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Studies in Art,  
Museums & Culture**

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In and Out of the Museum:  
New Destinations of the  
Moving Image**

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# In and Out of the Museum: New Destinations of the Moving Image

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## **Editorial. In and Out of the Museum: New Destinations of the Moving Image**

Luísa Santos

The Catholic University of Portugal, Portugal

Eugénie Zvonkine

University of Paris 8, France

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## Editorial. In and Out of the Museum: New Destinations of the Moving Image

Luísa Santos and Eugénie Zvonkine

The fourth issue of *The Garage Journal* aims to publish innovative scholarship on the relationship between the moving image and the museum. It seeks to analyze ways in which cinema, video art, and curatorial practices inform and influence each other. Analyzing this intricate relationship, the issue challenges traditional assumptions and opens up a discourse where affinities and oppositions coexist.

While the interlinks and inter-influences between cinema and curatorial practices have been tackled since the invention of cinema in the end of the nineteenth century, then of video in the 1970s, the ways and speed in which they have been (re)thought and (re)contextualised in the recent decades has highlighted, on the one hand, their socially transformative potential and, on the other hand, how immensely the concept of the museum has changed. Much as the field of architecture transformed over the course of the twentieth century, moving from the end of monuments heralded by Lewis Mumford (1938) to a more collective and flexible concept of what architecture and interior design should be, so too have conceptions of the moving image, the museum, and their interlinks evolved. They now appear to work in symbiosis, borrowing each other's technical tools and practices and enriching theories and history of perception and moving images through their *dispositifs*. By asserting the multiplicity of individual and subjective gazes, contemporary moving images in and out of the museum work as counter-hegemonic initiatives, giving voice to narratives previously silenced and visibility to unseen parts of society and artistic expression.

The definitions of museum, exhibition, and moving image change and are constantly renegotiated. Their distinctions are very much inscribed in sociocultural contexts and history. Yet the possibilities of expression they offer and the ways in which these different spaces, the 'black box' of the cinema theatre and the 'white cube' (Balsom 2013) of the museum, determine interactions between art, artist, and audience have inspired many artists to experiment with both. For instance, some famous film directors have invented two versions of their projects, one for a traditional screen and one for the museum space, like Chantal Akerman with her *From the other side* (2002) and *From the other side*, displayed at Documenta (Kassel, 2002).

The mutual fascination between cinema and contemporary visual arts at formal, conceptual, and methodological levels has resulted in numerous contemporary artists being inspired by cinema and using extensively the possibilities offered by video technologies to draw on and manipulate cinematic

image and narrative. In these explorations, artists study the power of cinema as an art of spectacle and perception. For instance, Douglas Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho* (1993) extended the 109 minutes of Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) into 24 hours, alienating the viewers' common understandings of the moving image, while Dóra Maurer activated her 16mm black-and-white silent film *Timing* (1973–80) in an expanded cinema performance via a simple experiment with the structural features of the medium (canvas and screen) to challenge what the viewers think they know of the image (Maurer 2011: 46).

While artists are fascinated by cinema, the opposite is also true: more and more cinematographers who still make and distribute their films in the traditional socioeconomic structure of film production and distribution declare that they are inspired by video artists. Moreover, theoreticians frequently employ concepts originating in analyses of traditionally distributed cinema and apply them to the context of contemporary artistic practices (for instance, Mulvey 1989: 127–136), or the other way around (see Verraes and Le Maître 2013; Denson and Leyda 2016).

*Technê* is an essential aspect of this relationship and the constantly renegotiated definitions of what museum art and cinema are or could be, as publications on post-cinema have shown these last years (Denson and Leyda 2016; Chateau and Moure 2020). Thus, the recent project at the intersection of traditional cinema and art installation *DAU* by Ilya Khrzhanovsky (2019) has been largely discussed for its use of 35mm film and the ways in which it puts the audience—through the means of an installation—in a situation that brings it back to an equivalent of a traditional cinema theatre (Zaezjev 2020; Zvonkine 2020).

Many of the texts in this issue discuss how specific technical *dispositifs* work as a link between the diverse formats of the oeuvre: the circularity or laterality of the camera movements (Sara Castelo Branco), the dolly and the rear projection (Blümlinger), the specific visual illusions created by installations (Biscainho, Kozicharow). These texts investigate these technical *dispositifs* as doorways to an interdisciplinary understanding of the artworks and to the emergence of new tools for understanding other artforms. Thus, the video *Baptizo* by Levi Glass (2019) makes us rethink early cinema and the history of panorama, just as the videos by contemporary video artist Mark Lewis make us reassess cinematic traditional technique and perception without nostalgia.

Research on cinematographic exhibitions has always paid attention to films, but to date, conceptualizations of the topic have been extremely rare (Mandelli 2019). This issue explores the relationship between the variety of narratives created by the moving image and the curatorial practices that make the moving image visible. Contributors uncover a new vision of the relationship between moving image curatorship and preservation and archiving as they study how not only the museum can be used to display and decompose cinema to create a new understanding of its specificities and history, but also how traditionally distributed cinema can act as a means of preserving and understanding the museum. Through creating new (both physical and

virtual) spaces for the audience to experience, cinema and exhibitions work in a symbiosis.

The birth of video art opened both artistic and curatorial universes to further experimentation: images could now be appropriated, manipulated, created, and erased, while the space of the gallery could house installations comparing museum narrative to film narrative. In fact, both film and exhibitions unfold following a pre-determined script, and both use elements such as lighting, framing, composition, selection, focus, as well as a complex articulation of the characters (the works) and their stories. These multifaceted interactions between cinema and contemporary art are made visible in exhibitions curated by filmmakers, such as *L'île et elle* (Fondation Cartier, Paris, 2006), by Agnès Varda. These intersections are analyzed in the third and final part of the issue, which tracks the ways in which audiences are immersed in new relationships (see Bourriaud 1998/2002; Bishop 2012) and (particip)a(c)tions upon entering the exhibition space(s) or outside of it. Audiences' active or passive role, the place given to them in the moving image and in the exhibition space, the processes of identification and distancing, the generation of estrangement, and the mechanisms of emotion and empathy are all components of both cinematographic and curatorial creation.

The diversity of places given to audiences in contemporary films and exhibitions reminds us that, ultimately, as framing/selective devices, both the video camera and the exhibition have the potential to act as a privileged medium of visibility and, as such, they move beyond their aesthetic features to the domains of society and politics (Rancière 2004, 2005: 13–36, 2011; Mouffe 2013). *Casus Belli* (2010) by Yorgos Zois portrays Athens to extrapolate to the domino effect of the global financial crisis in 2008: one after the other, people queuing in shops, art galleries, malls, and supermarkets, fall as a metaphor for the collapse of social systems globally. The installation *La Roquette, Prisons de Femmes* (1974) by Nil Yalter, Judy Blum, and Nicole Croiset criticizes prison conditions. These are just a few examples. It is not only artists who critically analyze society, many times adopting an activist/artist role: Maura Reilly has coined the term 'curatorial activists' to denote those individuals who—just like artists/artivists—choose their practice as a tool for counter-hegemonic initiatives, giving voice to the many micro-narratives that have been systemically silenced from the grand-narratives (Reilly 2018: 14).

In 1974, Kenneth Hudson showed the importance of individual gazes and perceptions inside the museum (Hudson 1974). The study of the diversity of gazes generated or authorized by artworks is nowadays central to reflections on the status of the museum. Several texts of the issue tackle this hypothesis (Vagnsdatter Andersen, Zvonkine, Santos, Radaelli). Some of them show, quite surprisingly, that the relationship between audience and art is sometimes closer and fuller when the audience is *not* in the museum but in a different context of perception—as in the case of net.art or a documentary or fiction film that permits an active use of artefacts otherwise inaccessible in the museum. They also show, in tune with contemporary research in the cinema studies field, how much this relationship is mediated by hapticity



Photomontages by Eugénie Zvonkine, 2021.

(Marks 2000) even when the art piece is audiovisual. The hand touching the book with precaution and tenderness in *Film Book Film* by Tatiana Macedo is just one example of the reintroduction and insistence on this haptic and sensorial approach in contemporary discourse.

### **A diversified and ludic methodology**

We found the invitation to be guest editors of this special issue captivating from a methodological point of view. Luísa Santos is a researcher and art curator; Eugénie Zvonkine is a cinema scholar, film programmer, and film director. The topic of our issue and our backgrounds drove us to mix the approaches in the papers and contributions selected for the journal and to bring researchers from diverse backgrounds into dialogue, either directly (as they do in the podcast) or in readers' minds as you read through the issue.

These diverse disciplinary origins and the format of the journal allowed us to take a diversified approach to the contents of the issue, one rare for research journals. Just as Vlad Strukov argues for the museum as a 'research hub' in the previous issue of the journal (Strukov 2021), we have tried out a variety of forms of research, using the journal itself as a research hub or a platform for multiple approaches to research. The issue presents traditional academic research, but also art-based research (as defined by Shaun McNiff 1998), as well as visual essays and even a podcast.

This diversity echoes the conceptual complexities and intricacies of the interlinks between cinema, art, and museum. Moreover, it involves an element of the ludic, which has been one of the most exciting aspects of the work for us. We use here 'ludic' in the sense in which it was defined by Huizinga (1938) and reinterpreted by Roger Caillois, who argued that the essence of play is in the permanently renegotiated limit between the rule and the liberty of invention (Caillois 1958). Caillois also argued that risk is intrinsic to 'ludic culture.' There is a risk involved in the idea of diversifying methodological approaches through research-based art and other forms of exploring theoretical questions. Risk is an essential aspect of art, since, as the artist Grégory Chatonsky has expressed it, 'each artist produces their own method in regards to their art. Sometimes it is even each art piece that generates its own methodology. This is why the artist has to always learn everything anew and can never fully rely on a previously acquired knowledge' (Chatonsky 2016).

Thus, the participants we solicited and/or selected among the responses to our call for papers are not only truly international, but also representative of the breadth of our scope: our authors are art scholars and cinema scholars, but also artists and researchers with curatorial experience.

We have also ensured that the papers and art pieces reunited in this issue came from seasoned as well as young researchers and artists. Both of us editors have always defended the importance of artists' words and thoughts on their art. We have thus included a text by the artist João

Bescainho on his art piece *Uncanny River* in our JG Media section on the website but have also presented an artist's statement by Tatiana Macedo on her project *Film Book Film* in the issue. An artist also speaks in Eugénie Zvonkine's video project, *Narrate an exhibition as a film*.

The first group of texts reflect on the mutual theoretical influence between video art and cinema. Christa Blümlinger, a cinema professor in France, takes as an object of analysis the complex and prolific artist Mark Lewis. The fascination his art has for cinema scholars (see Verraes and Le Maître, 2013) has brought scholars to analyze his art pieces with great attention. Blümlinger shows that the 'paradoxical allusions that Lewis's work makes toward the "classical" *dispositif* of cinematic projection' shine a light on and at the same time challenge cinematic theories and theories of perception. The visual essay by Eugénie Zvonkine, a French scholar and co-editor of the current issue, explores the complex relationship between cinema and museum by asking several participants 'to narrate an exhibition as a film,' thus testing what imaginary structures people use to spontaneously describe the unique spaces/textures/narrative devices of the cinema and museum. Margherita Foresti, a PhD candidate in Contemporary Art History at the University of Münster, uses her paper to interrogate the interdependency of exhibition space and moving image in defining both terms anew. As she puts it, the 'nature and outcome of the relationship between museum and moving image' depends on our capacity to see both the medium itself and the space anew. Finally, she analyses 'the power inherent in the museum and the way curatorship does or does not empower its spectators.'

A second group of works explores the ways in which museums can curate cinema and cinema can curate artworks. Zvonkine's essay shows how two films, a feature and a documentary film, even though produced in completely different sociopolitical and economic contexts, perform for the spectator a 'transportable museum' that not only preserves, displays, and makes accessible fleeting forms of art exhibition, but also acts as a platform for an interactive relationship to art objects. The podcast created for this part of the issue brings together three art scholars around the same specific question: how can the museum display cinema? The discussion between Paul Sztulman (art historian, Ecole des Arts Décoratifs, co-curator of the exhibition *Practices of distraction* at the HEAD, Geneva, 2019), Antonio Somaini (professor, University of Paris 3, curator of *Time Machine: Cinematic Temporalities* in Parma, 2020) and Ada Akerman (CNRS, curator of *Serguei Eisenstein: the Ecstatic Eye* at the Centre Pompidou-Metz) shows the complexities and specific challenges of this endeavor and how art and cinema scholars construct specific museum-based narrations of cinematic oeuvres through the 'white cube' of the museum space.

Still in the second part, the Garage Archive analyzes the documentary as both object (media) and subject (concept). Irina Gakhova puts together a series of TikTok videos focusing on the video archive of Sergei Borisov, a photographer and documentary filmmaker of *perestroika* and Russian unofficial artistic culture to highlight the close ties between the

musical underground and fine artists in Russia during this complex period. This last piece also makes a connection with Zvonkine's paper, analyzing *Assa* (1987) by Sergey Solovyov.

Tatiana Macedo, a Portuguese filmmaker and visual artist, in turn, delves into the links between literature and film in her video essay *Book Film Book*. Macedo takes a second-hand book from 1976 that is a book-format translation, in Norwegian, of the Canadian short film by George Pastic *The Violin* (1974), turning it into a small film again. Asking whether the narrative was lost in the multiple translation processes (of the language but also the medium), Macedo invites us to critically reflect upon the power structures that lie within translation of different mediums such as the moving image, the printed page, the computer screen, the analogue film, sound, and the image.

Natasha Nedelkova, a PhD student at the French University of Paris 8, reviews a recent publication, *The Moving Image as Public Art: Sidewalk Spectators and Modes of Enchantment* by Annie dell'Aria (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), which reflects upon the presence of moving images within the field of public art through encounters with passersby.

In the third group of texts, Sara Castelo Branco, PhD student in Arts and Sciences of Art and Communication Sciences at the Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne (Paris) and the Universidade Nova de Lisboa (Lisbon), reflects on 'the multiplicity of contemporary screens and their influence on today's modes of vision.' Questioning the relational ontologies between screen, moving images, and body-technology, she suggests three notions to analyze new experiences of vision: depth, laterality and circularity. Nicola Kozicharow, a specialist in Russian and European art and visual culture from the nineteenth century to the present and an assistant professor in the School of History at HSE University, Moscow, investigates the relationship between audiences and the moving image in cinematic and virtual space(s) outside of the museum through Canadian artist Levi Glass's intermedial project *Cineorama*. Rooted in the historical traditions of the panorama, philosophical toy, and early cinema, Glass's physical and virtual versions of *Cineorama/Baptizo* provide a useful case study in reconciling our diverse viewing practices today in light of the plethora of visual media that appeared in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In turn, Maria Redaelli, a Ph.D. fellow in History of Arts at Ca'Foscari University of Venice, discusses how our digital viewing practices differ depending on the context. In her essay, Redaelli describes how net.art turns into a 'testimony' when transposed to the physical space of a museum or a gallery, changing drastically the experience of encountering this type of art. Svala Vagnsdatter Andersen, a researcher focusing primarily on sex, gender, and the body in visual culture, also discusses different ways of experiencing the moving image, claiming that there has been a turn in the art of spectating through the analysis of a series of Jesper Just's film exhibitions.

Portuguese artist and curator João Biscainho's proposal can be read as a visual translation of such a turn. In his visual essay titled *Uncanny River*, an imaginary watercourse runs through the so-called Uncanny Valley

as if the valley really existed in terrestrial physical geography. The symmetrical duplication of the crossing forces us to simultaneously cross and return to the same bank from which we departed without actually noticing where we set off or where we are headed, an impossible movement in the physical world. In front of the installation, we are coaxed into a mode of perceptual suspension as we perpetually attempt to recognize forms and patterns that are continually dissolving and being replaced with an endless succession of new compositions over the thirty minutes of video, projected in an endless loop.

Papers in this part show how moving images, just as art in general, '[may] generate an imaginary space in which the most diverse wishes and desires can be projected' (Gielen 2018: 133). To conclude this segment, Ekaterina Odé, a French PhD holder and independent researcher in film studies reviews the collective volume coedited by Paul Sztulman and Dork Zabunyan, *Politiques de la distraction* (Presses du réel, 2021). The volume investigates the notion of distraction through diverse methodologies and disciplines.

Finally, Luísa Santos, a Portuguese scholar, independent curator, and coeditor of the current issue, closes the three parts with *Moving Image and the Museum: Speculative Spaces in 3 Acts*, an essay to be read as an epilogue to the various narratives presented throughout the current issue. Unfolding in a series of three short stories, each embodied by a main character (an artwork), the essay adopts storytelling as a methodology to present diverse ways of looking at the manifold relationships between the moving image and the museum. What the essays in the current issue, with its many micro-narratives, show is that these relationships have a tremendous potential that goes far beyond the space of the screen(s) and the museum.

Although the three parts of the issue apply different research methodologies to the investigation and analysis of contemporary moving image in and out of the museum, they are in no way disconnected. The aim is not to provide a linear and exhaustive historical reconstruction on the multifold relationship between the moving image and the museum. Rather, concentrating on a variety of cases and methodologies allows an in-depth discussion of the needs to which the moving images exposed in museums respond, the problems they raise, as well as the way in which they lead to a rethinking of film and the very idea of curatorial practices.

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### Authors' bios

Eugénie Zvonkine (PhD and Accreditation to supervise doctoral research) is an associate professor in the film studies department at the University of Paris 8. She writes on history and aesthetics in Soviet and post-Soviet cinema from the 1960s to the present day. She has published three monographs on Soviet and post-Soviet cinema, including *Kira Mouratova: un cinéma de la dissonance* (2012), and (co-)edited the collective volumes *Cinéma russe, (r)évolutions* (2018) and *Ruptures and Continuities in Soviet/Russian Cinema: Styles, Characters and Genres Before and after the Collapse of the USSR* (2019). She was also a regular contributor to *Cahiers du cinéma* from 2010 until 2020. In October 2021, she was named a Junior member of the French University Institute (IUF).

Address: University Paris 8, 2, rue de la Liberté, 93200 St-Denis, France.

E-mail: eugenie.zvonkine@univ-paris8.fr.

ORCID: 0000-0002-3851-8046.

Luisa Santos (PhD) is an independent curator, researcher, and assistant professor at the Faculty of Human Sciences of the Catholic University of Portugal. She holds a PhD in Culture Studies from the Humboldt-Viadrina School of Governance, Berlin, and an MA in Curating Contemporary Art from the Royal College of Art, London. In 2017, she initiated *4Cs: From Conflict to Conviviality through Creativity and Culture*, a European Cooperation project involving eight institutions across Europe. She is a member of the editorial and scientific boards of several peer-reviewed journals, including Böhner-Verlag's *Yearbook of Moving Image Studies*. She is currently coediting a special issue of *The Garage Journal* on the moving image in museums.

Address: Universidade Católica Portuguesa Lisboa, Palma de Cima, 1649-023 Lisboa, Portugal.

E-mail: [luisa.santos@ucp.pt](mailto:luisa.santos@ucp.pt).

ORCID: 0000-0003-3460-0496.

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## **Framing, Masking, Revealing: Mark Lewis's Regime of Projection**

Christa Blümlinger  
University Paris VIII, France

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# Framing, Masking, Revealing: Mark Lewis's Regime of Projection\*<sup>1</sup>

Christa Blümlinger

This article analyzes the complex and plethoric video artist Mark Lewis and his *Willesden Launderette Reverse Dolly Pan Right Friday Prayers* (2010, 5'), highlighting how he works with cinema theories and devices. The article demonstrates that the paradoxical allusions that Lewis's work makes toward the 'classical' dispositif of cinematic projection shine a light and at the

same time challenge cinematic theories and theories of perception. Moreover, the use of specifically cinematographic techniques such as the dolly or the rear projection screened in the museum context, and in a loop, displays the projected image in its hybridity and, more broadly, celebrates the cinematic dispositif while refusing to view it in a nostalgic way.

**Keywords:** apparatus, dispositive, temporality, punctum

If cinema may be understood as, among other things, an art of decoupage, Mark Lewis's *Willesden Launderette Reverse Dolly Pan Right Friday Prayers* (2010) offers a kind of demonstration of this. This decidedly formalist film presents four movements and four pauses—in a single shot, within the space-time of five short minutes—highlighting a spectacle of appearances and disappearances on a London street corner through adjustments of the framing. The film sets out its 'program' with its very title. Initially, it presents a tracking shot: we leave the interior of a laundromat via a reverse dolly, interspersed with pauses allowing for the contemplation of a particular assemblage of lines and forms. And so we go from spinning dryers to the front window, behind which a man sits motionless; then, still tracking back, toward a wide shot of the laundromat, whose exterior is enlivened by the interplay of transparencies, lights, and reflections. The camera then leaves this laundromat and pans more than 180 degrees to the right, taking in both sides of the street. We discover a working-class neighborhood in the late afternoon, when Pakistani men in Muslim clothing walk toward a place of worship. In displaying the co-presence of secular and religious activities within its movement, *Willesden Launderette Reverse Dolly Pan Right Friday Prayers* highlights cinema's status as an art of passage. While pausing on a particular framing, the film emphasizes both the degree

\* This is a translation of the following article: Blümlinger C (2015) Cadrer, Cacher, faire apparaître. *Projections de Mark Lewis. Trafic*, 94: 50–59. It has been translated into English by Allyn Hardyck.

of its artificiality and its documentary aspect, whose purest indicator is the fleeting reflections of birds projected onto the windows of the laundromat.

The question has arisen—without neglecting to put it to the artist himself—whether Mark Lewis's films are real 'films' or not, to the extent that they are rarely screened in movie theaters and most often exhibited in a museum context, and that they are not shown at specific times of the day, but in a loop. They evince a spatiotemporal continuity, in the style of the Lumière brothers' films and the earliest moving shots in cinema: they are not, therefore, edited in the traditional sense and present themselves as 'single shots.' This has encouraged the association of these films with the domains of painting and photography. Among the most engaging hypotheses in this area, we may mention David Company's idea that the pictorial effect in Lewis's work emerges from silence:

'Not enveloped by sound, the beholder is not recruited into a cinematic spectacle but permitted to remain detached and observant, as though in a gallery of photographs, paintings or sculptures. In this sense, Lewis does not use the gallery wall as a screen: he accepts it as a gallery wall' (Company, 2009: 20).

This immediately aligns cinema with the audiovisual and the spectacle. It also leads to projecting other silent films onto gallery and museum walls (and not onto screens), starting with those films typically associated with avant-garde movements. This kind of curatorial practice is actually fairly common these days, notably when it comes to multifaceted bodies of work: Paul Strand, for example, is increasingly being presented as both a photographer and a filmmaker, within the same museum space.<sup>2</sup> Strand's photographs are exhibited as original, indeed vintage, prints, produced through various procedures for photographic film. On the other hand, his motion pictures, shot using film stock, are shown in a more or less open space by means of a digital medium that never claims to convey the experience of the original film, instead creating a kind of comparative complement to the photography exhibition, which is conversely endowed with the aura of craftsmanship. But when Mark Lewis decides to transfer Super 35 film onto a digital medium, it is a mode of exhibition that he has chosen. We should also note that Lewis's films are not 'exhibited' films, extracted from theaters and merely 'hung on the wall,' but are on the contrary intended to be 'installed,' i.e., located in a given space and, most particularly, putting the viewer in a given setting. This viewer must find their place before the image, being at liberty to vary their point of view. This is especially striking at the BAL arts center in Paris<sup>3</sup> when, in going down the steps leading to the basement composed of white columns, our eyes encounter a film that, with a vertiginous Steadicam shot, depicts the winding staircase in a building designed by Oscar Niemeyer (*Staircase at the Edificio Copan*, 2014).

The radical difference that Company establishes by distinguishing 'wall' from 'screen,' and painting (or photography) from cinema, corresponds in his view to a series of oppositions between the terms of detachment

and envelopment, as between those of observation and spectacle. From this perspective, cinema—as apparatus or *dispositive*—does not allow for attentive observation. This negative definition (and this privilege granted to the gallery space) neglects the constant, paradoxical allusions that Lewis's work makes toward the 'classical' *dispositif* of cinematic projection, even deep inside the 'white cube.' Lewis not only seeks to recall the figures of a 'distant' observer within film history, but also to use—without nostalgia or fetishism—what we could call, in accordance with Jean-Louis Baudry, 'basic cinematographic apparatuses': technical tools that allow the camera to move, or a mode of projection that draws the viewer's attention to a very luminous high-resolution image, placed high upon the wall, sometimes with the possibility of sitting or lying down, in other words of remaining still for some time.

The distinction between wall and screen merits discussion if it must serve as a means for comparing cinema and painting. Many years ago, André Bazin had defined the budding dialogue between painting and cinema arising from the essay films of the 1950s—by Resnais and Clouzot, for example—through a differentiation on a formal level. He asserted a fundamental distinction between the frame (in painting) and masking (in cinema): one is centripetal, the other centrifugal. Unlike 'the space in which our active experience occurs,' the frame encloses a 'space that is oriented [...] in a different direction' within the painting, thereby offering 'a contemplative area opening solely onto the interior of the painting.' 'The outer edges of the screen,' on the other hand, 'are not [...] the frame of the film image' but rather

'the edges of a piece of masking that shows only a portion of reality. The picture frame polarizes space inwards. On the contrary, what the screen shows us seems to be part of something prolonged indefinitely into the universe' (Bazin 1959: 128).

One of the reasons for this fundamental difference lies in their respective regimes of temporality: the painting's temporality develops geologically, deeply, while film's temporality functions geographically, on the level of editing. Whereas the frame emphasizes pictorial heterogeneity, in opposition to the natural space in which it inserts itself, the masked film image 'destroys' that pictorial space through its permanent outward spread.

It must be added that this fundamental disjunction between on-screen and off-screen space can arise not only through editing, but also through the movements that take place in front of the camera or through the mobility of the camera itself. The separation between what is shown and what is hidden is fundamental to the organization of a shot in cinema, as 'a shot is not a perception,' as Pascal Bonitzer says. 'It is an assemblage of volumes, masses, forms, movements. The frame is not the vague limit of the visual field. It is a cropping of space that creates the interrelation' (Bonitzer 1985: 21). Mark Lewis's films display that very property of the screen, which is not the world and which does not have horizons, as Merleau-Ponty pointed out (Merleau-Ponty 1945: 82).

Mark Lewis is particularly intrigued by painting when it captures time. Concerning a work by Auguste Renoir, *Le Pont des Arts* (1867–1868), he notes that it portrays the slow tempo of a lazy afternoon when time ‘stands still,’ even as it appears transitory, via visible shadows. We may also observe a third kind of time, one of the making, again transitory, of the painting itself:

‘a time that embodies both contemplation and passage, stillness and movement, a condensation that the viewer experiences or unpacks when considering the formal depiction of the different kinds of time’ (Lewis 2003: 3).

We thereby sense to what extent the hybridization of forms of time constitutes a key focus of Lewis’s films (in much the same way that Jean Epstein spoke of it in order to circumscribe the essence of cinema). To Company’s argument concerning silence, we must therefore add a question dealing with the perception of time, which is impossible without considering the function of movement inherent to cinema.

*Hendon F.C.* (2009), for example, starts with a classical, stable composition presenting a wide, slightly high-angle shot of a section of the stands in a disused football stadium on a summer day. In the distance, we see women and children having fun on the sidelines. The camera then leaves this scene and pans to the left over the overgrown field, revealing the faded sign featuring the name of the local team: ‘Hendon F.C.’ This moment allows for the appreciation of several things: the beauty of this sports ground that has become a ruin; the historicity of this structure overrun by nature; and a twofold temporality, underscoring both the lost sociocultural function of the field and its current status as an abandoned plot of land. The depth of field allows for connections between different planes within the image, between its temporal layers, as in the Renoir painting. But through that connection, we may also recognize an affinity with the films of the painter’s son. According to Bazin, in Jean Renoir’s work such use of depth of field, similarly to his long shots and tracking shots, is a response to ‘the constant concern not to allow the photography or the editing to break up the dramatic focus of a scene’ (Bazin 1971: 58). Of course, Lewis does not make what are generally known as fiction films, but he evokes an imaginary space that approaches fiction, by moving within a single shot from a present-day social scene (featuring migrants) to a site overtaken by nature, and from there to ‘another scene,’ also social, but belonging to the past (recalling the days when the stands were filled with supporters).

The camera then cranes down from its high angle, turns, pivots and starts to sweep across the tall grass covering the field. We pass very closely overhead; we attempt to make out some details. The undulating trajectory of this gaze, produced by the crane, is reminiscent of drones, those new machines of vision. At one point, when the camera turns in the bright sunlight, we see the crane’s shadow: ‘it’ reveals itself, like a kind of *punctum* of the apparatus. This *punctum* effect is due to the movement engendered by what an American critic of the late nineteenth century—discussing the well-known ‘phantom rides,’ shots made by a moving camera in the early days of cinema—called

'the unseen energy' that 'swallows up space and flings itself into the distance' (Gunning 1994: 197.) When the apparatus finishes its circuit around the stadium and returns to the location from which it started, it stops on a slightly low-angle shot in the grass, quite unlike the initial point of view.

This 'circuitous' shot puts the spectators/visitors in a very special kind of position, allowing them to temper their description of the *dispositif* with which they are dealing. Instead of regarding Mark Lewis's creations as either works of cinema or works of photography, it is better to get a sense of how they explore the interrelationship between the two realms. Given that these works are 'installed,' they literally exhibit the screen's masking effect. Through their mobile composition, they transpose the temporality of painting and photography. Without any obvious editing, they remain within a regime of theatricality and attraction associated with the *dispositif* of their projection, as the earliest films did.

It is well known that Mark Lewis has a particular predilection for the technique of rear projection (aka back projection). This is not so much because he is interested in extolling an obsolete special effect, the sign of an art of moviemaking that could be associated with 'the age of machines' (Fernand Léger): instead, it is a result of this technique's modernist dimension, given that it creates a tension between the representation and its materiality. This interest also corresponds to the artist's taste for a certain kind of stratified representation as seen in Renaissance paintings, creating spaces at once separate and integrated, as Laura Mulvey points out (cit. in Lewis 2009: 25-29).<sup>4</sup> In his essay on the function of rear projection in Hitchcock's films, Dominique Païni emphasizes to what extent this is a pictorial suture between figures and a background, enabling the creation of a semblance of reality 'without erasing the illusory device that created it,' or even of 'a symmetry of pictured pictures.' For Païni, the aesthetic tension of this special effect lies 'between establishing a space with actual dimensions via different camera angles, and [an] inclination toward illusion' (Païni 2000: 58, 69-71).

Although this technique of rear projection has its roots in pre-cinematic *dispositifs* such as the diorama or theatrical backdrops, in Lewis's work it appears as a special effect that brings out the aesthetic power of cinema. In this sense, *Rear Projection: Molly Parker* (2005) is Lewis's most emblematic work. In a text on one of the first classic films using rear projections, Tay Garnett's *Her Man* (1930), Lewis describes their particularly striking effect, which causes a split between the drama in the foreground—performed by two actors who are 'firmly studio bound'—and the documentary background, in motion, in which the anonymous urban space flows past. For Lewis, this effect is due to the editing together, or even the collage, of two different kinds of filmic experience:

'Against the plot and via a reality effect, the film registers a time that cannot be reduced to theatre or story. As we experience this reality effect of the back-projection, we begin to notice reluctant "extras," all the people in the background who when they saw a flat-bed truck driving around "their" city with a camera mounted on its back, presumably stole moderately surprised or inquisitive second glances as it passed them by' (Lewis 2003: 2).

There is nothing nostalgic about Lewis's reuse of an obsolete special effect. As a visible effect, displaying the projected image in its hybridity, the rear projection in Lewis's work embodies a kind of 'modern' antiquity, understood as a structural tension<sup>5</sup> between a stable composition and the experience of the ephemeral. This kind of tension can be incorporated into a history of painting, but at the same time, in the way it captures chance moments in daily life, this tension often references what is inherent to cinema and what makes cinema a hybrid domain: movement, as well as editing, which in this case resembles a form of collage.

This figurative tension is also on display in the films by Lewis that explore the modern world, relying on especially intricate camera movements that may involve a dolly, a crane, a car, or a helicopter. These films highlight the aesthetic value of this movement through the duration and the continuity of a lengthy shot. (We should not refer to such shots as 'long takes' or 'sequence shots.' Firstly, these are not narrative films—despite the fact they are staged—so they cannot be analyzed on the basis of narrative logic. Secondly, these are one-shot films, no more no less.) The figurative tension is therefore not produced in the same way as with rear projections; it lies in the surprising revelation of an unexpected detail or event within the motorized *dispositif* of the mobile recording. The permanent deframing [*décadrage*] is thereby indicative of both a protean composition and a grasp of what is transitory. It becomes a sign of the presence of the apparatus, as well as of the 'optical unconscious' in Benjamin's sense of the term.

Thus *Motion [From the Minhocão to the Cinema Marabá]*, a 'film' from 2014, places the spectator before a 'poetry of change' intrinsic to that modernity defined famously by Baudelaire as 'the transient, the fleeting, the contingent' (Baudelaire 1932: 1163). This modernity possesses an acute awareness of temporality currently characterized by a heightened form of acceleration, accompanied in turn by contradictory effects of deceleration, developing what we—taking a cue from Hartmut Rosa—could call an 'aesthetics of slowness' (Rosa 2017). The very title of this film makes its intentions clear, in a conceptual gesture recalling some of the Lumière brothers' films: covering a journey that leads from the *Minhocão* highway to the *Marabá* movie theater in São Paulo. In the course of a night drive that goes from a play of shadows worthy of Arthur Robison's *Schatten* (1923)—shadows that spread out onto the disused viaduct of the *Minhocão*—to a movie theater in an adjoining neighborhood after which the theater is named, we discover the life of a great city on which locomotion has left its mark. Here, the transient lies in the moving point of view. Just when we approach the *Marabá*, from some distance we start to notice a small spot on the sidewalk, in the shadows. Once our gaze stops in front of the theater entrance, we assess the incident that must have taken place before the car arrived, as we observe a cyclist sprawled across the sidewalk.

In photography, the *punctum* is a 'detail': 'Certain details may "prick" me,' as Barthes says. The *punctum* is connected with time: it 'could accommodate a certain latency;' it 'is a kind of subtle *beyond*' (Barthes 1980: 71, 84, 88, 93). We may attempt to transpose this concept to Lewis's films.

What constitutes the *punctum* of a shot—whether for a moment, or when the image is paused—can, as the image moves and through deframing, lead to its end (in both senses of the term): toward a major event (the people leaving the theater will attend to the injured man) that gives rise to a virtual fiction (the film stops just when we start to observe dramatic actions, at which point we leave the mode of contemplation).

If the *filmic*, in Barthes's view, was 'that in the film which cannot be described' because the film 'does not exist (any more than does the text)' (Barthes 1982: 43-61), we may suggest that, in Lewis's films, the filmic-as-*punctum* with which they are associated lies in movement and in vision itself, presaging military surveillance via new technologies (drone wars). In *Forte!* (2010), filmed from a helicopter, the aerial view makes it clear that the fortress featured in the film was built before the invention of the airplane. The scale of the very wide shot reveals an ant-like line of a mass of humans running out of the fortress, bringing to mind the notion of massive destruction as it was invented during World War I and pursued in today's conflicts with increasingly automated weapons. This manner of conceiving the contemporary world, which focuses on the biopolitical effects of the neo-capitalist condition by means of an assortment of diagrams and maps, has an aesthetic counterpart in this film. Here, Lewis recreates for us something along the lines of what Serge Daney called a 'cine-demography' (Daney 1991: 147-150): Daney, noting the disappearance of crowds from fiction film, perceived a lack of proportion between humans and their environment. In the early 1980s, he proposed the study of the increasing absence of these cinematic beings that constitute crowds, crowds that gave the cinephile spectator a sure sense of belonging in the world. In his text, Daney composed an homage to extras, overshadowed by the star system and under threat from the economic transformation of the Hollywood studios: low-rung, anonymous workers to whom Lewis also paid tribute in his film *The Pitch* (1998).

The crowd, which featured in so many works of 1920s cinema, is also a figure of the public space of modernity, such as Georg Simmel described it in his study of the life of great cities (Simmel 1971: 324-339). Today, Mark Lewis captures the crowd in the many crossroads of daily life, those anonymous sites of 'supermodernity' (Marc Augé): places of business or entertainment, transportation networks. But he also seeks it out where it has disappeared, or is about to, because the cities have transformed themselves and their centers have shifted.

*Above and Below the Minhocão* (2014), for example, constitutes a kind of monument to a modernist neighborhood of São Paulo, featuring an elevated highway. This road is filmed at the end of the day, when it is reserved for the exclusive use of pedestrians and cyclists. The framing privileges long shots much of the time, taking advantage of the fact that the figures are enlarged by their shadows. With a slow, twirling movement of the crane, the camera apparatus captures fleeting moments—for example, when two cyclists pass by—or 'micro-events,' like when a man goes out into the courtyard of a building to make a phone call. Sometimes, the imposing presence of the

crane elicits a gesture from a passerby, waving to the mechanical eye attached to it, as people filmed by the cameramen of Edison or the Lumières once did.

At one point, the conspicuous framing (a high-angle shot), with very high-contrast lighting, emphasizes the modernist aesthetic of these buildings, their geometrical aspect. Here, Lewis—through effects of flat, uniform coloring and of serialization in a style recalling Paul Strand—composes what Rosalind Krauss has called ‘the grid,’ which ‘announces, among other things, modern art’s will to silence, its hostility to literature, to narrative, to discourse’ (Krauss 1984: 9). In *Above and Below the Minhocão*, there is a tension between these moments of formal abstraction and a reality effect that is inherent to the scene’s twofold temporality, the overlaying of several periods of urbanism, of modernity and supermodernity: a political dimension emerges just through the representation of these places in their fleeting role as indicators of change. The pedestrian takeover of the highway is probably a portent of the neighborhood’s gentrification. Thus, the transformation of this road could paradoxically be a threat to the current inhabitants. In capitalist society, Simmel says, the functional value of money abstracts qualities: instead of serving as an intermediary between social relations, modern monetary exchange becomes their template (Simmel 1978: 224-225, 237-238).

In the films by Lewis that feature the mobility of the cinematic eye, we may distinguish two tendencies, corresponding—like his films featuring rear projection—to two ‘models’ in the history of cinema. One stems from what Tom Gunning calls the ‘cinema of attractions’ of the early period, embodied in Lewis’s work by documentary-style moving shots (already seen in the work of the Lumières as well as in Edison’s films and produced by attaching the camera to some modern form of transportation). The other is a product of what in classical cinema could be called the autonomization of the gaze, a somewhat rare phenomenon at the time that could be seen, for example, in the films of Max Ophüls. In *Le Plaisir*, the camera leaves the characters and explores the upper portions of a church to the sound of ‘Plus près de toi, mon Dieu’ (i.e., ‘Nearer My God to Thee’), breaking away from the religious ceremony and the story for a moment. In contemporary cinema, this type of insistent movement is more prevalent (in films by Antonioni or Varda for example): we may lend it a ‘camera-consciousness’ or say that it pursues a ‘free indirect discourse,’ in line with the concepts of Pier Paolo Pasolini and Gilles Deleuze (Deleuze 1983: 108).

The tension that develops in the lengthy shots filmed by Lewis is in fact a product of these two functions: the pure attraction of the phantom shots of early cinema, and the later function of the ‘roaming’ shot in fiction films. This last aspect is a sort of inverted consequence of the crane’s continuous movement, a purely cinematic *dispositif* that both frames and conceals: instead of suspending the story, as in narrative cinema, the insistent movement in Lewis’s films leads to its possibility. In its winding trajectory, *Above and Below the Minhocão* crosses several times over the viaduct, transformed into a pedestrian zone, to return to a man and a woman whom we have seen

sitting down on it earlier. We have occasionally forgotten about them, because they stayed off screen, but they appear in the center of the final frame. Here, the hint of an embrace, barely perceptible, becomes particularly touching.

The small element that 'pricks' me presents itself as a gesture filmed in real time, an unexpected gesture that only assumes its full importance because we have gone through all the time it took for it to come about. It is precisely for that reason that the artist has chosen a wide, high-definition projection here, and given visitors the possibility of sitting down, for they would not notice this moment of grace if they did not spend enough time facing the screen-wall. Thanks to the specific duration of the shot (11 minutes) and its irregular movement, we may see the appearance, disappearance and reappearance of something that 'is an enigma' (Michel Frizot)<sup>6</sup> or that "'pricks" me' (Barthes), something we discover anew in a surprising and moving way every time. In Lewis's 'formalist' films, the *punctum* is connected to both movement (foiling the shot's enigmatic dimension) and time (allowing for contemplation). It may lie in the bustle of a distant crowd, flooding out of a fortified castle atop a snowy mountain, or in the gesticulation of someone out for a stroll in São Paulo, realizing he is being filmed by a camera mounted on a crane, or in the small spot formed by the body of a cyclist, sprawled on a sidewalk in the shadows at night, who can only be perceived by coming up to him with the car on which the camera is mounted.

While Mark Lewis's works seem to call upon a mode of attention close to the experience of photography, the form in which their technical conditions are exhibited also reveals the specificity of their medium. For the artist shows us precisely 'why cinema is important' more than ever, in the same sense as when Michael Fried (2010) explains 'why photography matters as art as never before': for him, the *punctum* is the fundamental element of what he calls the 'antitheatricality' of photography. In this sense, Lewis, in his installation films or his 'formalist' films, explores the effects of decentering and of the latency of a subtle beyond, by presenting cinema as the mode of experience of time's passing.

1. This text is a revised version of a paper given on 12 March 2015, at the invitation of Diane Dufour and Chantal Pontbriand, as part of an exhibition titled *Mark Lewis—Above and Below*, at the BAL arts center in Paris.
2. See for example the major exhibition *Paul Strand—Master of Photography*, which took place at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 2014-2015.
3. *Mark Lewis—Above and Below*, Paris, Le BAL, March-April 2015 (curator: Chantal Pontbriand).
4. In this sense, Mulvey likens some of Lewis's compositions to the "spatially aggregated" backgrounds in paintings by Jan van Eyck and Giovanni Bellini, while emphasizing the Brechtian effect of rear projection in cinema.
5. Mark Lewis does not refer directly to the technique of rear projection when

he defends his concept of historicity.

6. See the title of the exhibition of amateur photography curated by Michel Frizot at the Maison Européenne de la Photographie in Paris from décembre 2014 to janvier 2015, *Toute photographie fait énigme (Every Photograph is an Enigma)*. [Translator's note: The English title was explicitly used in the presentation of the exhibition by one of its organizers, the Fotomuseum Winterthur in Switzerland, [www.fotomuseum.ch](http://www.fotomuseum.ch).]

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### Author's bio

Christa Blümlinger is a Professor in Film Studies at the University Paris VIII. Her publications include books about the essay film, and avant-garde and archival film aesthetics. She co-directs the research group *Théâtres de la mémoire*, and has investigated face, gesture, landscape and memory in documentary. Her recent publications include: *Morgan Fisher, Off-Screen Cinema* (Les Presses du Réel, 2017), co-edited with Jean-Philippe Antoine; *Geste filmé, gestes filmiques* (Mimesis international, 2018), and *Hors cadre: imaginaires cinématographiques de l'histoire* (Hermann, 2020, with Emmanuelle André, Sylvie Lindeperg and others), edited by Mathias Lavin. Her forthcoming publication is *Harun Farocki. Du cinéma au musée* (2022, P.O.L.).

### Translator's bio

Allyn Hardyck is a translator based in Paris. He earned a BA in film from the University of California, Berkeley, followed by two graduate degrees in philosophy from the Université Paris 8. He has worked regularly with Raymond Bellour, translating new texts and revising earlier translations. He has also translated texts by Michel Chion, Philippe Grandrieux and Luc Moullet, among others. He is currently one of the two translators of the *Journal of the CIPH* (Collège international de Philosophie), available on the website of Cairn International (cairn-int.info).

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## ***Baptizo* and Immersion: A Panoramic Perspective**

Nicola Kozicharow

National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow

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## *Baptizo* and Immersion: A Panoramic Perspective

Nicola Kozicharow

This article investigates the relationship between audiences and the moving image in cinematic and virtual space(s) outside of the museum through Canadian artist Levi Glass's new media project *Cineorama*. This wooden panoramic cinema, which the artist built in 2019, immerses viewers in the eight-channel video *Baptizo*—a 360° experience of the Baptistery in Florence—on double-sided screens inside and outside the building. The article focuses on the outdoor public display of *Cineorama* at the

2020 *Luminosity* exhibition in Kamloops, Canada, and Glass's digital adaptation of the project for viewing on personal devices or virtual reality headsets. Rooted in the historical traditions of the panorama, philosophical toy, and early cinema, the physical and virtual versions of *Baptizo/Cineorama* offer a valuable case study in reconciling our diverse viewing practices today in light of the vast array of visual media appearing in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

**Keywords:** art history, audiences, cinema, immersive space, public art, virtual reality

This article explores the relationship between audiences and the moving image in public cinematic and virtual space(s) through two different displays of Canadian artist Levi Glass's project *Baptizo/Cineorama*: its outdoor installation at the 2020 video art exhibition *Luminosity*<sup>1</sup> in Kamloops, British Columbia (Figure 1), and online adaptation during the pandemic (<http://cineorama.ca/>).<sup>2</sup> A hut-like wooden structure built by Glass in 2019, *Cineorama* is a 10' tall panoramic cinema, which projects the eight-channel video *Baptizo* ('to immerse' in Latin) in 360° on interior and exterior screens embedded in the architecture. The 8'11" video immerses the audience in a tourist encounter with the façade of the Baptistery of Saint John in Florence (1059–1128). Tourist footage, which is shot from various viewpoints, elevations, and camera angles, gives the viewer a sensation of being 'transported' to Florence, but never forms a perfect optical and spatial illusion of the building. Through Glass's radical and highly tactile approach to cinematic construction, the singular viewpoint of linear perspective is multiplied and fragmented, and crisp, rhythmic splicing of the geometric marble façade presents moments of complete abstraction.

Grounded in the historical traditions of the panorama, philosophical toy, and early cinema, Glass's *Baptizo/Cineorama* provides a useful case study in reconciling our diverse viewing practices today in light of the plethora of technologies that audiences could use to see images in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. *Cineorama* takes its name from Raoul Grimoin-Sanson's *Cinéorama* of 1897—a multiscreen panoramic cinema that was a commercial disaster. When he came across the term *Cineorama* and its doomed history, Glass (2020a, personal communication<sup>3</sup>) found it a 'laughable discovery' but 'rejoice[d] in the collective invention and failure.' In reviving the panorama—a 360° viewing environment indelibly linked with intermediality (Trumpener and Barringer 2020: 20)—through new technologies, Glass's work is testament to the robust dialogue that artists have forged between early and proto-cinematic viewing experiences and contemporary image-based practices, such as, for example, Stan Douglas's *Panoramic Rotunda* (1985), Donald Lawrence and *The Camera Obscura* project, Bill Brand's *Masstransiscope* (1980), and Sandra Gibson and Luis Recoder's *Topsy Turvy* (2013). The way in which Glass's virtual reality (VR) version of *Baptizo/Cineorama* encourages curiosity and a sense of play through the use of hand-held devices or headsets in domestic settings also points to the philosophical or optical toy. One of the dominant modes of seeing images in the nineteenth century, the philosophical toy later became a crucial tool for artists such as Robert Breer and Marcel Duchamp in shifting film practices outside of the traditional site of the movie theatre in the 1960s (Uroskie 2014: 93). Building upon scholarly discussions of the tactile engagement of handheld philosophical toys (Doane 2006) and toy moving panoramas (Huhtamo 2013), this article views interactions with the moving image on phones and VR headsets as part of a much longer history.

The subject of significant scholarly attention in the fields of art history and literary, film, and media studies, the panorama has been (re) conceptualized through various approaches and frameworks. It has been historicized as a technical invention and form of entertainment (Oettermann 1997) and positioned alongside digital art in a wider account of illusionary and immersive spaces (Grau 2003), and its multiscreen commercial permutation has been discussed as a foil for avant-garde expanded cinema in the 1960s (Uroskie 2014). More recently, Katie Trumpener and Tim Barringer (2020) have emphasized its status as an intermedial phenomenon in historical and contemporary practice. There have also been efforts to recover large-scale image practices outside of the circular panorama: Erkki Huhtamo (2013) has shed light on the moving panorama, which, unlike its 360° counterpart, unfurled continuous images from a rolled mechanism alongside a narrative performance. Amid a range of aims and focuses, sources on the panorama largely categorize it as an immersive spectacle that overwhelms and awes through subliminal illusion. This article shows how Glass's *Cineorama*, while sharing characteristics of the panorama tradition more broadly, does not fit comfortably within this narrative and generates wonder on a smaller but no less affective or impactful scale. In turn, this analysis questions the idea that immersion—either physical or virtual—is necessarily limited to a singular type of aesthetic experience.



Figure 1. Photo of Levi Glass's *Cineorama* at *Luminocity* (courtesy of Levi Glass, 2020).

Looking to the range of different formats and situations available to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century spectators, from hand-held devices in domestic settings to full-body immersion in public spaces, Glass's flexible use of moving image technologies facilitates virtual and real interactions with audiences that instill wonder and delight. In view of the closing or restricted opening of museums and galleries due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this article's close examination of the in-person and online *Baptizo/Cineorama* speaks to the broader significance of public moving image displays in urban environments and digital spaces in our continued isolation. Outside, free, and accessible to all, public moving image projections like Glass's at *Luminocity* present rare opportunities to view art safely with strangers and can enliven the relationship between art and local communities. Indeed, *Luminocity* attracted a wide audience, which is generally reflective of the active public engagement programs of the Kamloops Art Gallery—the exhibition's organizers—and the enchantment of the glowing *Cineorama* structure (Dell'Aria 2021: 9) lured in regular gallery-goers and visitors who did not intend to encounter art. Amid calls for museums to see the present moment as an opportunity to galvanize free online platforms to engage with new and more diverse audiences (Joselit 2020), there remains a prevailing disdain for the kind of aesthetic encounter we can have in domestic settings. The online version of *Baptizo/Cineorama*, which can be viewed on any device and through a VR headset, illustrates the wonder that arises from art you can hold in your hand. By activating new and unexpected ways of seeing in enchanting and familiar environments, Glass's use of the moving image invites the viewer to emerge from the real or virtual space with a more expansive, open view of the world.



Figure 2. Aligned view of the Baptistry façade in *Baptizo* (courtesy of Levi Glass, 2019).

### ***Baptizo*: Multisensory Play with Perspective**

From the very start, *Baptizo* plunges the viewer into a multisensory tourist experience of Florence within the physical or online space of *Cineorama*. Amid the clanging of the Bell Tower of the neighboring Duomo, car sirens, and the multilingual murmuring of tour-guides, the eight screens show separate tracking shots that approach the Baptistry on foot from different routes. The ethereal synth notes of the soundtrack by Glass and musician Monte Heyman—a lyrical expression of the minor quality of the bell tolls—blend with the street noise and act as an emotional undertone throughout *Baptizo*. At 0:30 (Figure 2), the cameras, which appear as eight individual viewpoints for most of the film, halt in front of the building and remain positioned on stationary tripods. Each screen frames a different side of the structure, showing either the geometric façade or one of its three bronze doors. The videos sync up to form an inverted mirror image of the façade—a 360° experience of the exterior folded within *Cineorama*'s interior. The projectors' views do not remain fixed and slowly begin to shuffle clockwise: Lorenzo Ghiberti's *Gates of Paradise* (1425-1452) may appear in front of the viewer and then in a blink jump one screen to the right. The cuts gather speed, resulting in a flickering effect at 3:01. An accompanying blaring tone echoes and fades into a single bell clang, joined by a deep synth note and a thumping heartbeat in the same scale. This dramatic overture is the backdrop for the work's next encounter with close shots of the dark green and white marble façade. Unseated from their tripods, the cameras rove around the building at asynchronous paces. This pleasurable foray into abstraction (Figure 3) is increasingly disrupted by passers-by, cars, a souvenir

stand, and railings, especially as several cameras begin to zoom out. At 7:19, *Baptizo* comes full circle: all eight cameras zoom in once more before zooming out to form the inverted façade again. Ten seconds later, they rise above the lower section of the building in a vertical tilt, losing the crowd, and glide up the arcade of arches, upper panel, and lantern into darkness.



Figure 3. Exterior view of the abstract sequence in *Baptizo* (courtesy of Levi Glass, 2020).



Figure 4. Façade of the Baptistery of Saint John, 1059-1128, Florence (courtesy of Bradley Weber, 2017).

Like Peter Greenaway's *Leonardo's Last Supper* (2008), Glass combines new moving image technologies with a canonical work of Renaissance art. No textbook survey of Western art can fail to include the Baptistry (Figure 4) for its contribution to the development of linear perspective and the *Gates of Paradise*, which are the quintessential example of relief sculpture. Famed for building the dome of the adjacent Florence Cathedral (1420–1461), the pioneering Renaissance architect Filippo Brunelleschi used the front façade of the Baptistry for his groundbreaking experiment in pictorial illusionism in 1425, which *Baptizo* playfully re-stages. Attempting to revive artistic approaches prevalent in Antiquity, Brunelleschi sought to discover the exact method behind linear perspective, which created the illusion of three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface. He used a painting of the Baptistry he had created in one-point or central perspective and a mirror to show how parallel lines converge in single vanishing point at the horizon line. The viewer could look through a hole right at the painting's vanishing point to the mirror, which then reflected the painted image proportionately onto its surface, and this flat mirrored image could then be successfully compared with the Baptistry in the flesh (Friedberg 2006: 15). Both Brunelleschi's experiment and Leon Battista Alberti's (1435) conceptualization of the technique in *On Painting* set out the use of linear perspective in theory and praxis. Thanks to this radical new optical illusion, which astonished viewers, the status of painting, which had long been seen as inferior to sculpture and architecture, skyrocketed. Popular *spalliera* (shoulder-height) paintings such as *The Ideal City* (Attributed to Fra Carnevale, c. 1480–84, Walters Art Collection) (Figure 5) paraded artists' mastery of the technique through balanced, ordered scenes of the perfect city square, which often included an octagonal Baptistry-like building.

One of the most prevalent and recognizable systems of representation in the arts from the Renaissance onwards, linear perspective enforces a way of seeing that has important implications for Glass's work and the immersive potential of the moving image in general. In this 'scopic regime,' as Petran Kockelkoren (2003: 53) calls it, an illusionistic image is neatly and coherently organized for the eye from a singular point of view. The closed, self-sufficient, and autonomous world remains fixed in time and sealed off from the space and body of the viewer (Kockelkoren 2003: 53).<sup>4</sup> Our vision is bound to the horizon line; we are detached, objective observers, passive witnesses to marvelous mimesis. In using imagery of the Baptistry, *Baptizo* offers a creative reworking of this visual system, which is still 'impose[d]...on our sensory equipment' (Kockelkoren 2015) and structures how we perceive and relate to our own reality.

By combining the mobile, temporal, and multisensory qualities of the moving image with the radical spatial possibilities of expanded cinema practices, Glass multiplies, eradicates, and rebuilds linear perspective. The medium of film addresses one major failure of Brunelleschi's experiment: the painted image is static, and only the reflective properties of the mirror enable the viewer to experience the movement of wind and clouds around the building (Friedberg 2006: 15). Each channel of *Baptizo* is shot from an individual, framed point of view, but the multiscreen format enables the

viewer to see from multiple viewpoints and angles, which evolve and shift over time. No singular view is forced upon the viewer, who has the freedom to choose where to look. And move: both the online and in-person formats require mobility in order to be experienced, and the viewer must pivot with the head, body, or hand.



In addition to their freedom of movement in space, the viewer is granted virtual mobility through travel. In recreating a tourist's journey to Florence, Glass draws upon the visual strategies of urban panoramic films, which gave immobile spectators a sense of wonder by 'transporting' them to faraway destinations as if by magic (Gunning 2006a). Filmmakers such as Thomas Edison and the Lumière brothers bestowed a 'dose of scopic pleasure' (Gunning 1995: 121) upon late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century audiences by combining telepresence with new cinematic technologies, and cities became dazzling spectacles to be viewed on foot or by boat, automobile, or balloon (Friedberg 2006: 162). Directly linked with streetwalking along city sites such as arcades and department stores, the 'anatomy of movement' (Bruno 2007: 17) in early cinema underlines the haptic and spatial impact of film on the viewer. Accounting for this 'sensory spatiality,' Giuliana Bruno (2007: 16) shifts film theory's emphasis from 'sight' to 'site'—from the fixed gaze of the *voyeur* to the mobile 'site-seeing' of the *voyageur*. *Baptizo's* tracking shots, which mimic the fluid movement of the site-seeing pedestrian, who soaks up buildings and architectural details, directly reference this history and grant the viewer the sense of movement in filmic space. The video starts with forward-tracking shots that approach the Baptistery from eight different routes and follow a clear vanishing point, while from 3:16 onwards, the lateral shots more commonly associated with film panoramas move horizontally or vertically around or up the façade. At 7:30, the smooth, sumptuous passage of the cameras up and out of the frame is shot with a vertical tilt akin to Edison's *View from a Balloon* (1901), and the dramatic shift from day to night also nods

Figure 5. Spalliera painting with Baptistery-like building. Attributed to Fra Carnevale, *The Ideal City*, between c. 1480-1484, oil and tempera on panel (courtesy of Walters Art Museum).

to his *Pan American Exposition by Night* (1901), which showcased the temporal possibilities of film alongside the technology of electric light.

Apart from the still, stationary moments of *Baptizo*, Glass's lens maintains an unsteady shake suggestive of a tourist's handheld camera. The fact that he embraces the rough, variable style of personal footage reflects an integral aspect of his broader film-making practice, in which he seeks to retain the qualities of the medium and its mechanism (John 2015: 164). This 'texture of movement' (Uricchio 2011: 7), which often appeared in mounted shots of early filmmakers, activates a more embodied sense of 'being there' to the immersive experience. Indeed, *Baptizo* thrusts the viewer into a tourist trap. Glass includes sights and sounds that would spoil the view in postcards and urban panoramic films, which, on the whole, focus on the site and show crowds at a distance. With the exception of the film's final sequence, the body of the tourist is inescapable and disrupts the harmony of the geometric façade, from the muffled din of footsteps and voices to the vividly colored puffer jackets and rucksacks that coast in and out of the frame and sometimes block the shot altogether. Glass does not shy away from the dingy, loud, and tacky side of tourism either: the vulgar chaos of an ambulance, souvenir stand, horse and carriage, graffitied van, rickshaw, and trashcan seem to make a mockery of Alberti's adage that 'without order [in urban space] there can be nothing commodious, graceful, or noble' (Hansen and Spicer 2005: 65). Glass's edits and cuts intensify this visual and aural dissonance, and the unpredictable sequence of the video does not conform to a straightforward, linear narrative. He denies continuity across the channels as figures and vehicles that exit one frame fail to appear in the next, eerily disappearing.

Glass's radical cinematic construction requires aesthetic labor on our part to make sense of what we see. *Baptizo* takes us on a tour of the birth, death, and resurrection of linear perspective: after being lulled into still, balanced views of the building, at 3:16 we are suddenly plunged into the world of abstraction (Figure 3) as each channel cuts to close-up roving shots of the façade, jumping from a distanced vantage point to extreme magnification. The elimination of depth in the fragmented shots of the geometric pattern underlines the flat surface of the screens, dispelling the illusion of three-dimensional space in the moving image. In a sequence that seems to recall the greatest hits of abstract modernism, from the monochrome colors of Kazimir Malevich's *Black Square* (1915) to Robert Breer's animated *Form Phases I* (1952), visual abstraction is paired with musical abstraction as the rhythmic pulse of the synth soundtrack overtake the sound of tourists or any other audible ties to reality. The various breaks from the single viewpoint of illusionistic perspective throughout the video simulate the effects of analytic cubism, in which 'the eye is puzzled' by the 'constant shuttling between surface and depth' within the frame (Greenberg 1965: 74) and multiple points of view are presented at once.

Through his avant-garde approach to editing, Glass creates a new aesthetic experience out of personal tourist footage—a recognizable, banal type of moving image—that activates our aural and visual equipment in unexpected ways. Applying the handcrafted construction techniques of his sculpture

practice—a fusion of wood, industrial materials, and new technologies—to filmic construction, he cuts and shapes videos of the Baptistry as if they were material substance. Emphasizing Robert Beavers's (1998) observation that 'a bodily sense of filming is sustained through the editing,' this approach ignites our haptic engagement with filmic space, especially the surface of the Baptistry façade. The rough, cracked surface of the ancient marble is shot through Glass's textured method of filming, and in a pleasurable intersection between our sense of touch and movement, the material tangibility of the building, accentuated by the cool geometry of its design, combines with the camera's vertical lick up the façade at the video's end. This heightened facility, which gives us 'a more spatial understanding of art' (Bruno 2014: 193), helps create an active, embodied, 'site-seeing' spectator within the moving image space.

### ***Baptizo/Cineorama* and Public Enchantment at *Luminocity***

In October 2020, visitors to the *Luminocity* video art exhibition, which was organized by the Kamloops Art Gallery, in Kamloops, British Columbia, could experience *Baptizo* within the architectural space of *Cineorama*. While non-essential travel was permitted within the Canadian province at the time, international borders were closed due to the pandemic, making the *Luminocity* site accessible to a strictly national and largely local audience. Amid various outdoor installations spread across the city, the work was part of a free week-long public art event that ran in the evenings from 6 p.m. to 2 a.m. in Riverside Park alongside the confluence of the North and South Thompson Rivers. Nestled in the middle of a circle of seven other video works, the *Cineorama* structure, which projected *Baptizo* on two-way interior and exterior screens, appeared as an alluring beacon of light. Freeing film from the hermetically sealed black box of the cinema, Glass deployed the luminous properties of the moving image to wondrous effect as the projected façade playfully combined with the physical building.

*Cineorama's* locus at the center of the site and its status as a uniquely built structure attracted the curiosity of visitors, including members of the public who spotted the work while walking in the park with no intention of experiencing art (Glass 2021c, personal communication<sup>5</sup>). Annie Dell'Aria (2021: 9) refers to this type of 'unexpected and wondrous' encounter between people and the moving image in public spaces as 'enchantment'. Artworks such as Brand's life-size zoetrope, *Masstransiscope* (1980; restored in 2008 and 2013), which, like *Cineorama*, directly references nineteenth-century technologies, elicit what philosopher Jane Bennett's describes as 'a shot in the arm, a fleeting return to childlike excitement about life' (Dell'Aria 2021: 27, 32). Glass's form of enchantment activates the kind of visual pleasure and delight that made early film a 'cinema of attractions' (Dell'Aria 2021: 13). Formulated by Tom Gunning and André Gaudreault (2006b: 384, 381-388), this term first originated from Soviet film director Sergei Eisenstein, who deliberately used the word 'attraction' to emphasize the link between cinema and the fairground.



Figure 6. Visitors to *Cineorama* at *Luminocity* (courtesy of Frank Luca, 2020).

Indeed, with the outside offering a tantalizing peek at the experience within, *Cineorama* achieved the status of a fairground ride or attraction. As the only installation with restricted entry between the hours of 6 p.m. and 10 p.m., it was open to two people or one social group at a time in accordance with COVID-19 social distancing rules, and visitors often queued to await their turn (Figure 6)—an especially cold experience after it snowed. More broadly, *Luminocity*'s sprawling outdoor space recalls late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century sites such as amusement parks, fun fairs, circuses, and World's Fairs. The layout encouraged carnivalesque wandering through Riverside Park, supported by a map and walking guide found at an information kiosk located outside *Cineorama*.

Drawing upon the pleasure of cinematic architecture, the enchantment of *Baptizo/Cineorama* brings about a dynamic interaction with the structure and site in which we feel a disposition to move and act (Newen, De Bruin and Gallagher 2018: 6).<sup>6</sup> In his well-known text 'The Cult of Distraction,' Siegfried Kracauer (1926) saw 'picture palaces' [*Lichtspielhäuser*] or 'optical fairylands' as governed by tensions between two-dimensional images and the 'elegant surface splendor' of the built space of the theater (Friedberg 2006: 167-168). Glass's work seems to answer for the fact that the English translation of *Lichtspielhaus* excludes the words 'play' [*spiel*] and 'light' [*licht*]: his glowing 'optical fairyland' engages and expands the viewer's haptic and spatial relationship with architecture through the three-dimensional *Cineorama* structure and virtual, flat screen of moving images of the Baptistry. At *Luminocity*, the spectator experienced a double movement as a 'site-seeing' *voyageur* (Bruno 2007: 6) in both real and filmed architectural space. Mimicking the camera's path towards and then around the Baptistry, the visitor first glimpsed and heard the noisy building at a distance while navigating the

perimeter of the park, then were drawn in and walked around the exterior. This self-driven peripatetic movement was often inquisitive as some people approached the *Cineorama* simply to find out what it was (Glass 2021c, personal communication<sup>7</sup>). The changing images and looped repetition of the film often prompted multiple circuits of the building—the haptic trace of which became marked by footprints in the snow (Figure 6).

The surprise of having a multisensory tourist encounter with the Baptistry in Florence during the pandemic added to *Baptizo/Cineorama*'s allure and novelty. The highly adaptive format of the *Cineorama*, which can be broken down, flat-packed, and re-installed anywhere with relative ease, demonstrates the same kind of mobility and wonder as the traveling panorama tradition. The nineteenth century saw immersive, touring panoramic structures (Trumpener and Barringer 2020: 13) as well as moving panoramas, which were 'ephemeral small-scale attractions' (Huhtamo 2013: 10) that could be set up in local theatres, community halls, or churches. Just as nineteenth-century spectators could experience painted views of far-off cities and landscapes in such displays, viewers at *Luminocity* could marvel at witnessing the sights and sounds of a bustling European city amid the riverside landscape of Kamloops. Given the closure of Canada's borders during the pandemic, *Baptizo/Cineorama* temporarily restored the recently lost pleasure of global travel: two visitors remarked with delight that 'it feels like we're traveling,' while others reminisced about previous trips abroad (Glass 2020c, personal communication<sup>8</sup>). The feeling of pleasure and nostalgia arising from unexpectedly being 'transported' to the site of a faraway place or a memory encapsulates film's ability 'to render affects and, in turn to affect' (Bruno 2007: 7).



Figure 7. *Cineorama*'s miniaturized Baptistry façade (courtesy of Levi Glass, 2020).

Despite this connection to traveling panoramas, Glass's *Cineorama* departs from the predominant circular panoramic tradition from the late

eighteenth century to the present day in significant ways. The panorama's massive size is meant to overwhelm the viewer. Indeed, the nineteenth century the suffix 'o-rama' became synonymous with the grandiose and sensational (Oettermann 1997: 6), and the panoramic cinema at the Exposition Universelle of 1900, for example, was ten times the size of Glass's structure. Audiences are immersed in a continuous, whole image, which appears across multiple panels or curved surfaces and is typically viewed from a set distance on a viewing platform. The experience aims to replicate reality so closely that we can receive and process visual data without much effort (Grau 2003: 49). In the nineteenth century, dramatically staged lighting, sound effects, artificial wind, smoke, and a rotating platform became popular ways to further enhance the illusion. Recent panoramas by artists such as Yadegar Asisi and Olafur Eliasson tend to adhere to the historical panoramic paradigm with high-tech spectacles or expansive views. In the broader sphere of public art, much of the outdoor moving image displays that garner public and scholarly interest are large-scale, from massive media projections such as *The Image Mill* (2008) to superimposed building façades in the work of Krzysztof Wodiczko or Doug Aitken.

Glass's *Cineorama* at Luminocity demonstrates the implications of a moving image installation that awes and astonishes through intimacy rather than subliminal immersion or mass scale. Unseating the fixed spectatorial relations governed by the viewing platform, Glass's small wooden building dissolves the distance between audience and art and relishes in its lack of grandeur. At 16' x 16' x 10', the *Cineorama*, whose size, shape, and material recall a gazebo, can hold up to 16 people and became even more exclusive at *Luminocity* due to social distancing. In a playful inversion of the grand, subliminal view of a city or landscape espoused by the panorama tradition, the artist collapses the monumental size of the Baptistery into the compact *Cineorama*. The delight of the illusion lies in its miniaturization: when the exterior screens project a complete image of the façade (Figure 7), the slim columns and geometric pattern shrink to fit within the frame.

In Glass's work, immersion is an invitation, and the panorama shape comforts rather than engulfs. Mobilizing the multisensory, 'affective power' of the panoramic space (Trumpener and Barringer 2020: 20), Glass heightens the illusion of being a tourist in Florence while maintaining the viewer's active presence in the space. With six speakers, two subwoofers, and eight projector speakers, the sound resonates loudly inside and out of the building, causing the floor and walls to vibrate. The street din, bells, and abstract tones are clearly distinguishable from one another, especially as Glass localizes elements of the contemporary soundtrack and the bell chorus, which plays through the projectors above. The synth notes shift around the structure in an echoing sensation, and the heartbeat, which Glass calls 'the rhythmic core of the work' (2021a, personal communication<sup>9</sup>), remains in one speaker, acting as an anchor for the body of the viewer. The vibrations in the *Cineorama* link with our own heartbeat to forge a direct sensorial interaction between the body and the environment. We also affect the space in turn: as soon as visitors step inside, their shadows disrupt the projection, and after sitting on the benches, their

heads continue to block the screen. As Bruno (2014: 78) highlights in Wodiczko's video façade projections, the human body is 'consistently animated with and against the body of building forms.' Outside the *Cineorama* spectators merge with both filmic and real architectural space, where the shadows of passers-by cast phantasmagoric projections on the ground and eerily join those of the tourists in the video (Figure 8).

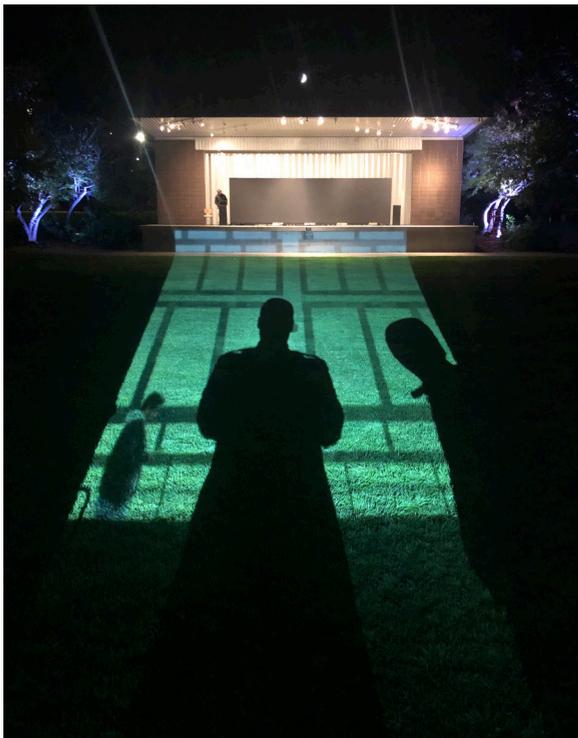


Figure 8. Visitors with projected images of *Baptizo* at *Luminocity* (courtesy of Levi Glass, 2020).

The body's interaction with the highly tactile *Baptizo* in the material environment of *Cineorama* is a haptic experience that results in heightened sensory awareness. Once the chevron-patterned doors shut (Figure 9), the space is not hermetically sealed off, blurring the boundaries between interior and exterior. While warmly sheltered from the cold night at *Luminocity*, visitors could still feel cool air coming through slots between the roof and wall, which ventilated the projector airflow, and despite the loud bells and soundtrack, conversations of people in the queue or circling the building were still discernible. With the audible thump of feet on the floor and creak of benches, the materiality of the building firmly grounds the viewer in reality, and the rough texture of beveled cedar, commonly used in Canadian architecture, which has been burnt, wire-brushed, and oiled through the method of cedar-burning, gives the cinematic space a rustic charm. Our sense of touch is further activated by the 'tension' of the tactile 'skin' of surfaces (Bruno 2014: 3) as we find pleasure in the classical marble, jagged shingles, or screen texture. Glass

seamlessly blends the haptic allure of the work's handmade elements with the sleek design of new technologies in the ceiling, the white eight-camera device built by the artist nestled within a symmetrical web of wooden beams (Figure 10).



Figure 9. *Cineorama's* doors (courtesy of Levi Glass, 2020).

Glass's mode of enchantment creates an active viewer who is aware of the experience and the apparatus behind it. Given the octagonal shape of the *Baptistry* and *Cineorama*, a proportionate replication could have easily been achieved, but Glass avoids this kind of cheap illusionism. There is 'a thin layer where the image exists' (Glass 2020b, personal communication<sup>10</sup>): at 0:30 and 7:30, the viewer can drink in a 360° view of the *Baptistry* façade, which briefly maps spatially onto the interior and exterior walls of the *Cineorama*. Even in the moments when the channels sync up, they do not perfectly align, and there is noticeable gap between each screen (Figure 2). The image of the *Baptistry* is also a stylized version of the actual building, whose western side juts out into a two-bay apse and disrupts the otherwise symmetrical octagonal shape. In a twist on Brunelleschi's mirror, which verified the 'truth' of perspective (Friedberg 2006: 15), *Baptizo* produces a funhouse mirror image of reality, whose distortion of the truth is apparent to the spectator. Harkening back to the 'physiologically stimulated observer' of early film (Gunning 2006a: 35), the peek behind the curtain Glass offers can be related to other multiscreen or projected experiences that enchant a consciously aware viewer, such as the 'intentional daydreams' of Aitken's *SONG 1* (2012), which 'thwarts total immersion' (Dell'Aria 2014: 218-219), or Wodiczko's *Guests* (2009), in which the tangible surface of the façade is always visible (Bruno 2014: 78).

Capitalizing on the intersubjective exchange that is intrinsic to art in the public sphere (Colangelo 2019: 17), *Baptizo/Cineorama* drew upon its ability to stimulate viewers sensorially and spatially to create a shared experience encouraging empathy for others. According to 4E cognition,<sup>11</sup> spatial navigation, action, perception, and understanding the emotions of others rely

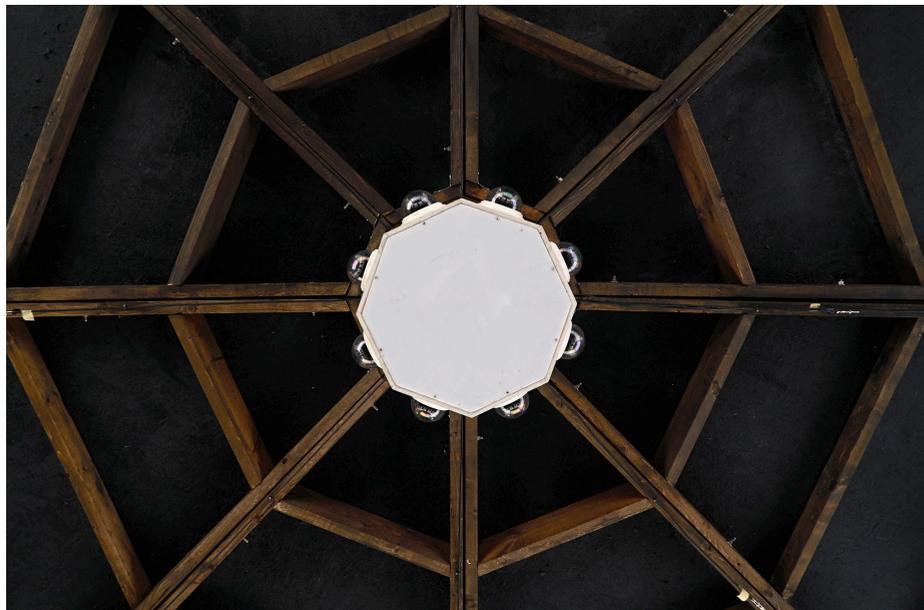


Figure 10. *Cineorama's* ceiling (courtesy of Levi Glass, 2020).

upon 'an active and embodied interaction with [our] environment' (Newen et al. 2018: 5). If we are in the same environment with others, intersubjectivity means we are jointly aware of this (Froese 2018: 165) and can 'participat[e] in the creation and transformation of meaning together' (De Jaegher 2018: 454), while empathy enables us to see or experience the situation from the perspectives of others. Fritz Breithaupt (2019: 7) defines empathy as 'assuming the perspective of another' or 'perspective-sharing,' which is less focused on affect or emotion—the response we most typically associate with empathy—but rather intent. 4E and phenomenology have emphasized the connection between empathy and intentionality: according to Shaun Gallagher, empathy involves 'attuning' to the same focus of the other person and, as Maurice Merleau-Ponty contends, 'perceiving another' and understanding they are 'directed toward the same world' (Zahavi and Michael 2018: 600). When we are, therefore, in a social environment in which a group of individuals direct their attention to the same art object, we are drawn into a whole host of empathic and intersubjective relations. Our actions and emotions align with those of others as the processes of looking at, reacting to, discussing, or taking pictures of include an awareness of others doing the same. As Per Aage Brandt (2004: 203) discusses, what 'attracts' the attention of one person then becomes 'interesting' for others, who then 'try to interpret that interaction and empathize' with that person.

While entry to the interior was restricted due COVID-19, the enchantment of the outdoor installation of *Baptizo/Cineorama* represented a rare opportunity to see art with others during the pandemic as well as have intersubjective interactions with strong potential for empathy. The work's central location in Kamloop's main park and the festival itself led

to gatherings of visitors around the structure (Figure 6), attracting passers-by from members of the homeless population to families with costumed children on Halloween night. In a domino effect of joint discovery, visitors who were drawn towards the structure out of curiosity then prompted others to investigate what they were looking at, with different groups thus becoming 'part of a whole intersubjective situation' (Froese 2018: 175). Easing some of the anxiety surrounding our proximity to strangers during COVID-19, the size of *Cineorama* meant interactions could happen at a safe distance but be close enough for meaningful exchanges. For Glass, the work and its situation at *Luminocity* 'levelled the playing field' among members of the public: viewers were inspired to 'bring their own interpretations to the work' (Glass 2021c, personal communication<sup>12</sup>) and exchange feelings of awe and confusion with others when they had been confronted with a less familiar cinematic environment and unconventional film practices (Dell'Aria 2016: 25). When enchantment is shared, we become more open to the perspectives of others and, through empathy, the possibility of seeing something differently 'because we note how others feel about it' (Breithaupt 2019: 7).

Not limited to real encounters outside the building, even lone visitors at *Luminocity* could participate in a shared viewing experience with the video itself in the interior or exterior space. Underlining the collective element of tourism, *Baptizo* centralizes the act of looking and observing how others see. According to Breithaupt (2019: 7), empathy's 'main effect... is a duplication and multiplication of our perceptions: we perceive what we perceive *and* we participate in the experiences of someone else.' As we are 'transported' through multiple camera 'perspectives' and 'viewpoints' to Florence, we become aware of the fact that we are now part of others' experience of the Baptistry. In what Glass calls 'a sense of togetherness' (2020b, personal communication<sup>13</sup>), we are able to forge empathetic connections with others in the video, especially as our attention is directed at the same work of architecture. This intersubjectivity is heightened by the fact that the joint focus on and pleasurable exploration of the Baptistry façade is dynamically mirrored in the viewer's interaction with the real *Cineorama*; mimicry, according to some cognitive theorists, acts as the 'social glue' between groups of people (Carr et al. 2018: 544).

Engaging with the slippage between the metaphorical and literal meanings of 'perspective,' 'viewpoint,' 'seeing/looking,' and 'perception,' *Baptizo/Cineorama* also involves seeing from different perspectives in an optical/spatial sense. The extreme perspectival shifts and 'breaks' from illusionistic perspective across the video are more intense in the space itself, and the rapid cuts that spin around the spectator at 3:01 in metric time with a jarring tone especially shock the senses. Marking the transition between linear perspective and abstraction, this brief disorientation, however, enables re-orientation and resets the viewer's senses to ready them for a new perspective (Kockelkoren 2003: 13). The action of entering then exiting the structure at *Luminocity* also results in a change in perspective: the inner/outer screenings of *Baptizo* offered different spatial and haptic experiences. Indeed, after emerging from the interior space, many visitors opted to view the video

again from the exterior—a desire akin to the thrill of a second merry-go-round ride on a different horse.

This wondrous and pleasurable interaction with perspectives other than our own—both literal and imagined—may open up or activate different ways of seeing. The physiological impact of the experience on the body, especially through immersion, which involves ‘a process, a change, a passage from one mental state to another’ (Grau 2003: 13), can shift or even change our perception of others; the perspective-sharing of empathy is not simply an imaginative occurrence in the mind but is actually *felt through* and *because* of bodily processes. The lasting effect of the cinematic encounter of *Baptizo/Cineorama* at *Luminocity* on audiences is ensured through enchantment—‘a sensory experience that both carries [the viewer] away and returns them to a deeper engagement with the world’ (Dell’Aria 2021: 26).

### **VR *Baptizo/Cineorama*: Enchantment at Home**

During the pandemic, Glass has adapted an online VR version of the *Luminocity* installation to enable viewers to experience *Baptizo/Cineorama* on any device at no cost. A purpose-built VR interface allows the user to move 360° in the *Cineorama* and see two-dimensional looped footage of the building from the outside, and there is also a YouTube VR version<sup>14</sup> of the interior. With mobility still deemed high-risk in most countries in 2021, audiences can engage in an immersive experience of Glass’s work without having to travel or leave their homes by using a VR headset. The digitization of *Baptizo/Cineorama* not only increases accessibility but is also an act of preservation: the interface’s video tour of the phantasmagoric *Cineorama* exterior at *Luminocity* recreates an ephemeral installation that no longer exists in, as Glass puts it, a ‘potentially endless exhibition’ (2021c, personal communication<sup>15</sup>).

Glass’s online version of *Baptizo/Cineorama* presents a productive case study in questioning established paradigms for virtual viewer-artwork relations and revealing the more diverse set of goals and strategies at play in VR practices. While VR formats can accommodate an ‘infinite’ number of artistic approaches (Birnbaum 2019), recent high-gloss VR works made by prominent artists or as part of spectacles such as the Van Gogh Experience have led to the assumption that immersion must be done through advanced and cutting-edge technologies to have significance. Such formats, however, may lose the specificity of artists’ work, which raises concerns about how the technique and design of these media and interfaces are evaluated. Glass sees VR as an experimental, flexible medium and envisages adapting the *Cineorama* project into a permanent viewing room to show different works or test out new ideas. The rapidly evolving nature of VR technologies presents opportunities for the online version to be ‘played with, failed on, and expanded. Online art affords this malleability and is perhaps what some early expanded cinema artists dreamed of’ (Glass 2021c, personal communication<sup>16</sup>). Glass sees any quirks and frustrations as ‘the papercuts we get’ from working in virtual media,

which he equates to projectors that would overheat or slides that would crack in early cinema. Indeed, the diverse range of digital interfaces, formats, and devices artists can use to create and disseminate moving images today parallels the confluence of film technologies and other image-viewing media in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Amid the Mutoscope, small-scale moving panoramas, travelling cinema, and Cineorama, earlier philosophical or optical toys such as the kineograph, zoetrope, and praxinoscope, which produced animated rather than moving pictures, remained popular with the advent of cinema and were seen as complementary rather than competitive media (Doane 2006: 152-153).

The viewing practices associated with the philosophical toy offer a valuable framework for examining the exploratory and playful relationship between art and audience in Glass's VR *Baptizo/Cineorama*. As Mary Ann Doane (2006: 151-165) has discussed, hand-held items like flipbooks or zoetropes miniaturized movement on a portable device and 'required something of the spectator,' without whom animated images could not be produced. The related phenomenon of the moving panorama, too, was miniaturized through transparency rolls in objects from peepshow boxes to toy panoramas, which were especially popular in mid-nineteenth-century America (Huhtamo 2013: 47). Philosophical toys required hand-eye coordination and active tactile engagement to be operated; cranking handles, mounting photocards, and flipping pages not only brought viewers into closer proximity with images but also offered the pleasure of touch and wonder of holding animated images in the palm of one's hand. Aimed at adults and children alike and frequently used in education, these apparatuses could be owned, coming in compact, affordable versions like the Lumière brothers' kinora, and magazines published make-your-own panoramas (Huhtamo 2013: 178) and were oriented towards a single viewer or small group in domestic rather than public settings.

Harnessing these aspects of the philosophical toy and the wonder of the cinematic situation at *Luminocity*, Glass's VR version of *Baptizo/Cineorama* introduces enchantment into our domestic space and personal devices through a small-scale experience of art. As with the real panorama tradition, scholarly or mainstream discussions of immersive VR tend to stress the creation of a 'high-grade feeling of immersion' in a 'completely alternative reality' (Grau 2003: 9, 7, 13). Even though platforms such as *Acute Art* have recently raised the profile of online encounters with art, immersive VR or Augmented Reality (AR) is seen to have limited potential in domestic settings because the technology cannot simulate the massive scale of a truly subliminal experience, especially if viewed on a phone ('Future Art Audiences' 2021). Overwhelming immersion, however, is not the goal of Glass's VR, which enchants through intimacy, touch, and curiosity and, like the real *Cineorama*, calls for an active viewer who is awed by but aware of the technology behind the encounter. The technology in this case is indeed a noticeable part of the experience: VR headsets in galleries and at home have attracted criticism for being heavy, clunky, and ugly, and their domestic use has not been particularly popular or prevalent ('Future Art Audiences' 2021). Lacking the sleek design

we associate with new technologies, the cheap, widely available cardboard VR headset I used for this article (Figure 11) has a nostalgic, retro charm, especially for viewers who grew up with the red plastic viewmaster. Recalling the labor of cutting and pasting together homemade panoramas from nineteenth-century magazines, its DIY assembly involves a kind of instructive play through watching how-to videos and bending, folding, velcroing, sticking on felt, and snapping the phone into place through trial and error.

The VR *Baptizo/Cineorama* invokes the meaning of 'enchantment' in a magical sense by reanimating our relationship with our technological devices. While our phones can immediately show us photos and videos of the Baptistry, *Baptizo's* embodied experience brings surprise and delight to the viewer's sudden shift from their domestic environment to Florence. The slight blurriness from weak WiFi and the low-quality plastic lenses do not diminish the jolt of our plunge into immersion and the disorienting loss of real space. Moving images encircle the spectator at every turn of the head, and noise-cancelling headphones intensify the vibration of the bass as well as ambulatory noises; the cough or footstep of a tourist are so distinct they appear to emanate from real space. Along with the non-linear narrative of the film and its dissonant cuts and edits, the sensation of unexpectedness heightens the viewer's aesthetic engagement with the work.



Figure 11. Photo of cardboard VR headset (courtesy of the author, 2021).

Through the viewer's physical movement, the VR *Baptizo/Cineorama* encourages active and pleasurable 'site-seeing' with cinematic and Renaissance architecture. In his digitization of architecture, Glass's work enters what Bruno calls 'the architectural imaginary' in the virtual building forms and constructions of artists such as Sarah Oppenheimer and Rachel Whiteread. In *Baptizo/Cineorama*, too, architecture is 'far from being abstracted space; rather it becomes the envelope, the skin of our inhabitation' (Bruno 2014: 187). He folds the spatial environments of the *Cineorama* and Baptistry into a haptically charged viewing space. While the material structure of both buildings is now rendered immaterial, the tactility of their different surfaces—wood, screen, marble—engages with the texture of the phone screen. Whether played on a phone, computer, headset, or tablet, optical tracking relies on our movement in the virtual architectural space, which is, in turn, linked to physical motion in real space. While limited to a fixed distance from the screens, we have Three Degrees of Freedom (3DoF) and must play an active role in triggering movement. The headset impels us to stand up and shuffle around our surroundings, and a flick of the wrist can reveal different views of the Baptistry on *Cineorama's* multiple screens. Like the delight of a carnival ride, the combination of real and filmic motion can have a physiological effect of the body: the acute shuttering sensation at 3:01 coupled with our movement is dizzying, and the YouTube toggle lets us gleefully whirl at breakneck speed in 360°. Any motion or gesture necessitates close haptic engagement with a device—the weight of laptop on a lap, a finger on a trackpad or mouse (Friedberg 2006: 7). Through the rough texture of a cardboard headset pressed into the face or the grasping and tilting of a smooth iPhone, the sensation of touch can, as with philosophical toys like flipbooks (Doane 2006: 153), elicit pleasure and may have the potential to 'lead to emotional object relations' (John 2015: 172).

The enchantment of the single-user VR *Baptizo/Cineorama* cannot be experienced with others through the current technology, leading to a loss of the empathetic connections with strangers at *Luminocity*. Strategies for generating empathy or emotion in VR tend to involve overwhelming immersion or simulation: recent interdisciplinary research<sup>17</sup> on VR, which Chris Milk (2015) identified as the 'ultimate empathy machine,' has focused on its ability to simulate the illusion of being in someone else's body, while film makers such as Alejandro G. Iñárritu have similarly used VR so that the viewer sees from a different viewpoint in a realistic narrative ('Can Virtual Reality...' 2018). According to Breithaupt (2019: 7), however, simulation does not necessarily result in empathy or, by extension, altruism, which both require that 'we perceive what we perceive *and* we participate in the experiences of someone else.' True intersubjectivity, too, relies on the difference between self and others, and a similar awareness is fundamental for interpersonal understanding (Zahavi and Michael 2018: 597). In the VR *Baptizo/Cineorama*, the viewer's intersubjective relations with the filmed figures are meaningfully brought into contact with their own personal space. Rather than simulate a single point of view, multiple 'perspectives' are collapsed together in the digital environment through a kind of matryoshka-doll effect: the viewer can, for example, look through VR glasses

to see *Cineorama*, whose screens show filmed views of tourists gazing at the Baptistry. An online space that brings together different 'perspectives' and ways of seeing bears a far more subtle but no less potent emotional power. As Bruno writes (2007: 7), film 'moves, and fundamentally "moves" us,' transforming our inner space.

## Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic represents a watershed moment for innovative moving image practices that dynamically undercut conventional cinematic situations in real or online spaces and, like early film in the *fin de siècle* or expanded cinema in the 1960s, have the potential to revitalize and recalibrate the relationship between art and viewer. This article has stressed the continued importance of public moving image installations in engaging broad audiences who can view art (safely) together. Glass's *Baptizo/Cineorama* underlines that such displays do not need to be massive or overwhelming to enchant or create empathy for others. Not limited to a particular geographical location or institutional setting, the highly adaptive panorama format also gives *Cineorama* a promising afterlife without detracting from the thrill of encounter at different sites. This examination of Glass's work in VR points to a broader reassessment of the moving image's potential in domestic spaces, which remains critical as COVID-19 continues to restrict our ability to leave our homes, travel, or visit museums. Recovering the spirit of philosophical toys and the expansive field of image consumption in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it is crucial to recognize the existence of multifarious forms of creative expression and audience interaction in the digital realm. Looking beyond COVID-19, a more expansive picture of the innovative and accessible new spaces for the moving image is required, 'papercuts' and all.

1. The 2020 *Luminocity* exhibition (<https://luminocity.ca/>) was curated by Charo Neville of the Kamloops Art Gallery and Zoë Chan of the Vancouver Art Gallery.
2. The VR interface can be found at: <http://cineorama.ca/>.
3. Glass L (2020a, June 29) Personal communication, video interview, *Baptizo/Cineorama*.
4. This conceptualization of linear perspective does have obvious exceptions that involve viewers in more embodied way, but this article focuses on the implications of this way of seeing as defined by Erwin Panowsky, Jonathan Crary, and Petran Kockelkoren, among others.
5. Glass L (2021c, October 10) Personal communication, video interview, *Luminocity*.

6. This disposition to act in an environment is referred to as 'enactment' in 4E cognition.
7. Glass L (2021c, October 10) Personal communication, video interview, *Luminocity*.
8. Glass L (2020c, December 12) Personal communication, video interview, *Luminocity*.
9. Glass L (2021a, April 20) Personal communication, video interview, sound in *Baptizo/Cineorama*.
10. Glass L (2020b, September 25) Personal communication, video interview, *Baptizo/Cineorama*.
11. 4E is a recently established field of research dedicated to embodied, embedded, enacted, and extended cognition. The 4E paradigm emphasizes that cognitive processes do not just occur in the brain but depend on complex interactions between the body, brain, and environment.
12. Glass L (2021c, October 10) Personal communication, video interview, *Luminocity*.
13. Glass L (2020b, September 25) Personal communication, video interview, *Baptizo/Cineorama*.
14. The YouTube VR version is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EuSsLSU7574&t=214s>.
15. Glass L (2021b, May 30) Personal communication, email correspondence, VR *Cineorama*.
16. Glass L (2021b, May 30) Personal communication, email correspondence, VR *Cineorama*.
17. See, for example: Herrera F, Bailenson J, Weisz E, Ogle E, and Zaki J (2018) Building long-term empathy: A large-scale comparison of traditional and virtual reality perspective-taking. *PLoS ONE*, 13(10): e0204494. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0204494>.

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### Author's bio

Dr. Nicola Kozicharow is an Assistant Professor in the School of History at HSE University, Moscow. She is a specialist in Russian and European art and visual culture from the nineteenth century to the present, and her research focuses on modernism and its historiographies, intersections between art history

and contemporary practice, and migration. Before joining HSE University in 2020, she was the Schulman Research Fellow in History of Art at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, and her research has been supported by the Ransom Center, Likhachev Foundation, and Getty Foundation.

Address: 105066 Moscow, Staraya Basmannaya Ulitsa 21/4, building 3, room П-304.

E-mail: [nkozicharov@hse.ru](mailto:nkozicharov@hse.ru).

ORCID: 0000-0002-8376-3403.

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## **'Narrate an Exhibition as a Film' or a Museum of Cine-memories (Items 1-5)**

Eugénie Zvonkine  
University of Paris 8, France

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## 'Narrate an Exhibition as a Film' or a Museum of Cine-memories (Items 1-5)

Eugénie Zvonkine

The art-based research project *Narrate an Exhibition as a Film* aims to construct an 'imaginary museum' composed not of art pieces (as the one invented by André Malraux), but of individual memories, emotions, and imaginations. As Shaun McNiff (1998) has defined it, art-based research allows for gaining research knowledge through artistic experimentation. Maggi Savin-Baden and Claire Howell-Major (2013) have insisted on the capacity of art-based

research to explore the artist's and the audience's subjectivities. The specificity of the art-based research method is that it is 'guided initially' by a 'research question' (Savin-Baden and Wimpenny 2014: 46). Here, such a question would be: What do educated and non-educated visitors remember after an exhibition, what makes a visit memorable, and, most importantly, how do visitors construct in their minds what an exhibition and a narration are?

**Keywords:** art-based research, exhibition, film, memory, narration

### Imaginary Museum of Memories

The idea of the exhibition as an ephemeral artform prompted me to start this project, that lets us explore one of the 'blind spots' of art history. These five captured moments are remnants of unattainable experiences, since we, today, cannot experience and visit these exhibitions. These short pieces have been conceived on a research-based systematic methodology but also allow for emotional and imagination-stimulated response.

Why do it through video films? Stendhal or Proust have written down such memories for centuries (Stendhal 1817, Proust 1923). Cinema also appeals to a strong emotional response. As Jean-Luc Godard expresses it in *Cinema, Cinemas* (1987, TV program by Michel Boujut and Guy Girard): 'What is cinema? It is a collective transport. In the affective sense of the word.' A decade earlier, in 1975, Kenneth Hudson, in his *A Social History of Museums, What the Visitors Thought* insisted on the importance of taking in account the myriad of individual and emotional reactions to exhibitions by their audience (Hudson 1975).

We have all tried (and failed) to convey through discourse and

words experiences of exhibitions as well as of films. The project can then function as a 'collection' and a preservation medium of *individual* memories otherwise doomed to disappear, but also of *collective* events already vanished in the past or still unrealized, since the exhibition is most often experienced in the crowd and in a collective way.

I filmed the participants telling their stories in one single shot, five minutes maximum each. Through these five videos, I attempted to explore these discourses while questioning the categories inherent to the relationship between cinema on one hand and museum and exhibition practices on the other hand. It presupposes that in our minds, whether they be 'competent' because of years of education (art and cinema scholars), or by praxis (artists) or even not yet fully competent (children), these categories are immediately associated with specific qualities. The participants in the project are Ludmilla Barrant, teacher at the Ecole Nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Lyon, Thomas Buswell, a young artist and student at the Beaux-Arts of Paris, Céline Gailleurd is a Senior Lecturer in cinema studies and film director, Ekaterina Odé is a young cinema PhD holder. Zoé Perret is a 9-year-old child whose speech appears as a counterpoint to the educated and specialized points of view of the four other participants.

I asked participants to interact with me in a ludic way. I asked them only one question: 'Narrate me an exhibition as a film' and let them answer as they wish to do so without my further intervening. Thus, the whole point was not to 'explain' this question but let every participant work with it, based on their personal and/or educated perceptions and their individual memories. For this reason, I didn't state in the video the status of the participants, even though the viewer can make it out quite easily, based on the ways in which they answer the question.

I didn't want to provide information on the specific exhibitions talked about by the participants either. One of them does not even exist yet, it is to be created. Some of the participants state the full name and date of the venues, others don't and that is part of the process. These are not videos documenting specific exhibitions, but rather the ways in which our memory and discourse can convey them or fail to do so.

In some ways, the participants tell us of a dreamed-up exhibitions that are no more or that are not yet created. They struggle with words and gestures to try and resuscitate (or make us imagine) fragments of the visions and sounds they seized in a museal space and tell us about the sensations and emotions that struck them then and there.

### **Play With the Concepts: What is a Film, What is Narration?**

A little girl talks about her discovery of the *Arc de Triomphe, Wrapped*. While she speaks about her understanding of it, we can make out in the back several construction cranes. A lively young woman narrates a shooting incident in the Pompidou centre. A very calm young man softly talks about

a sensorial exhibition that he is about to create. Little by little, a collection is gathered; a collection of faces, gestures and speeches, of spaces, lightings and soundtracks. Little by little, a larger image of what remembering an exhibition is appears to us. What we see is that the sensorial and emotional part of it is what stays most with the visitors, but also how the world around us (the *acqua alta* in Venice) impacts our perceptions and the way we narrate our lives to ourselves.

Walter Benjamin described the writer as 'a ragpicker,' who 'at daybreak, picking up rags of speech and verbal scraps with his stick and tossing them, grumbling and growling, a little drunk, into his cart' (Benjamin 1930: 310). This is in part what this project intends to do, gathering individual scraps and remnants of visited exhibitions.

### **Intonations, Imprecisions**

Another layer of expressivity and interpretations is added by the way the participants talk (that is 'perform')—either with a lot of facial mimicking and large gestures or calmly and with restraint. This aspect of filmed speech has been largely explored by fiction films. For instance, in *Twenty Days without War* (1976) by Alexey Gherman Sr, in a train in 1942, we witness two monologues. A young aviator tries to talk about his exploits during an air attack to two bemused women. He agitates his arms while saying 'I go like this, he goes like that, I go like this, he goes like that.' His description of the way he manoeuvred, probably combatting a German airplane, is completely unclear and even resembles more a little boy giving an account of a war movie, than a real account of a war scene by a direct participant. But at the same time, it does convey something else—his emotional state when he tries to convey this memory. His gestures and tone of voice inform us at least as much as his words themselves. Another man talks about his wife's betrayal for almost ten minutes, closely framed by the camera. His account is disorderly and once again, the gestures, the tone of voice and even the imprecisions inform us as much as the discourse itself.

In a more restrained manner, it is the same for my participants. Some of them convey emotions, others—sensations, still others try to apply theoretical constructs to their stories. Their specific expressivities and choice of story and words also evoke different types of conceptions we can have about what a narration is (or is not). I chose to frame them the way Eric Rohmer did in his films, so that their hands and arms gestures are visible, because they are an important part of speech and performance (Rohmer 2013).

Thus, another question one might ask after watching these videos, is: do we learn more about the exhibitions or about the narrators throughout this experience?

### **Document a Memory Inscribed in the Present Time**

I chose the framings and the settings so as to play with the idea of museal and/or cinematic spaces. Sometimes, I chose an exterior location, in order to confront the stories to their settings. I also chose to register the sound with a directional microphone, so that the voices are clear and audible, but the life around still exists and even sometimes breaks in the canvass of the videos, disrupting the soundtrack and creating surprising comments to the narrations (like the police siren that turns on when one of the participants talks about a transgressive experience in a museum). This type of a microphone does highlight the voice but doesn't isolate it from its surroundings, as a lapel microphone does.

This understated *mise en scène* is thus opposed to the plethora of interviews (the infamous 'talking heads') made on a regular basis, where only the recorded voice is important and where the location is usually chosen on the criteria of the most silent possible surroundings. My choice of framing, setting and sound recording is more inspired by documentary filming, and by self-staging we have all experienced during the lockdowns when the in(ter)vention of our image was limited mainly to a choice of setting and lighting (zoom, skype, etc). Another reference is early art by the French artist Valérie Mréjen, who has 'collected' short accounts of individual experiences by different people (young and old, female and male).

These videos also serve as a living trace of these people—an art scholar, a cinema scholar, a film director, a little girl, an artist—but also of their personalities.

### **Narration/ narrations**

Furthermore, I have composed a narrative order for these separate videos, numbering them from one to five, but I decided to present them separately, so that the viewer is free to follow this suggested order or to contemplate the videos in disorder, creating alternative narrative structures between the videos. Finally, these videos are evocative of the film *Timecode* by Mike Figgis (2000), which exposed four different points of view of a collective narration through a 93-minutes split-screen. Here, the accounts are not of the same exhibition, but they get intertwined at diverse points through the personal memories of the participants, through intellectual reflexions on what cinema or an exhibition is ('film is a more intense version of life' says one participant, 'there is nothing that separates cinema from any physical art object' states another), but also through accounts of impressions, sensations and emotions provoked by exhibitions and art objects. All these accounts form in our mind a collective image in its diversity and complexity.

This is the first state of the project, but one can easily imagine completing this 'collection' to further explore the ways in which willing participants can make this question their own and express themselves through it. When he made the series of portraits of cinema directors for

the French television—*Filmmakers of our Time*—André Labarthe said that he was thus creating a ‘living history of cinema’ (Labarthe 2020: 30). Such a collection of imagined and remembered exhibitions encapsulated in short videos could become part of a ‘living history of the museum.’

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## Author’s bio

Eugénie Zvonkine (PhD and Accreditation to supervise doctoral research) is an associate professor in the film studies department at the University of Paris 8. She writes on history and aesthetics in Soviet and post-Soviet cinema from the 1960s to the present day. She has published three monographs on Soviet and post-Soviet cinema, including *Kira Mouratova: un cinéma de la dissonance* (2012), and (co-)edited the collective volumes *Cinéma russe, (r)évolutions* (2018) and *Ruptures and Continuities in Soviet/*

*Russian Cinema: Styles, Characters and Genres Before and after the Collapse of the USSR* (2019). She was also a regular contributor to *Cahiers du cinéma* from 2010 until 2020. In October 2021, she was named a Junior member of the French University Institute (IUF).

Address: University Paris 8, 2, rue de la Liberté, 93200 St-Denis, France.

E-mail: [eugenie.zvonkine@univ-paris8.fr](mailto:eugenie.zvonkine@univ-paris8.fr).

ORCID: 0000-0002-3851-8046.



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## **Learning to Look Again—Challenging Spectatorship in Cinematic Art Installations**

Svala Vagnsdatter Andersen  
Independent researcher, Denmark

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# Learning to Look Again—Challenging Spectatorship in Cinematic Art Installations

Svala Vagnsdatter Andersen

Watching movies may be a relaxing form of entertainment or an actually ground-breaking experience. To perform a kind of spectatorship that adequately responds to the moving images demands much more than just keeping one's eyes open. This article explores what is at stake when cinematic works are exhibited in the museum. It focuses on different strategies to apply when it comes to inciting the spectator:

by explaining artistic interpassivity, analogue virtuality, and preclusion of the gaze, as well as by introducing seductive deconstruction, this article offers several examples of how film installations can challenge the museum visitor and their ways of looking. The strategies are unfolded through analyses of three film installations by the Danish visual artist Jesper Just.

**Keywords:** artistic interpassivity, film installations, Jesper Just, performative spectatorship, seductive deconstruction

Video and film art has a long-standing critical relationship with the entertainment industry. This article aims at presenting and analyzing examples of how a contemporary artist articulates and deconstructs visual consumerism and mainstream imagery as they are practiced in traditional cinema. The overall goal is to suggest three versions of spectatorship that challenge cinematic voyeurism.<sup>1</sup> By combining cinema and museum space, hybrid versions of spectator performance and new ways of seeing emerge. Thus, by analyzing three recent film exhibitions by the Danish visual artist Jesper Just (b. 1974), with each relating differently to its audience, I want to point at a potentially liberating crisis in spectatorship and to an ongoing turn in the art of spectating. The artwork examples are *Interpassivities* (2017), *Servitudes* (2014), and *Seminarium* (2021), and they are accompanied by three main theoretical lenses: Slavoj Žižek's (1998) concept of interpassivity, Gilles Deleuze's (1966) Bergson-inspired understanding of virtuality, and a New Materialism-angle that suggests a change of point of view in a so far generally human-centered visual history. A driving concept for unfolding the related implications of spectator and spectacle is Judith Butler's (1999) idea of performativity, with the focus on how to negotiate spectator identity in constituting interrelation with performing and performative works of art.

## Performing Art

At first glance, Jesper Just is a video artist. Ever since the early days of his career, moving pictures have been an inevitable medium in his works. Nevertheless, whenever he prepares a new film installation, the space is an important aspect of the artistic production. The screen always involves its surroundings, transgressing two-dimensionality and upholding a dialogue with the site-specific significance of the exhibition space. This way, what seems to belong to the realm of cinematic representation spills into what is normally experienced as the realm of spatial presentation. This exchange between the physical setting and digital images is ongoing through Just's body of work, when technology evolves into sculpture and the moving pictures connect subtly with external elements. The exhibition space becomes a performative element rather than white walls containing art.

At the same time as deconstructing categories and oppositions concerning identities and gender, body and technology, center and margin, the works challenge art genres as they mix and stretch practices like sculpture, video, installation, and conceptual art. No genre predominates the others, for the techno-poetic aesthetics form the blurred genres into a seamless network. The technology used in the works does not only constitute a practical media solution for presenting artistic content, but it is an inherent part of the imagery, contributing to the placid beauty of the works. Thus, technology takes part in the agency performed by the artworks.

We are dealing here with works which, without belonging to performance art in any classic sense, occupy the realm of performativity and imply a performative identity in the spectator. So, what does it mean 'to perform'? According to Judith Butler's (1999) performativity theory, we all perform—not as part of an art performance, but as in acting with or against expectations embedded in the culture or the specific situation around us. This is old news in sex and gender studies, but it can be applied to multiple examples of humans modelling their behavior, movement patterns, and bodily expressions to fit and be acknowledgeable to the surroundings. So, obviously people going to the movies perform 'cinema audience,' sitting passively in their seats, eating candy during the trailers, and not commenting on or applauding the film.<sup>2</sup> Somewhat similarly, the museum visitor acts according to the implicit institutional framing of the art experience. There is no touching, but a lot of contemplating at a distance, without dwelling too long in front of one piece, but spending a suitable amount of time with each work of art. A strict oppositional relation is upheld between the performatively constituted museum visitor and the aesthetically consumed art.

We cannot expect objects, technology, and space to perform the way humans do, though. We have to observe them carefully in order to perceive that something is going on. No space is ever completely empty and deployed of meaning. Even a museum space, which is supposed to be almost neutral and able to welcome all kinds of art exhibitions, is

geographically fixed, built in a certain way, maybe placed somewhere with a history that creeps painfully—or joyfully—up the walls. Connotations stick to spaces, making them able to perform with or against their character, depending on how the presented work of art engages space. The void is an illusion.

With regard to video installations, site-specificity has to be re-thought. What is often thought of as digital representations on a flat screen can instead present themselves, not only as images of something, but as a presence of images. During my studies of Just's installations, it has become increasingly clear that exhibiting film can have a lot to do with transgressions and with how to form subtle dialogues between seemingly incommensurable elements of the installations: the imagery, the technology, the space, the screens, and, last but not least, the audience. In an attempt to disrupt the presupposed power relations and performative identities between the spectacle object and the consuming subject, I suggest a psychoanalytical and philosophical approach to cultural consuming.

### How to Occupy an Interpassive Position

When Žižek (1998) introduced the concept of interpassivity, he did so to ask the question: How do things act on behalf of humans? And what does the human subject do instead? When the psychically decentered subject is relieved of the superego's duty to enjoy, then the subject may no longer be the center of actions. Žižek's examples of what the subject then is free to do instead are discouraging, though. When the video recorder does the consuming of pop culture for subjects, they are free to work in the evenings. When the mourners are doing the weeping for them, they are free to go through the will of the deceased. Not much room is left for displaced joy.

Interpassivity is something more than the passive opposite of interactivity. It is the spectacle and the object of pleasure that reacts—not only substituting, but presupposing the emotional reactions of the subject. Thus, the subject escapes the culturally instituted injunctions which tell us how to react appropriately to a situation or, say, a work of art.

For Žižek (1998), the passive act of fascination is somewhat shameful. Just to gaze at something admirably is to submit to the power of the object, and this position in Žižek's version of psychoanalysis is supposed to be unbearable for the subject, almost destroying to their identity. To rescue their own subjectivity, the subject is forced into an interpassive relation to their overwhelmingly enjoyable surroundings. The false activity is a survival mechanism.

But what happens if you displace the phenomenon of interpassivity from a general self-preservation function to the art experience? I assert that the concept unfolds creatively through spectacular interrelations in Just's ballet performance *Interpassivities*.

### Applying the Concept of Interpassivity—Art Exhibit #1

The work *Interpassivities* (2017) is indispensable when discussing the concept and phenomenon of interpassivity as well as its influence on spectator involvement. Not only is the work named after Žižek's (1998) concept, but it also presents an in-vitro expanded interpretation of how the concept can be experienced through art. Audience immersion is at the center of the spectacle while, paradoxically, the spectator is displaced by the stage itself.

The work consists of three major elements affecting each other: ballet dancers on the floor, films on all four walls, and the space in which the floor is performing, making the audience move around. At the beginning of the film performance, the audience is assisted to the location via the back entrance and an elevator usually transporting props and staff. Spectators enter an empty space colored in a light grey. Dancers wearing training clothes blend with the audience, everybody seems to be waiting for something to happen, and then the dancers start warming up, leaning softly on spectators here and there, using them as ballet bars. Here the spectators are installed as props and inventory, and the spectacle turns to use them as support. What is usually expected of a spectator performing an appropriate version of spectatorship is here gently disturbed. The show immerses the spectator, turning the viewer into a doer—and eventually sheer material.

This tendency is amplified when a couple of workmen enter the scene and start rearranging the floor made of movable squares (Figure 1). When the spectacle actually removes the ground on which you are standing, you are forced to react. You realize that you are in the way of the artwork, that you had a personal space, and it is now invaded by the unfolding spectacle—not for your eyes only, but as an immanent imperative. The spectacle does not happen because the audience attends it as according to classic phenomenological reciprocity which takes the embodied consciousness of the viewer into account. This art moves the audience around physically, treating them as material, in line with the floor squares.



Figure 1. From the performance *Interpassivities* at the Royal Danish Theatre (image courtesy of Jesper Just).

During the show, different films are shown on the surrounding walls (Figure 2). Simultaneously, the dancers are performing choreographies which mirror or respond in some way to the moving pictures. This way, the focus is diffused between walls and floor and between representation and presentation. When the audience is forced to distribute their attention or choose a focus at the expense of the show's other elements, then every spectator becomes their own editor. They have to blend cinematographic and choreographic parts, experiencing different medias at the same time as moving around, in order to not be in the way of the still changing floor squares, which the workmen are carrying around and piling up according to a detailed chart, which they are frequently checking.

Thus, the work *Interpassivities* seems to act in two directions. Firstly, it encompasses the viewer, happening independently of the audience's gaze. Secondly, it engages the audience by forcing them to act, move, choose focus, and edit the narrative. How does this double drive match the Žižekian concept of interpassivity?

As said, interactivity and interpassivity rub against each other throughout the show. When the spectacle turns to the spectator to use and involve them as a bar or a piece of furniture, it tends to form a sort of sovereignty of the experience. As in Žižek's example where the comedy with canned laughter represents the correct response to its own scenario, *Interpassivities* closes in on itself. A prominent moment during the show is a scene which contains films on the walls portraying dancers lying around while electronically connected to a musical accompaniment, each tone corresponding to a dancer's muscle. Through wires providing micro electrical shocks from piano keys to muscles, the arms and legs are made to move. When the films are shown, a self-playing piano appears from under one of the floor squares, and a couple of present dancers gather around and watch it play. This is the spectacle enjoying itself, leaning back, taking a break. Through the show, this happens several times: the audience is blocked from adopting a performatively correct and expected position as viewer. They are left to an othered role as meta viewers, pushed around in considerations on what it means to be an audience and what exactly it is that they are witnessing.

The show starts out so subtly that it has no exact beginning. In the same way, it ends by fading out with no curtain fall. After the last dance sequence, the dancers open the sliding doors in one of the walls that is still showing a film. They leave the scene through the crackled moving pictures. In the meantime, the workmen, as if they were completing a large puzzle, are still moving about the last displaced floor squares. This makes it completely up to the audience to decide whether workmen are really a distinct part of the artwork or just staff managing props. If you compare how the audience responses differ during the show period, it becomes obvious that a kind of group negotiation is taking place. Some of the nights, the spectators choose to leave in the company of the dancers, and sometimes they stay until all the squares are put back in place and the floor has returned to its

original state. Occasionally, they leave in silence, but quite a few times they stay to applaud when there is nobody but themselves left in the performance room. No performer returns for the ovation, and nobody seems to listen to the applause. In other words, another classic element of doing correct spectatorship is taken away from the participating audience. With no addressee, the ovation is bypassed.

The film and ballet performance *Interpassivities* thus presents several examples of the spectacle enjoying itself and excluding the significance of the present spectators. Following the Žižekian concept of interpassivity, we can then ask: What surplus is produced for the audience to administer when they are no longer expected to follow certain standards pertaining to perceiving an artwork? When the super ego is elsewhere engaged because the right kind of enjoying the show is already taking place, an alternative position is formed. If we refuse to settle for the practical or useful replacement examples which Žižek himself offers and instead widen the perspective to capture other kinds of engagement, then we might be able to paint a more polarized picture of what it can mean to be a spectator or, more precisely, to perform spectatorship.



Figure 2. From the performance *Interpassivities* at the Royal Danish Theatre (image courtesy of Jesper Just).

### Seductive Deconstruction as a Cinematic Strategy<sup>3</sup>

A night at the movies is seldom a very bodily experience. In exchange for a fixed point of view with no scope, the viewer gets full visual access to and perceptual domination over the screen. The narrative that unfolds is equally presented for everyone. This way of presenting visual storytelling for a crowded unity of moviegoers implies demands. The viewer is expected

to follow the narrative with undivided concentration. If you leave momentarily during the show, you may lose track of what is going on. This rewarding behavior of passive viewing is traditionally paralleled by a certain length of narrative as well as a recognizable plot structure, visual aesthetics where the form does not dominate over the storyline, and a cast where desire and identification are clearly delegated. An early Jesper Just trademark was to relocate this cinematic formula to the art sphere. Especially his works from the 2000s are ripe with Hollywood aesthetics and present themselves as drafts or excerpts of a greater drama, one which we can only imagine.

The initiation of the viewer's culturally embedded imagination is one way that the short art films by Just work with and against cinematic expectations. We as audience get almost what we expect, but not quite. Somewhere along the line of the gorgeously produced films by Just, the plot takes a turn leaving the spectator faced with their own presuppositions. Whatever normative notions the spectator expected to be confirmed through the film are projected back at them. What does one do with these spare presupposed lines, endings, or gender roles? Watching an abandoned underground garage sets certain thriller connotations in motion;<sup>4</sup> witnessing a sweaty trucker sneak into a container makes the viewer expect certain actions and definitely not that he bursts out singing;<sup>5</sup> introducing a strip club setting is normally not followed by an ambiguously tender wrestling between two men.<sup>6</sup> When normative expectations become homeless, they also become palpable. Deconstruction works in the beholder as they are gently invited to expect what they see and not the other way around.

Framing and form are great deconstruction initiators. Appropriating a Hollywood aesthetics, refusing the sketchy expressions which are often expected from art film, adds to both the strength and fragility of an art film's significance: strength because the recognizable form may seduce the spectator to be open to impressions, and fragility because the shiny surface of the art films depends on the spectator's ability to listen carefully to the subtle signals of resistance inherent in the moving pictures. Relying on the museum institution for validation, the spectator is never in doubt that this glossy movie clip which may somewhat resemble a mainstream trailer is actually an artwork. This way, the institutional framing always oozes meaning into the art pieces, admitting ways of looking which are not facilitated in the cinema.

These other ways of looking can be explained by returning to the concept of interpassivity and the polarized picture of the spectator. When in the museum, spectators are freed of their static situation of being positioned in a velvet chair with their faces illuminated by the big cinema screen, they may evolve into another kind of viewer. Again, I want to return to some of Jesper Just's later film installations in nuancing which kinds of doing spectatorship are released when subjects engage with these art works.

In *Interpassivities* (2017), three or four walls are showing films at the same time. When they do, it is almost the same film which is projected. The point of view may be slightly different, the framing and zooming degrees vary, they may be chronologically out of sync, in one film a woman

may wander across the frame while the others remain without people. It is impossible to grasp every detail simultaneously. At the cinema, every spectator is passively facing the screen, interactively engaging with it, and visually dominating the pictures, so that the pictures are acting on behalf of the spectator. In mainstream movies, the targets of identification and desire are presupposed in the plot. The narrative takes the spectator by the hand, nudging them towards wanting to be the hero and desiring the heroine sidekick. Otherwise, the imaginative interaction would not work. Contrary to this scenario, to perceive *Interpassivities* or another film work by Just is a selective experience. No position of visual control exists, and every time the spectator may think they have worked out who to identify with or how to immerse themselves in the narrative, they are blocked from doing so. Seldom has a *Verfremdungseffekt*<sup>7</sup> been this seductively gentle. Most films by Just are accompanied by music with a cinematic touch to it—the music creates an atmosphere which draws the spectator in, never letting go of them. Thus, even when the spectator gets redirected in their presuppositions and barred from distributing identification and desire as usual, they are invited to stay emotionally and intellectually involved in the artwork. The films open room for the spectator to question their go-to reactions while at the same time embracing them.

This balanced approach of dragging in while blocking complete immersion I call *seductive deconstruction*. While at first glance affiliated with the phenomenon of *nudging*, this artistic style tries not to change the spectator's behavior, but to move their normative expectations that form their being in a visual world. Especially the film medium is suitable for doing this, as the medium itself connotes plot-driven entertainment engaging certain naturalized ways of linking looking, identification and desire. Exhibiting these linkages in a museum potentially reflects back at upcoming cinema nights with popcorn and candy in a velvet seat: the spectator may have adopted a slightly altered mode of presupposing the narrative and distributing identifications. Or at least they have been momentarily aware that they were inhabiting these presuppositions.

The seductively deconstructed movie expectations are not the only means for different ways of looking. As mentioned above, Just's large art film installations<sup>8</sup> leave room for different ways of doing spectatorship, as they employ a fine balance of interactivity and interpassivity. Interactivity denotes situations when the scenario is acting on behalf of the spectator who is busy identifying with the actors on the screen while staying passive in their seat—contributing not necessarily with actual inputs, but with mental projections. Interpassivity, on the other hand, describes the mode where the scenario takes over the act of enjoying and experiencing itself, contemplating its own twists and turns. This is where alternative ways of looking at and perceiving an art film installation manifest themselves. When the spectator realizes that the scenario is not empirically dependent on them and that it is experienced and happening with or without them, they may stop thinking about what it all means. And when the show encompasses them as a prop or makes them

enter through the back door for staff only, it becomes obvious that they do not have to dominate the scenario visually or intellectually, and that they are not expected to figure everything out. This is when real immersion begins. Indulging in a work of art may partly be to sit back relieved of one's superego imperative to keep trying to 'get' the artwork and instead let it unfold.

Technically, this blocked indulging is facilitated in Just's film installations by the scattered aesthetics they present. The artworks turn their back on the viewer, they surround them, prevent them from overviewing the whole scene, and expose their electronic inside of cables and wires in an over-sharing gesture. There is no escaping the eye of the action and at the same time no chance of supervising it all. Thus, the viewer keeps getting displaced and surrounded by the ever-decentered installations.

In later works by Just, the decentering of both art and the viewer is amplified by fragmented screens. Elements from the main LED-screens are spread on the floor, as if they had just randomly detached themselves from an original whole. As they lie around in the exhibition space like mega pixels, they keep showing their piece of the film. This way, the film stretches its representational space into an almost inconvenient presence in which the viewer has to move between and around physical film fragments to get a never complete overview of the moving images. In art installations like these, film as a traditional temporal medium is pushing itself into a spatial appearance. When representation melts into presentation, the categories of time and space become difficult to uphold. As Just's installations are spilling time into surrounding space and breaking up the film representation into moving fragments, the decentering proves more profound: it is not just about the viewer feeling a bit off at the back side of an LED-screen; it involves deconstructing basic categorial opposites like time and space, presentation and representation through a fusion of film and sculpture. The surrounding experience is at the same time a displaced one.

### **Early Optic Techniques and Virtuality in Contemporary Art**

Lately, it has become unclear whether a film installation by Just is under construction or slowly ruining. The works *Circuits* (2018) and *Corporéalités* (2020) reach into their surroundings by scattering bits and pieces around (Figure 3). They form an odd interdependency when they present high technology supported by a beam of steel, and it becomes unclear whether the beam is some leftover scaffolding or part of the restoration of a work which has returned to us from the future. The works thus offer an ambience of eerie timelessness and a short-cutting of chronology.

Another key element uniting Just's later works is the application of multiple circuits which imply a blurring of causality. The circuits forming connections between actors on the screen, and soundscapes and electrical and sculptural elements structure several of the later film installations and performances and thus interconnect the artworks. The networks of meaning

and visual elements reinforce each other and loop the installations into never initiated effect machines.

One inspirational field to which Just keeps returning is early optic machines. The eighteenth century displayed an educating conflation of entertainment and enlightenment that continued subtly with the nineteenth century's elaboration on the camera obscura technique,<sup>9</sup> the panorama,<sup>10</sup> the mareorama,<sup>11</sup> etc. (Barry 2004: 6-17). Especially the 'oramas' contributed to a democratization of visual entertainment, which disseminated contemporary knowledge about natural science using the latest mechanical and electrical equipment. The experimental and ground-breaking techniques that developed into the cinema of today still affect our visual regimes. By applying inspiration and traits from historical optic machines, Just's art films underscore the diachronic interrelations in ways of seeing as cultural products. What may be even more significant, they point at art's mixed status of entertainment, enlightenment, and science—a conflation which fits perfectly with the seductive deconstruction approach.



Figure 3. From the exhibition of *Corporéaliétés* at Gallery Perrotin, New York (image courtesy of Guillaume Zicarelli).

When the broken screens in a Just film installation bend forward as if to embrace their surroundings or their viewer, and when the moving images are projected on all four walls at once or fill the floor like a shattered videodrome,<sup>12</sup> they connote early days' 'oramas.' Thus, they work twofold: pointing to the beginning of entertaining optic techniques and reaching beyond traditional division of presentation and representation. This double sight challenges the spectator. They will have to apply multiple foci, let themselves be immersed, and lean back and let it just happen without them. That is a lot of demands. Especially the don't-try-too-hard part is testing, as it does not fit the performatively expected ways to do art spectatorship.

The double sight can also be perceived as a fusion. When the art works combine an outdated technique with a visionary deconstruction of the time/space realms through an overlap of presentation and representation, the installations come close to forming an analogue kind of virtual reality. The virtual reality techniques are multiple and encompass the foundation of a central perspective in order to paint supernatural spaces and the imaginative ability to temporarily accept the theatre stage as reality, while the latest software has proven useful in training flight simulation, in medical rehabilitation, and in space programs. As with every development in optic technologies, the ability to create other worlds or expand on what we know about the already existing ones has most prominently become popular in entertainment. The software that immerses its wearer or user has recently turned so accurate that it actually does fool the kinesthetic abilities of the human body. Thus, human spatial skills are applied in a situation which may not really require them.

This is not exactly the case in film installations by Just. Other kinds of virtuality are going on here. The most prominent example is the film ballet performance *Interpassivities* (2017), where the audience is pushed around on an ever-changing floor made of elements that resemble oversized pixels, as if the spectator were trapped in some real computer game. As the pixels are stacked in various heights, a topographic map is formed. Some of the mega pixels carry a loudspeaker. This way the soundscape follows the spatial developments, and the pixelated changes are sensorily trackable during the performance. The map is normally an abstraction of somewhere real, but here it is a real abstraction of a fictional place experiencing real fictional demographic movements as the audience keeps moving around the room. Real space and mapped space blend into a haptic virtuality carried out by a social imagination which is created and shared by the present audience.

The application of optic techniques from different periods of time creates an odd feeling of timelessness. There is an ambience in the later works by Just which indicates that they have returned to the spectator from a ruined future. Or the other way around: that they have been passed on from a visionary past. To engage in a kind of stretched now that also reaches into the exhibition space contributes to a conflation of latency and manifestation, of what actually is and what may be. This subtle mixing of realms works as an amplifier of the feeling of virtuality in the film installations.

In his book *Le Bergsonisme*, the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1966) gives an interpreting analysis of timeliness in Henri Bergson's works. Bergson, whose philosophical foci include memory, duration, and past and present time, contributed to continental philosophy the concept of qualitative multiplicity. In his work *Matière et Mémoire*, Bergson (1896) writes that memories experienced in the consciousness are repeated with a difference in the heterogeneous space of the mind, which equals duration, that is, the prolongation of the past into the present. These thoughts on timeliness were explored by Deleuze, who applied them in his definition of virtuality. His elaborated definition is of relevance to the understanding of how an analogue

virtual feeling is produced through the experience of Just's film works and how it affects spectatorship. Deleuze explains the difference between what is by presence and what is by effect. The special quality of the virtual is never to be realized, but to be a fictitious reality actualized in the present just like a memory from the past. This is a productive iteration recalling something in ever-new forms and ways. With Deleuze, virtuality contains a creative process. What is of significance for the readings of Just's film installations is to come to terms with what the outcomes are when representations become prolongations into the realm of presentation and how the viewer is to perceive the analogue virtuality. The installations form a space of duration which draws in a heterogeneity of possible perceptions. When the viewer experiences films made sculpturally tangible in a time-space which mixes presentation and representation as well as applies and connotes early and contemporary optic techniques, they are required to stretch their visual and perceptive abilities. This is nothing like going to the movies on a Saturday night. And yet, as mentioned above, a subtle connection may be formed between the entertainment presented in a movie theatre and the multiplicity of time realms in a film installation by Just. That connection is to be created in the spectator when they are learning new ways to look.

### Ways of Looking—Art Exhibit #2

To look is a cultivated action. Not only is the viewer performing spectatorship through accustomed behavior in correspondence with location, other viewers present, and the physicality of exhibited art, but they are also adjusting their gaze. Like the invention of perspective in painting, which has influenced our way of enjoying prospects and reading three-dimensionality into images, we socio-culturally agree on certain ways of looking at movies. Technologies and visual media produced the movie spectator. When experiencing films in the museum space, we will have to learn more—not un-learn, but to use the skills consciously and in exaggerated ways.

The means to this 'exaggerated end' are the interpassive viewer positioning and the application of the virtual perception modus. The spectator immersed in time realms in the museum has to actively choose and edit their view while the spectacle goes on enjoying itself. They will have to apply various viewing angles and remember modes of acknowledging that imply their kinesthetics<sup>13</sup> and recollections of past optic experiences.

With a film installation by Just, the question is not so much 'What will the spectator see?' but more 'How will film and spectator perform in the exhibition space?' In Just's oeuvre, the installation *Servitudes* (2014), which was produced for the exhibition space Palais de Tokyo in Paris, is one of the most prominent examples of how to manage the audience. During the exhibition, the rather large location was intersected by ramps like the ones that facilitate entrance by wheelchairs (Figure 4). Here, the ramps were the only way for everybody to enter the exhibition. By forcefully casting the spectator

as in need of support, the installation turned itself into prolongations of the spectator bodies. At the same time, it staged the visual access to the films in ways which ambiguously balanced between aid and blockages—the ramps either helped the spectator overview the installation or prevented their full admittance to watch the films from an angle of their own choice. Unlike the movie theatre, which forms a spatial continuation of the central perspective, any exhibition space has the ability to create an alternative interrelationship with its audience. *Servitudes* subtly crooked the expected viewing positions and gently invited the spectator to make an effort to engage in the spectacle while simultaneously carrying and guiding their way around the exhibition. This kind of spectacle requires a bodily participation. It interferes with the spectator's kinesthetics and normative perspective while at the same time offering another perspective. As the films presented in *Servitudes* concern themselves with dis-/ablebodiedness and the concept of phantom limbs manifested at Ground Zero in New York City, where urban trauma is tentatively healed through the building of One World Trade Center, the intersecting ramps function as sculptural semantic prolongations of the films. This way, they mediate between the moving images and the viewer.

Insisting on the viewing body, its privileges, its abilities, and the crucial role it plays in the act of looking, *Servitudes* points at ways of looking in the plural. The viewer does not always have to be at the center of things and complete the perspective by occupying a certain position. Depending on the acute intersection of their body, cognitive experiences, visual memories, access to and engagement with the social imagination of their specific cultural sphere, they acknowledge the spatio-visual film installation in the situated way that the installation provides. Again, the spectacle is not just there because the audience is observing it. It is already acting, manipulating, performing, facilitating, and blocking the experience. The void is an illusion. The always willing and accessible spectacle is, too.

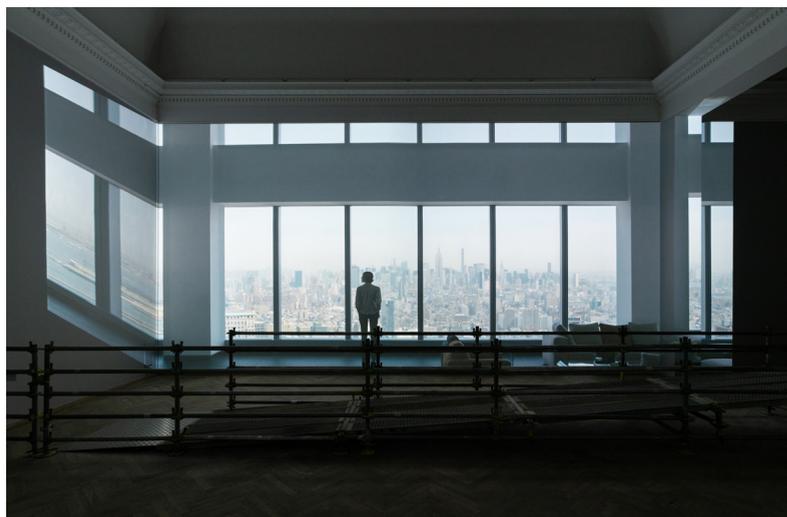


Figure 4. From the exhibition *Servitudes* at Charlottenborg (image courtesy of David Stjernholm).

### Flowing Images With no Addressee—Art Exhibit #3

The missing initiation of Just's installations reveals a dissolved opposition between passivity and action. The status of the acting subject is questioned through the intertwined circuits that imply non-hierarchical relations between elements like technology, human bodies, and nature. When the screen in *Corporealités* shows classically trained ballet bodies move, the movements are caused by an electronic muscle stimulation system often used in rehabilitation and not by human will. The represented bodies are connected, lightly touching each other, and each electrode on a muscle is wired to a tone on a hidden piano. The played music makes the muscles contract, thereby producing a micro-choreography. It is a rejection of the autonomous subject when the bodies are 'being danced' rather than dancing themselves. The initiating subject is suspended as the musical accompaniment moves the dancers' limbs like a puppeteer. The absent agency and initiation make for a blurry ambience of achronology and decentered subjectivity.

Experiencing cinematography at the museum often implies negotiating chronology. Whether the presented films are short or the length of a feature film, the viewer's first impulse may well be to want to watch from the start. The question is then, what 'start' means outside narratively plot-amplifying cinema. As mentioned, film is a time-based medium traditionally dependent on a forward movement. Film is expected to go somewhere. By looping the footage, a film artist is able to shortcut the presupposed narrative causality connected with moving images. Then, the move in moving images turns into something qualitatively different. The films become simmering pictures flowing around, turning inwards and no longer relying on the spectator for acknowledging their narrative. The spectator has to decide for themselves when to cut, knowing that the flowing images keep on.

The latest film installation by Jesper Just, *Seminarium* (2021), presents several LED-screens, each bending towards a plant cutting placed in a glass of nutritive water. Here, the flowing images portraying human bodies in loops form shields that communicate with and care for the plants (Figure 5). The bodies that move slowly on film are flickering purple light onto the by-standing plants; in fact, the LED-screens themselves are hacked so that they provide the plants with grow-light. This way, the plant cuttings are fully dependent on the installation for nutrition and on the flowing images in particular for their contribution to uphold photosynthesis. This biological interplay with organic surroundings supplies the films with yet another feature besides the visual, sculptural, and time-disrupting ones. Here, they reach out in an alliance that completely suspends the spectator. The invisible product of the screens in this installation is what constitutes the foundation of the artwork. What goes on in the image flow, where combined body parts perform micro choreographies, is a visual parallel to the grow-light, rather than being the work's main focus. The elusiveness of the light, which together with time is the ontological quality of film, turns out to be the most practically useful and hands-on part of the installation, while the represented images—

usually what the spectator perceives as the film *per se*—is cast as visually supportive aesthetics.

This game changer in the cinematographic field twists the spectator's position. From being an eye-witnessing part of an ambiguously inviting visual spectacle they find themselves turned into a body witness of a process that does not happen in front of their eyes, but in the air that they breathe. The traditional visually dominant recognition of moving images on a cinema screen is replaced by a cognitive trust (the spectator believes that grow light is produced by the screens) and an acknowledgment of the causal proof (the spectator sees that the plant in front of the screen is alive, so they 'know' that the grow light is working). The museum here functions as an institutional guarantee that what you do not see is what you actually get. It is an atypical experience when the screens do not primarily address the audience, and when they work beyond the visual scope. The spectator still looks at the screens and their flowing images, knowing that not all art is for them.

The age of the anthropocene is the geological present time when human impact on earth and its ecosystem is momentous.<sup>14</sup> Everything around us shows human imprint. Significantly, recent academic theories present a reverse approach to human influence, as theoretic movements such as Object-Oriented Ontology and New Materialism<sup>15</sup> reject the privileged position of human beings over non-human existence. Reacting against the twentieth century's phenomenological idea that existence unfolds in relation to an embodied human mind,<sup>16</sup> the material turn expands agency and applies it to objects, fauna, plants, machines, and spaces. The development in artificial intelligence is but one aspect that very tangibly supports the theoretical materialism.

Object-oriented ideas are reflected in the described film installations by Just. Here, films, exhibition space, technology, and overall spectacle do not perform because an embodied spectator is attending. The displacement of the human gaze is profoundly exemplified in the flowing images of *Seminarium*, which appear oddly introvert. When even film is rejecting the human spectator as ontologically vital for the media, then how to occupy the role of spectator and how to perform spectatorship in the museum space?

In performative identity, there is always room for agency. It is possible to do something different that does not fit the expected model. Not through revolutions, but in a displaced iteration of actions and behaviors that differ only slightly from the ones that are culturally presupposed. The cinema-goer is supposed to stay passively seated in what is agreed to be the best angle for visually dominating the screen. The museum guest encountering an art film may at first try the same. But as the films—as discussed above—prolong themselves into their surroundings, turn into sculptures, and occupy themselves, the visitor will have to adjust to an experience of multiple foci, of being perceived or precluded by the spectacle, and of re-modelling their ideas about presence. Spectatorship may evolve into a heterogeneous identity connected with several non-central perspectives and a freedom that follows the acceptance of not being vital or even needed for the flowing images to keep wandering their plotless way.

This repositioning of the human perspective may reflect further on developments outside the realm of visual art. Human beings have long been superseded as the main validator and legitimizing factor of their material surroundings. The gaze may be the last advantage that we renounce, as in general, we connote the gaze with knowledge, and knowledge with power. The gaze as a theoretical concept originates from Jean-Paul Sartre (1943/2020), who, in *Being and Nothingness*, introduced a phenomenological and existential conception of the gaze as double-edged: the acknowledgement of another being possibly looking at you places you as an object in the surroundings of a thus reaffirmed subjectivity outside yourself. This chiasmic<sup>17</sup> structure is repeated in Michel Foucault's (1975/1995) *Discipline and Punish—The Birth of the Prison* in a much more dis-embodied way, when the possible on-looker turns into a disciplining institutional surveillance system internalized as self-observation in the subjected citizen. These interconnections imply that the gaze is always also a power relation and a negotiation of subjectivity. As such, the gaze simultaneously constitutes—in this case—the spectator and the spectacle, a link which supports the visual exchanges asserted here while at the same time proving inadequate: Where does the spectator go with their subject-constituting gaze if the spectacle does not need them?



Figure 5. From the exhibition *Seminarium* at Gl. Holtegaard (image courtesy of David Stjernholm).

### An Interim Conclusion

Through discussing the presentations of three film installations by Jesper Just, I have shown the various ways which contemporary film art may apply

in order to engage, immerse, and displace the spectator. By employing seductive deconstruction, diverse degrees of virtuality, an interpassive position, facilitating blockages, and partial viewer preclusion, these cinematic art works contribute to gently pushing the museum visitor into alternative spectator identities. Thus, the museum may be a space to achieve new ways of looking at films in general, while simultaneously raising concerns about the status of the human gaze. Performing spectatorship stretches to include seeing, believing, as well as renouncing the perfect view and the ultimate meaning of the spectacle. The aim here has been to analyze and accept the artistic invitation to do so.

1. The psychoanalytic concept of voyeurism was originally introduced in film theory by e.g. Christian Metz (1977) in *The Imaginary Signifier—Psychoanalysis and the Cinema* and Laura Mulvey (1975) in her canonized essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.'
2. In this article, I focus on how art films can act as prolongations of, as well as critical oppositions to, traditional cinema, the mainstream entertainment industry, and the movie theatre as institution. This is not to underestimate the obvious influence which the history of video art has on contemporary art film. Considering Wolf Vostell's implementation of a TV set in what would be known as one of the earliest video installations in the late 1950s, Nam June Paik's sculptural screen performances, Andy Warhol's 'anti-films,' and Valie Export's critique of passive TV consumerism in the 1960s further developed by e.g. Gretchen Bender in her visually overloaded video walls in the 1980s all suggest that video and film art has concerned itself with the mainstream visual culture, building on and critiquing mass media imagery. I have found it productive to study and present a contemporary example of what critical application of visual culture looks like, thus implying the video art inheritance implicit in the works of Just.
3. I want to stress that cinematography is my main focus in this text, thus building on my previous writings on the subject (see Andersen 2021). This is not to state that the cinematic element has priority over architectural, theatrical, sculptural or musical features in the works by Just. For an introduction to space as theme and the interplay between physical space and imaginary geography in Just's oeuvre, see 'The Scale of Jesper Just's Imaginary Landscapes' by Giuliana Bruno (2021). Likewise, the influence and major subject of staged performance throughout Just's works are well covered by Irene Campolmi (2019) in 'Folding the Outside Inside—Performance in Jesper Just's Artistic Practice' (2005-2019), and by André Lepecki (2019) in 'Pulse in the Flesh' (2019). among others.
4. Jesper Just, *Something to love* (2005).
5. Jesper Just, *Bliss and heaven* (2005).

6. Jesper Just, *The sweetest embrace of all* (2004).
7. The estrangement effect, as coined by German playwright Bertolt Brecht in his 1936 essay *Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting*, describes ways to prevent the audience from complete immersion in and identification with a performance's characters and plot.
8. Using the term 'art film installation,' I aim at art works which combine video or film media with spatial, sculptural, and performance elements thus expanding the genres 'film,' 'sculpture,' and 'installation' with synergetic effects.
9. Camera obscura is a technique where a dark room has a small hole on one side or wall, through which light comes in, thereby projecting an upside-down picture of the immediate outside of the penetrated wall. It was originally invented in the 16th century and developed into the photographic camera in the 19th century.
10. The panorama was originally paintings on a cylindrical surface meant to be experienced from inside the cylinder and thus providing the viewer with a 360-degree view.
11. The mareorama applied two moving panoramas that, together with steam and a moving floor, would provide the audience with an experience of being on a ship and watching the shore line passing.
12. A videodrome consists of a cylindrical screen on which film is projected. The viewer is surrounded by moving pictures all around.
13. The bodily and sensory awareness of being positioned and moving in the spatial surroundings.
14. It remains disputable in scientific research whether the geological age of the Holocene (covering the past 11,700 years) actually equals the age of the Anthropocene, as human beings have been changing their surroundings through agriculture and other kinds of nature cultivation this whole time, but a more tightened definition of the era of severe human impact points at the atomic age around 1945 as a defining tipping point of measurable human influence on our global environment.
15. An example of this movement is the book *Vibrant Matter* by Jane Bennett (2010), where the author presents an acknowledgement of things and objects as major participants in cultural events, and suggests a concept of agency which is always a combination of human and non-human forces (Bennett 2010).
16. As suggested most prominently by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945) in his *Phénoménologie de la perception*.
17. A reciprocally connecting rhetorical structure criss-crossing opposing perspectives.

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### Author's bio

Svala Vagnsdatter Andersen's research focus is primarily on sex, gender, and the body in visual culture. Over the past nine years, she has contributed as a curating consultant to several art exhibitions throughout the world. Having a background in visual culture studies, her research and other writings evolve around what meets the eye, the culturally visible/invisible, imaginative imagery, blindness, and exemplary works of film and visual arts. Her PhD dissertation from the Royal Danish Academy (2019) concerns the history of the fetish as a concept and phenomenon and investigates the role of the fetish in sexuality and aesthetics. Theoretically, she generally works within queer performativity studies, always aiming to corporealize the concepts into form and bodily representations through art works.

E-mail: [svalavagnsdatter@gmail.com](mailto:svalavagnsdatter@gmail.com).

ORCID: 0000-0002-9207-2225.

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## **Metamorphoses: The Place of Moving Images**

Margherita Foresti  
University of Münster, Germany

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# Metamorphoses: The Place of Moving Images\*

Margherita Foresti

The migration of film from cinemas to art institutions engendered a series of metamorphoses. A metamorphosis of the medium, through the convergence of film and installation, produced the moving image. A metamorphosis of the space within the screen itself transformed the spectators' reception of this new language of the moving image. A metamorphosis of the exhibition space resulted

from its relation to the new medium. These metamorphoses require museums to redefine the ways in which they can empower their audiences through effective curatorship. This research article analyzes these transformations through cases of contemporary uses of moving images to propose a theory on how to curate moving images in the museum of the twenty-first century.

**Keywords:** curating, exhibition, experimental film, Forensic Architecture, moving image, spectatorship

When film migrates into the exhibition space, something about either the container or its content clearly must change. Films displayed in theaters generally tell stories of a different kind than those one finds within museums or galleries. This difference is harbored in the parallel development of the medium since its launch at the end of the nineteenth century, as a means of expression for artists, as an autonomous art form in its own right, and as the entertainment industry of cinema. The shift of film towards the museum has been conceptualized in various manners: as artists' film or artists' cinema, the other or the *othered* cinema, and finally, as the moving image.<sup>1</sup> The desire to define it belies a need to reinforce its alterity. Yet, film escapes categorization by the same effort by which it permeates different platforms. The notion of the moving image refers to the medium resulting from the relationship between film and the space that contains it, which film constantly reinvents.

This research article investigates the interdependency of exhibition space and moving image in defining both terms anew. Its four-part structure analyzes the nature and outcome of the relationship between the museum and the moving image. The first question concerns the *medium* emerging through the blending of installation art and film; the second and third relate to *space*,

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meaning both the space engendered by the artist within the screen and the physical space of the exhibition that concerns the curator. Lastly, there is the issue of the *power* inherent in the museum and the way curatorship does or does not *empower* its spectators depending on its strategies of communication. All these questions correspond to an equal number of metamorphoses informing both the exhibition space and the moving image as the outcome of their interaction. These transformations will be analyzed based on concrete cases of contemporary artists and exhibitions in which the moving image features as the primary, but not exclusive, medium of expression. These include the work of Ammar al-Beik as well as the artist duo Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige. Particular mention will be given to the exhibition *Enter the Void*, which took place at the Kunsthalle Mainz (from the 10th of July to the 1st of November 2020), and to the works presented there by Forensic Architecture (Figure 1) and Ursula Biemann and Paulo Tavares.

Ammar al-Beik's work spans different media, from film to painting and installations of found objects. Because of its experimental approach, his work suits a diversity of institutions, from film festivals and film museums to contemporary art museums and galleries. His work intertwines with the role of the digital image in online social networks in two ways: on the one hand, he increasingly adopts Instagram as a documentation and exhibition platform; on the other one, his filmic works draw most of their material from found footage, often acquired from YouTube. In this sense, al-Beik's practice proves the moving image's versatility and its potential to transcend both institutional and medium-specific conventions.

Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige work mainly with photography and film to blur the subtle line between reality and fiction. Their works featured in this article belong to the series *I Stared at Beauty So Much* (2013–20), based on videos and photographs in which the beauty of poetry conflates with troublesome images of the reality of post-war Beirut. Hadjithomas and Joreige's oeuvre includes installations of objects and documents, digital prints, photography, video, and feature-length films. The moving image thus features either as a standalone work or as part of an installation.

The work of these artists reflects contemporary art's tendency towards multimediality, which allows it to transcend the boundaries between different exhibition platforms such as the film theater, the film festival, and the museum.

A unique case of a multimedial and interdisciplinary approach is the collective Forensic Architecture (FA), whose work was at the heart of the exhibition *Enter the Void* at Kunsthalle Mainz in 2020. Born in and based at the Goldsmith University of London, FA is an independent research group conducting investigations of environmental, social, and political issues. The moving image features in its work among other media as visual evidence of their cases, and it has a very different function than in the works mentioned up until now. The visual material used by FA often stems from various sources. These moving images are not always conceived *ex novo* as original artworks: they can also be already existing evidence material. FA's material includes

recordings of testimonies, juridical processes, surveillance footage, interviews, and animated graphics. This practice is emblematic of a research-based strand of contemporary art that endeavors to investigate relevant topics from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Another kind of moving image presented in the exhibition is Ursula Biemann and Paulo Tavares's *Forest Law* (2014), a double-channel video installation filmed in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Like in the work by FA, the moving image represents only part of the artwork, being part of a larger installation including other media as well. Here, the artists' ingenuity merges with a use of the moving image as a document.

All these cases allow us to trace the present transformations of the moving image and curatorship as *metamorphoses* resulting from the encounter between the medium and the exhibition space. The latter emerges as a place of trial and error, a field under construction by the constant interaction between technology and art. Understanding this encounter as metamorphosis allows us to highlight its unfolding nature and yet draw some methodological foundations for curating the moving image.

Scholarship has mapped and reflected extensively on the transformation of film into a medium for the gallery and the museum. Among these studies are A. L. Rees's (1999) *A History of Experimental Film and Video*, which traced a genealogy of artists' use of film from modernism to the end of the 1990s, focusing especially on Britain. Raymond Bellour's (2002) reflections on the new media's impact on the redefinition of film as a medium for the museum are condensed in the title of his essay collection *Entre-Images*. 'Between images' is where meaning is created when film migrates to the art museum, where it is placed in relation to other visuals (Radner 2018: 40). The emergence of the moving image and the so-called 'black box versus white cube' antithesis have been the subject matter of later edited collections like *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, edited by Tanya Leighton (2008), and *Exhibiting the Moving Image: History Revisited*, edited by François Bovier and Adeena Mey (2015). In *The Place of Artists' Cinema: Space, Site and Screen*, Maeve Connolly (2009) explored the circulation of artists' films within different platforms and art institutions, as well as the artists' concern with site and space. More recent studies include Erika Balsom's (2013) *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art* and Catherine Elwes' (2015) *Installation and the Moving Image*, which further explore the emergence of film as a medium for artistic practice.

Building on these studies, the present research focuses on some cases of moving images' presentation in museums to propose a practical approach to curating. By means of a formal analysis, two different kinds of moving images are detected based on the space and time engendered within their frame. A centripetal space is one in which the viewer's focus is catalyzed towards the center of representation, like in painting; a centrifugal space instead proceeds outwards, like in film, where the diegesis alludes to a reality exceeding the material limits of the frame of the displaying device.<sup>2</sup> The distinction of two kinds of moving images expands our understanding

of spectator reception in relation to the space of the artwork, while allowing to sketch a theory on how to exhibit moving images based on the reciprocal interferences between its inner space and the exhibition space surrounding it.



Figure 1. Exhibition view of *Enter the Void*, Kunststhal Mainz (Hall II), with works by Forensic Architecture (from right to left): *Ape Law* (2016), *CCN* (2019), *Ecocide in Indonesia* (2016–17) (photo by Norbert Miguletz, courtesy of Forensic Architecture).

## 1. First Metamorphosis: The Moving Image

Artists' experimentations with film punctuate the history of the medium as it evolved as an autonomous art form and into the industry of cinema. At the closing of the nineteenth century, the Lumière brothers' new technology was not conceived explicitly as art. About a decade later, increased attention toward the new medium surfaced among avant-garde artists. Cubists' call for a 'pure' (i.e., non-mimetic), autonomous art beginning at their first exhibition in 1907 was extended to film as well (Rees 1999: 15–21). Above all, Futurism was the first avant-garde movement to theorize the need to free cinema as an art form in its own right. The first Cubist and Futurist films were hand-painted, created by directly painting on the filmstrip (Rees 1999: 27–29). Film-as-art was initially abstract or focused on form, in opposition to the concomitant development of commercial film, based on realism and narrative logic.

From its inception, film's place in art history has been an unsettled matter. As A. L. Rees (1999) writes, 'the impersonal technology of film and its lack of direct authorship seem to run against the grain of traditional art' (p. 25), especially against modern art, which was informed by what Rosalind Krauss has named 'the avant-garde myth' of the artist's originality (Krauss 1981: 47–66).

But while for the avant-garde, film was one of many media of expression at artists' disposal, another strand developed from the second decade of the twentieth century onward that pursued the autonomy of cinema

as an art form made not by artists but by filmmakers. It began with Art Cinema, a European avant-garde film movement including German Expressionism, the Soviet school of Eisenstein, and French 'Impressionists,' later reaching the United States with the post-war film avant-garde (Rees 1999: 30–31, 56). A further step in this direction was the introduction of the notion of *cinéma d'auteur* by François Truffaut and the periodical *Cahiers du cinéma* in the 1950s, emphasizing the ingenuity and originality of the vision of the filmmaker (Elwes 2015: 91) against the leading view of film as a commodity of the industry of the spectacle.

This article focuses on the kind of metamorphoses that film has undergone and is still undergoing as an art medium. Artists' film strived for 'purity' by means of anti-realism and the absence of a narrative plot based on a linear chronology and character development. More than that, artists' film often intentionally displays its medium's specificities, exhibiting the technical apparatus behind its fiction. These films often expose intermedial substructures as the outcome of a media-combination (Rajewsky 2005: 51) of photography, music, theatrical performance, literature and even painting. In contrast to those early filmmakers who sought to assert film as an art of its own right, artists' films are perhaps unique in their tendency to expose their blending of diverse media. An early example is Man Ray's *Le retour à la raison* (1923), where the artist's cameraless *rayographies* appear as the natural filmic outcome of his own photographic oeuvre.

Though the origins of artists' film can be traced back to the beginnings of film history, scholarship tends to draw a line between those early contributions by avant-garde artists, the experiments by conceptual artists between the 1960s and 1970s, and the proliferation of video technology within the museum from the 1990s onwards (Balsom 2014: 34–35). Video art, with protagonists such as Wolf Vostells or Nam June Paik, first brought the TV screen to the exhibition space in the 1960s. The difference from later practices is that video art still emphasized the plastic nature of the TV apparatus over the moving image itself. These artists treated the *dispositif* as a sculptural, three-dimensional object, occupying a traceable space within the exhibition room. On the other hand, the content of these moving images defied the coherence given by its materiality, not only by rejecting a univocal narration, as previous modernist films did, but also by multiplying the number of screens scattered across the exhibition room, showing images on a loop and in asynchronous rhythms. Writing about the work of Nam June Paik, the Marxist literary critic Fredric Jameson (1992) notes: 'The postmodernist viewer, however, is called upon to do the impossible, namely, to see all the screens at once, in their radical and random difference' (p. 31). Significantly, video art set the stage for the metamorphosis of the moving image into a medium for installation. As Balsom (2014) points out, the real turning point for the 'institutional endorsement of the moving image' was the diffusion of video projections in contemporary art practices from the 1990s onward, a key event being *documenta 9* (1992), curated by Jan Hoet, which was dominated by video and art installation (p. 35).

From the first Cubist and Futurist films to contemporary engagements with the medium, what has changed is the new technology available to artists as well as their sources of reference within film history and the modes of production drawn from the cinema industry. But except for video art, which both nominally and practically circumscribed its practice to its technology, most artists working with the moving image do not see it as their exclusive medium of expression: film and video may stand alone or complement other materials within larger installations. In this sense, the notion of 'moving image' seems adequate to describe artists' experimentations with film, as it encompasses disparate artworks from different movements and artistic tendencies, diachronically stretching from early modernism to the present. It also allows us to bypass the issue of discerning between the often conflated terms of 'film' and 'videotape.' While technically the term 'artists' film' is better suited to refer to the early artistic experimentations with film cameras, to limit its use to these works might risk stripping art history of its sense of continuity. Language evolves alongside technology, as today 'film' refers to everything that is filmed. However, the moving image framework might be useful for including all digital media, that is, not only what is filmed, but also what is set in motion.

The notion of 'moving image' has been adopted by Catherine Elwes (2015) to refer to artists' film. To her, the concept stresses the element of motion and the flow of visuals, in opposition to the stasis typical of the art objects within the museum. The term "moving image" implies a lack of discrimination between artist and technician, often one and the same individual, and between analogue mediums' (Elwes 2015: 5). Further, this notion refers to an expanded practice through which artists and filmmakers have reached beyond the traditions of their respective fields, that is, art and cinema as well as broadcast television. Doubtless, the term 'moving image' has contributed to defining this artistic trend by identifying its constitutive features, while others have tended to theorize it based on its departure from either art or the film establishment. Among these theorizations is Erika Balsom's expression 'the othered cinema,' coined in response to a review of the 2001 Venice Biennale by Raymond Bellour (2003), who had reported a proliferation of moving images within its exhibition spaces. Witnessing a difficulty in defining this new kind of works that exceeded the margins of both plastic arts and cinema, Bellour referred to them as *other cinema* (2003, as cited in Balsom 2014: 15). In response to this formulation, Balsom's (2014:) notion of an *othered cinema* is maintained as a rejection of the 'strict alterity' implied by the earlier term, whereby 'understanding these gallery-based practices as an othered cinema is to suggest that they represent a site at which the cinema has become other to itself' (p. 16). Yet, despite the reversal of the active-passive relation inherent in the past participle 'othered,' the expression does not change the status ascribed to this cinema. Artists' film is simply defined on the base of its non-alignment with conventional cinema. Even more insufficient is the term 'othered cinema': it ignores the history of artists' experimentations with the medium, which, as seen before, goes back to the beginning of the twentieth century.

Maeve Connolly (2009) points to the recurring use of the expression 'artists' cinema' in contemporary exhibitions and publications. Her adoption of the term, especially with reference to art practices of the 1990s, stresses the aspect of ownership implicit in the label. The emphasis on the possessive *artists'* means that a specific way of practicing filmmaking is deduced from the claims artists make on cinema (p. 9). This expression, however, might be problematic because of the shift from 'film' to 'cinema' to refer to contemporary art uses of the medium in an allegedly 'cinematic' way. As Connolly (2009) admits, 'Any attempt to define an artwork as cinematic necessarily invokes pre-existing notions and expectations about cinema' (p. 9). To assimilate contemporary artists' films to cinema is problematic because it evokes a kind of filmmaking privileging illusionism and aestheticization while excluding the realism of amateur-like aesthetic, for instance, in works using smartphone video technology. To Connolly (2009), 'cinematic' points to artists' practice of referencing cinema history, but also to the idea of cinematic experience as collective, associated with an 'ideal public sphere' (pp. 9–10). While this view mystifies the role of cinema as a democratic platform, it also seems to imply a 'corrective' impact that cinematic works could have in making the museum an ideal collective space.

Moving images, artists' films, other or othered cinema, and artists' cinema—all these terms describe film's metamorphoses following its migration to a space traditionally reserved for the fine arts. They build the conceptual framework for artists and filmmakers to rearrange—or rather transcend—the boundaries delimiting their reciprocal practices.

There are a number of filmmakers whose work has been displayed in both cinema and the museum, with Jean-Luc Godard, who exhibited experimental works at the Centre Pompidou, MoMA, and documenta 10 (1997), most prominent (Balsom 2014: 46–47). Godard's work for the museum radically differs from that for the black box, not only because of the former's lack of narrative or dramaturgical coherence, but also in terms of its duration: either very short or far exceeding the norm of a feature-length film. A filmmaker might choose to enter the space of the museum to enjoy the freedom inherent in artistic license, thus neglecting the rules of the industry. At the same time, contemporary artists experimenting with the moving image often resort to the modes of production of professional cinema by adopting its same division of labor: the artist, acting out the role of director, collaborates with cinematographers, editors, and sound, music, and color technicians, just to name a few professionals. In other cases, artists' films might rely on small-scale production because of more exiguous financial means. This kind of moving image often plays with this quality of a self-made production, exposing the technical specificities of the medium.

This brings us to the meta-filmic dimension of some moving images. Reflections on the medium populate this cinema like the subliminal text of an advertisement spot. These might result in an emphasis on the linguistic tools of cinema—first and foremost, montage. This is the case with Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinema* (1988–98), made of a montage of film excerpts,

photographs of artworks, graphics, and on-screen texts, in addition to Godard's own footage starring the artist himself. This postmodern pastiche of film classics and canonic artworks allows Godard not only to retrace the history of film as integral to the history of art, but also to stress its medium-specific idiom based on montage. Further, the visual overlapping of the moving image with graphics and texts recalls a Cubist collage in which high art merges with visuals commonly associated with popular culture. *Histoire(s) du cinema* is truly a film about the history of cinema as history of art.



Figure 2. Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, *Remember the Light* (2016). Exhibition view at *Home Beirut: Sounding the Neighbours*, Maxxi, Rome, Italy (courtesy of Galerie In Situ/Fabienne Leclerc).

## 2. Second Metamorphosis: The Space of Moving Images

Writing about the difference between painting and film, Bazin (2005) touches upon the question of space within both the pictorial frame and the filmic screen: 'The essential role of the frame is, if not to create at least to emphasize the difference between the microcosm of the picture and the macrocosm of the natural world' (p. 165). In other words, the frame ensures that the discontinuity between reality and fiction is kept alive, in the same way as the curtains of the stage in a theater remind the viewer about the imaginary nature of the piece. According to Bazin (2005), the frame of a painting is centripetal, meaning it engenders a space that gravitates towards the core of the representation. In

film, what is referred to as a 'frame'—the shortest possible temporal unit of the moving image—does not correspond to the material frame of the painting. What happens within the screen perceptively exceeds the physical boundaries of a frame, in apparent prolongation of reality. The diegetic space of film also moves according to its own temporality. This movement is perceived by the viewers as a centrifugal one going from their point of view towards all the directions of the reality represented (Bazin 2005: 166).

Bazin's (2005) reflections on film date back to the mid-twentieth century, a time when new media had not yet swarmed into the museum. His essay 'Painting and cinema' reproduces a strict binarism, unaware of the later development of film as a medium for the museum, yet his distinction between 'centrifugal' and 'centripetal' framings, if stripped of the painting/cinema binary, is helpful in reviewing cases of moving images' exhibitions. An example of this distinction are the video installations by Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, in which the moving image takes on a kind of centripetal frame system; Ammar al-Beik's film *La Dolce Siria* (2014), on the other hand, is an example of centrifugal frame system.

Hadjithomas and Joreige's use of film in their series *I Stared at Beauty So Much* (2013–20) results in an emphasis on the pictorial quality of the moving image. The eight-minute film *Remember the Light* (2016–20, Figure 2) was filmed underwater to explore the transformation of color perception below the surface of the sea. A colorful cloth fluctuates in the sea, while on another screen a man dives in deep waters: in both cases the thick texture of the sea almost eliminates the feeling of three-dimensionality, instead drawing attention to the foreground where objects and people, enveloped by the light, produce different shades of color. The video installation appears in the form of two acrylic glass recto-verso screens on which the images are projected, like frameless pictures seemingly suspended in the exhibition room (2021, personal communication with Diane Mehanna<sup>3</sup>). Film here assumes the quality of painting, not only for its closeness to two-dimensionality, but also for its emphasis on light's effect on color reminiscent of French Impressionism. While the darkness of the exhibition room alludes to cinema's mode of presentation, the artists' use of film draws nearer to the abstraction of early modernist works, especially in their avoidance of dynamic montage and narrative logic.

In another film by the artists, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (2013, Figure 3), animated photographs of the city of Beirut taken at different times of day succeed each other in a frantic rhythm to the score of a reading of Constantin Cavafy's 1909 poem *Waiting for the Barbarians*.

In the forefront is the aesthetic quality of pictures caught in broken motion, which turns the image of Beirut into striations of the natural colors of the sky and artificial lights of the metropolis, somewhat resembling the brush strokes of an abstract expressionist canvas. This effect is achieved by superimposing 50 to 70 photographs shot at a shutter speed between one and ten seconds and setting them in motion through video (Eye Filmmuseum 2021). Beyond the beauty of this vision, the moving image acquires significance through the recital of Cavafy's poem in the background. *Waiting for the*

*Barbarians* reflects a situation of impasse in which the life of the state has stopped, conscious of the imminent arrival of 'barbarians.' Signification is obtained here by the kind of 'horizontal montage' that Bazin (1958a) identified in the film essays of filmmakers such as Chris Marker. Horizontal because it proceeds 'from the ear to the eye,' from intellectual to visual cognition, as a result of the combination of poetry and film (Bazin 1958a : 22, cited in Stob 2012: 36). By means of the contrast between image and spoken word, the beauty of almost impressionistic images in *Waiting for the Barbarians* unlocks the reality of a city in the perpetual state of change due to which it cannot hold still in front of a camera. 'Barbarians' become vague referents standing either for threat—to be associated with Israel or with Islamist groups—or, in Cavafy's sense, an impatience for a positive turnaround.

The subjects of representation in *Remember the Light* and *Waiting for the Barbarians* remain quite static because the works focus the study of light and color on an almost two-dimensional surface. As a result, the viewer's attention is catalyzed towards a focal point within the fields of representation. Because of these formal qualities of the pictures and of the lack of a plot-oriented narrative, they manifest a centripetal type of framing. The space and time of the artwork remain separated from those of the spectator. On the one hand, the centripetal framing creates a discontinuity between the physical space occupied by the viewer and the space of the artwork; on the other, the absence of a plot means that viewers' reception process need not adapt to the duration of the moving image. These kinds of moving images are suited for conventional presentation on a museum's wall. This was the case with *Waiting for the Barbarians'* presentation at documenta 14 (2017), where the digital video appeared on a screen on a wall. *Remember the Light* usually features on screens hung in the middle of a semi-dark room, where viewers' ability to walk past them meant that the cinematic illusion of the black box was blended with the multi-screen installation's nature as an artistic environment.

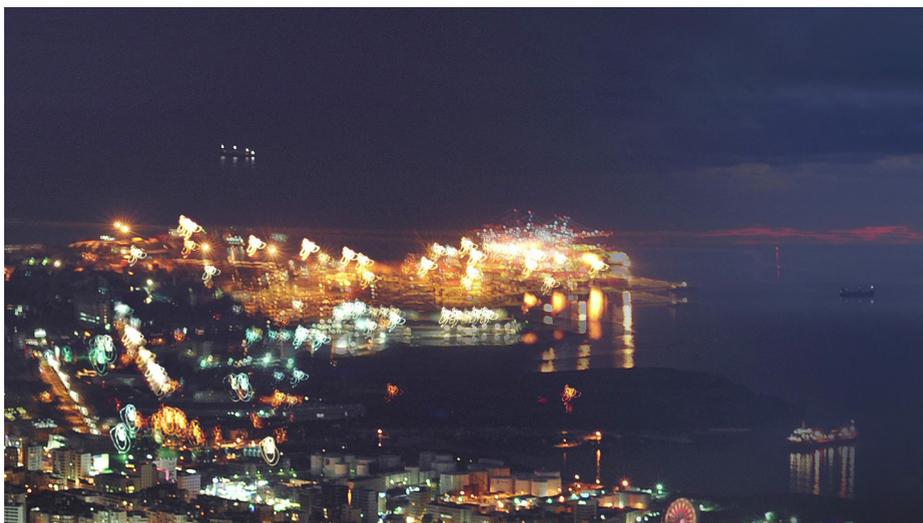


Figure 3. Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (2013) (courtesy of the artists).

A rather different case is Ammar al-Beik's *La Dolce Siria* (2014), part of his trilogy<sup>4</sup> about the 2011 Arab Uprising and the Syrian war. It is an assemblage of heterogeneous footage that makes it impossible to recognize a single centripetal core of representation. Adopting the widespread practice of Syrian civilian protesters recording human rights violations committed by the Syrian army from 2011 onwards, the filmmaker collected largely anonymous video material uploaded on social media and assembled it into a film. Al-Beik defies the notion of a single author in order to voice a collective Syrian narrative about the war that undermines that of the regime. For the duration of 24 minutes, *La Dolce Siria* breaks with many of cinema's conventions by merging amateurish, pixelated smartphone videos filmed by unknown video makers with professional footage extracted from Federico Fellini's *The Clowns* (1970), leading the spectator in and out of fiction. This use of film reflects contemporary art's concern with its time in a way that goes beyond mere documentation but also eschews voicing clear political statements. The short film showcases a multiperspectival narrative in which videos shot by Syrian protesters alternate with those shot by the opposite side. Although the notion of authorship is not discarded en bloc, the artwork is not understood as the expression of the original point of view of the artist-genius. Al-Beik builds his film with ready-made footage, exhibiting references to other films and artworks. It reflects contemporary developments in art following the postmodern turn, thus demonstrating the importance of conceptualizing artists' use of film in the art historical context.

Because of the complex montage, the film articulates a narrative that the viewer must 'read' from beginning to end. This is a kind of work that requires a higher degree of concentration and engagement compared to the two works previously mentioned. Noteworthy is the format adopted to present al-Beik's Syrian trilogy, of which *La Dolce Siria* is part, at the exhibition *Away from Home* at Kunstverein Graftschaff Bentheim in 2016 (Figure 3).<sup>5</sup> On a long white table, three tablets were placed next to each other, all equipped with headphones and a chair. The viewer was invited to sit and watch the short films individually, in the kind of solitary concentrated mood typical of private reading. Al-Beik describes cinema and its reception as a kind of ritual in which the spectator must break with the surrounding environment to enter the space and narrative of the film (2021, personal communication<sup>6</sup>). The exhibition format of al-Beik's films at Kunstverein Graftschaff Bentheim attempted to secure the viewer's immersion in the films' dimensions beyond the physical margins of the screen.

Bazin's (2005) distinction of film and painting based on the analysis of their inner space may have lost its relevance because of his unawareness of film's later development. However, this text suggests that a reinterpretation of the centrifugal-centripetal framework can be used to distinguish between contemporary approaches to the moving image and to develop strategies for their exhibiting. Seen from today's perspective, Bazin's theory underlines a fundamental issue for the presentation of film in the museum, a place traditionally reserved for framed or plastic works, both characterized

by a centripetal mode of reception. While Bazin sought to define cinema on the basis of a binary distinction, this article views the theory of centripetal and centrifugal framing as a positive dialectic of coexisting practices within artists' use of the moving image. The two modes engender different perceptions of space not only within the image, but also when it comes to the latter's relation to the exhibition room. Thus, the metamorphosis of film into contemporary moving images throws light on a second metamorphosis in the space of the museum. The identification of centrifugal and centripetal space allows us to establish the first cornerstone of a theory on how to exhibit moving images. The following section delves deeper into this theory of centripetal versus centrifugal image as applied to selected works exhibited as part of *Enter the Void* at the Kunsthalle Mainz in 2020.



Figure 4. Exhibition view of *Away from Home* at Kunstverein Grafschaft Bentheim (2016) with Ammar al-Beik (courtesy of Gudrun Thiessen-Schneider).

## 2.1. Moving Images *Enter the Void*

In 2020, the Kunsthalle Mainz hosted an exhibition entitled *Enter the Void*, which included works by Lawrence Abu Hamdan, the research group Forensic Architecture, Paulo Tavares, and Ursula Biemann. The exhibition featured pioneering works in the field of research-based art engaged in investigations of political and environmental relevance and their documentation. The title *Enter the Void* referred to the spaces left blank, silenced from history, that these artists endeavor to bring to the surface (Kunsthalle Mainz 2020: 2). This is the objective of Forensic Architecture, a collective of architects, photographers, filmmakers, programmers, journalists, and lawyers founded in 2010 at Goldsmiths University London. As the label 'forensic' explains, the

group conducts investigations with a journalistic approach, aiming to uncover 'human rights violations including violence committed by states, police forces, militaries, and corporations' (Forensic Architecture n.d.). Eyal Weizman, director of FA, explains that the term stems from the Latin *forensis*, meaning 'belonging to the forum,' that is, the space where public matters are discussed. 'Architecture' refers to the 'architectural dimension of the works'<sup>7</sup> (Weizman 2017) which set off to reconstruct 'architectural evidence,' that is, 'relating to buildings [and] urban environments' (Forensic Architecture n.d.). The fact that more than half of the members of the group are architects (Weizman 2017) is reflected in the presentation design of the works, which take the shape of apparatuses of evidence material ranging from model reconstructions of buildings and crime scenes to videos of material witnesses, documentary films, animated graphics, 3D prints, and written documents. As Lisa Stuckey (2017) points out, these works are 'reconstruction acts' with narrative potential (p. 31, cited in Engelskirchen 2019: 121). They tell of not just any story, but untold, urgent matters, often of political relevance. Above all, FA recognizes itself as a new field of academic research that has found in the museum one of its ideal display platforms.<sup>8</sup> The present analysis focuses on the group's use of moving images in the exhibition *Enter the Void* at Kunsthalle Mainz as well as on another work in the exhibition, *Forest Law* (2014), by Ursula Biemann and Paulo Tavares, a former member of FA. The heterogeneity of these works illuminates the necessity of articulating different modes of exhibiting moving images within the museum's space.

Hall II (Figure 1) presented works by the research group Centre for Contemporary Nature (CCN), a department of FA dealing with environmental issues. The work consists mainly of videos, digital prints, and 3D models, exposing lesions to the environment in conflict areas. Upon entering the room, the viewer is confronted with *CCN* (2019), a video projected onto a disc leaned upright against the wall featuring a two-dimensional representation of the earth. The five-minute, 34-second video, shown on a loop, visually reproduces areas whose recent conflicts affected the environment. It thus evokes a cartography of the ongoing environmental crises by simple but effective chromatic demarcations and detailed captions. Though the animated graphic is indeed a digital moving image, the representation remains two-dimensional. Its circular shape alludes to a planisphere, a schematic depiction of reality like all cartographical representations. The round projection surface is detached from the wall, emphasizing its discontinuity with reality. The work thus appears as a hybrid of plastic artwork and moving image dominated by a centripetal inward movement.

At the opposite corner of the hall, the work *Ecocide in Indonesia* (2016–17, Figure 4), made of a large projection, a video shown on a monitor, and digital prints, begins. It documents fires in the Indonesian areas of Kalimantan and Sumatra that led to the destruction of considerable portions of forests and peat lands (Kunsthalle Mainz 2020: 6). The main projection traces the lethal clouds generated by the fires as the clouds move across Southeast Asia. As *CCN* does, the video bears the aesthetics of a digital cartographical

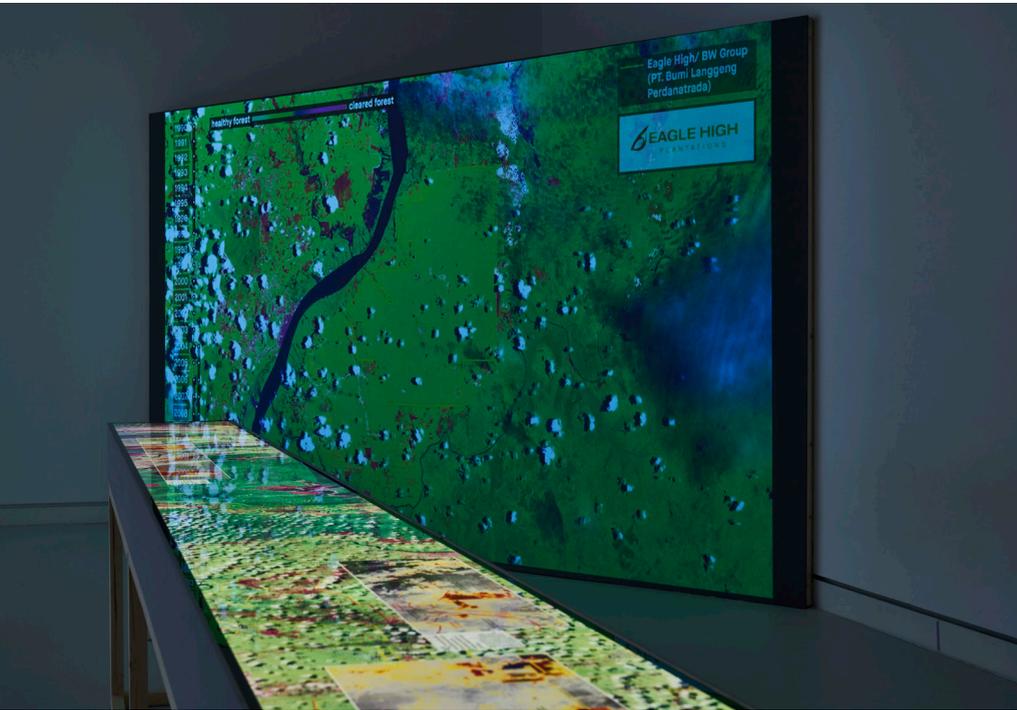


Figure 5. Exhibition view of *Enter the Void* at Kunsthalle Mainz (Hall II). Forensic Architecture's *Ecocide in Indonesia* (2016–17) (photo by Norbert Miguletz, courtesy of Forensic Architecture).

reconstruction. Again, the projection panel does not adhere perfectly flat to the wall but cuts diagonally across one of the room's corners. Interestingly, this visual interruption of continuity with the wall highlights the representational nature of the work, in contrast to those frequent cases in which a moving image is projected directly on the wall to uphold its illusionism. Next, a monitor displays *The Forest Fires* (2017), a video recording helicopters' attempts to extinguish the fires in the forests of Pangkalanbun in Central Kalimantan in 2015. Though it is not an animated cartography like the previous works, the elevated and mostly perpendicular perspective of the camera filming from a helicopter flattens the objects of representation. The absence of a voice-over narration points to the use of film as a tool for direct documentation. Overall, as the aesthetic of the works also suggests, these images are evidence material of forensic investigations. They do not tell a story of their own, but rather function as figures of a collage of disparate types of documents which are combined to form meaning. In opposition to the predominance of the word, written or spoken, in legal and forensic matters, FA reproduces its evidence visually by assembling it physically in space. Moving images are indispensable to this strategy, as they allow the collective to either supply the proof that testifies to the original event or reconstruct the latter through design and drafting software programs.

On the other side of the room is a work of a slightly different type: *Ape Law* (2016, Figure 1) is an inquiry into the rights of apes, documenting the 2014 trial in defense of orangutans in Buenos Aires. The core of the work

consists of two short videos projected on the wall: one shows the orangutan Sandra during scientific tests, the other is a documentation of the trial that recognized Sandra's legal status as a 'non-human person' (Kunsthalle Mainz 2020: 8). These moving images differ from the videos and graphics described before. While the latter consisted of images presented as material evidence which, taken together, built a case, the videos of the Sandra Trial speak on their own. To do so, they make use of basic tropes of film, first and foremost, the construction of a narrative through montage. The videos show excerpts from experiments conducted with Sandra at the Buenos Aires Zoo, each explained by a voiceover commentary. What follows is a reconstruction of the Sandra Trial through interviews with veterinarians and lawyers.

*CCN*, *Ecocide in Indonesia*, and *The Forest Fires* evidence the moving image's quality as a 'perfect' yet silent witness, as their images, if singled out, cannot speak by themselves, but rather need other images and text to complement their meaning. *Ape Law*, however, articulates its visual evidence in a story of its own. The image is projected directly onto the wall, emphasizing the work's immateriality, which, together with its narrative base, generates a centrifugal perception of its inner space. Moreover, unlike the previous works, *Ape Law* has characters that speak, and their words are translated in the subtitles. This kind of moving image requires the full immersion that is missing from Hall II, where centrifugal and centripetal types of work threaten to obscure each other.

FA's use of the moving image, reflecting the diverse background of its members, seems to be rooted in science rather than art history. However, the assemblage of the visuals—indeed the architectural quality of the forensic investigations—is an original and intriguing feature of the collective's work. The same kind of montage that shapes a film's narrative at the level of the image here unfolds outside of it, reified in a physical space.

Viewers encounter a different atmosphere in Hall III. The vast room is submerged into semi-darkness, dominated by two large projection panels on one side and a long table on the other. The only light is that emanating from the projections and the reading lights over the table. This environment forms Ursula Biemann and Paulo Tavares' *Forest Law* (2014, Figure 5), a research project about the rights of nature in the context of the Ecuadorian Amazon. The double-channel video installation shows recordings of the forest and testimonials of the indigenous Sarayaku people who won a trial in defense of this ecosystem against the large-scale extraction works conducted in the region. While the Amazonian forest is renowned for its positive impact on climate regulation for the whole planet, its soil houses great reserves of natural resources that make it especially attractive for private corporations. The main part of the work is a double-channel projection following Biemann and Tavares along their journey through the forest. These moving images drastically differ from those in Hall II—except for *Ape Law*—because of their likeness to a documentary film. The atmosphere of darkness, the dimensions of the projections, as well as the bench in front of them, all signal to the viewers that a quasi-cinematic experience awaits them. The duration of the videos increases

compared to that of the videos in Hall II, reaching 38 minutes. Doubtless, the projected images produce centrifugal movement as the camera follows the artists' route through the Amazon.

*Forest Law* exemplifies another use of film by artists, one that approaches and at the same time departs from traditional documentary film. The adoption of two screens with two parallel images, like points of view, also complicates the centrifugal nature of the space projected on the canvases. While traditional documentaries are built on a single narration, these artists' work uses temporal shifts in the representations within both screens to create a discontinuous diegesis. Spatial and temporal discontinuity is added to the centrifugality of the image when the same event is displayed simultaneously on both screens but filmed from two different perspectives and at slightly different times. *Forest Law* also departs from conventional documentary film in that the moving image does not represent the sole element of the work. On the other side of the room is a table on which documents, books, and soil samples are assembled to portray the research process behind the documentary film. In line with the display format of *FA*, Ursula Biemann and Paulo Tavares not only display the final result of their investigation—the 38-minute-long film—but also provide evidence of their sources, in the same logic as forensic research. Therefore, their work reflects both a scientific attitude and a journalistic posture valuing transparency, all filtered through an artistic strategy of enacting their narrative.

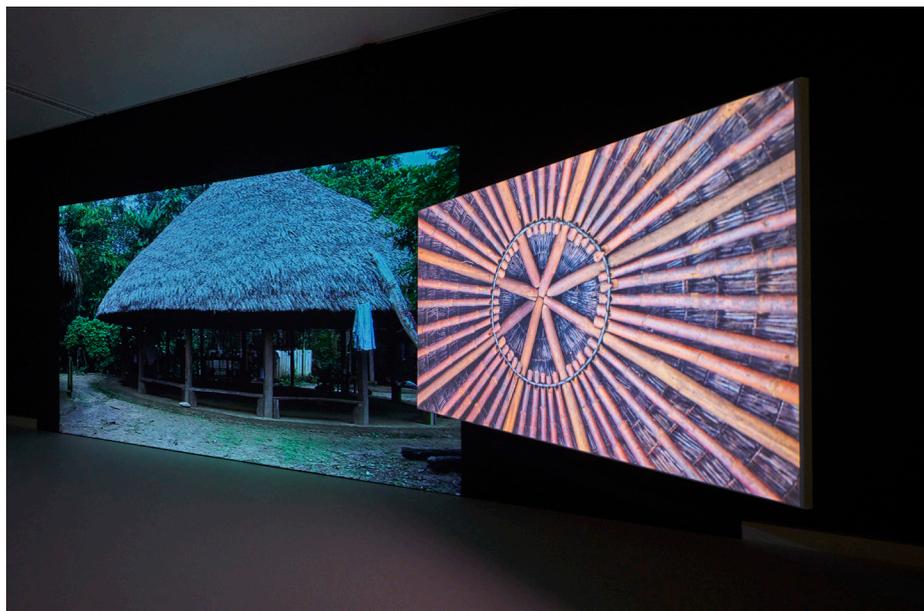


Figure 6. Exhibition view of *Enter the Void* at Kunsthalle Mainz (Hall III). Ursula Biemann and Paulo Tavares, *Forest Law* (2014) (photo by Norbert Miguletz, courtesy of Ursula Biemann and Paulo Tavares).

The works exhibited in *Enter the Void* are a poignant case of how the use of moving images in the art practice of the twenty-first century has changed and how it has not. Artists engender works that partly readopt

cinematic tropes—montage and narrative logic—while maintaining the aesthetics of a plastic, three-dimensional installation or framed image. The collage of visual proof collected by the artist-researchers fills the museum like one piece of architecture inside another. Because objects establish a relation with the space they inhabit, it is a *devoir* of the curator to think of artworks as if they had their own communicative agency. Much like Bruno Latour's (2005) understanding of Actor Network Theory, an exhibition is an apparatus of professionals, institutional laws, technical devices, and artworks—in other words, material and immaterial things as well as humans—that together form a narrative about a specific piece of knowledge. The artworks presented within the exhibition room are vehicles of knowledge and, thus, agents of communication in the absence of their makers. Yet, artworks can be given a voice or silenced depending on the efficacy of curatorial strategy. A theory on how to exhibit the moving image must take into account concrete examples of diverse configurations of the medium. In the case of the works described so far, and indeed in many contemporary usages of moving images, the medium figures as one element within what might be better described as 'environments.' In the work of FA, implicit in the subject matter is the process of research itself, as it sets out to visually reproduce how knowledge comes into being. As Boris Michel (2017: 706, as cited in Engelskirchen 2019: 124) interestingly put it, FA's work is a kind of *archaeological* reconstruction of an original event that is by definition inaccessible. The exhibition hall plays host to different kinds of 'artifacts' whose heterogeneity calls for a metamorphosis of the space, understood as a network of interacting media.

### 3. Third Metamorphosis: The Spectator of the Moving Image

From a historical perspective, the adoption of moving images as evidence material—instead of as independent products conceived by the creative mind of an auteur—is nothing new. As did photography in its early days, film, too, found application within scientific and forensic investigations because of its alleged capacity to record reality as it is. This tension between old and new defines the twenty-first century's moving image in the field of art. The question that remains is: what does this mean for curatorship and for the spectator of an institution as old as the museum? Artistic practice is receptive to technological transformations. The apparatus containing them, the museum, however, often struggles to keep pace. Curators, faced with new media and their respective modes of reception, are forced to rethink exhibition formats. Curating moving images appears to be a work-in-progress, in need of liberation from the conventions of both museum and cinema. The theory of centripetal and centrifugal space represents a starting point in the formulation of conceptual tools to exhibit moving images. From the perspective of the spectator's reception, understanding the space within the projected image prevents the inattentiveness of which scholarship warns. One of the pillars of the 'white cube vs. black box' (Balsom 2014: 39) dichotomy is the

alleged active reception of the museum's visitor opposed to the passive attitude of the cinema's audience. In response to the myth of the ideologically neutral space of the white cube which devaluates the mode of cinematic spectatorship as 'passive,' Balsom (2014) writes:

In contemporary discourses concerning the status of the spectator of the moving image installation, the notion that the cinema spectator is passive while the gallery spectator is inherently active rests on a spurious mapping of passive/active binaries onto this architectural difference, as if to conflate physical stasis with regressive mystification and physical ambulation with criticality—a claim that holds true on neither end (p. 51).

The issue is not whether spectators are allowed to move or not. Everybody who has been to a museum surely relates to the trope of the *flâneur*, the distracted viewer lost in the galleries of the museum, assailed by the flood of visuals awaiting to be seen. It reminds one of the half-scientific, half-colloquial expression 'Stendhal syndrome.'<sup>9</sup>

The moving image has changed the game of spectator reception because of one of its formal characteristics: its being time-based. While staring at a still image pertains to the sphere of subjective time, a video has a predetermined duration. *Forest Law*, *Ape Law*, and *La Dolce Siria* require the spectator's attention over an exact timespan. Not passive contemplation, but active viewing of images, listening, and even reading (for instance, the words in the subtitles). These moving images require their own space, or at least the creation of the conditions for a full immersion into their narrative. This is what we might name a 'centrifugal mode of reception.' This mode is troubled by a further aspect of artists' use of the moving image, namely the multiplication of points of view either in one image (*La Dolce Siria*), or by splitting the diegesis onto two projections, each subtending its own temporality (*Forest Law*).

On the other hand, we have the almost static images of *CCN*, *Ecocide in Indonesia*, *Remember the Light*, and *Waiting for the Barbarians*, all calling for a 'centripetal mode of reception,' since their representational fields gravitate inward, and their time is suspended to match that of their reception.

Stefanie Böttcher, director at the Kunsthalle Mainz, and curator Lina Louisa Krämer identify the challenges and advantages of exhibiting moving images: while video and film correspond to people's everyday habits of information reception, the frequent lack of a coherent narrative implies a need to compete for spectators' attention (2021, personal communication<sup>10</sup>). As Böttcher suggests, video and audio materials easily attract viewers, as they fill not just the room from which they emanate but adjacent rooms as well. It is, however, a challenge to articulate the relation between a given space and artworks in order to keep spectators engaged with the moving images. This consideration highlights one more factor that needs to be taken into account when exhibiting this medium: the behavior of sound. An artwork emanating sound occupies a space that goes beyond its physical margins. At last, these reflections allow us to trace some criteria and define the sketch of a theory on exhibiting moving images, a theory essentially concerned with space: firstly, the space delimited by the movement within the artwork, which is either

*centripetal* or *centrifugal*; then, the temporal space, that is, the time the image demands for its reception; and lastly, the ephemeral space occupied by the sound emitted by the artwork.

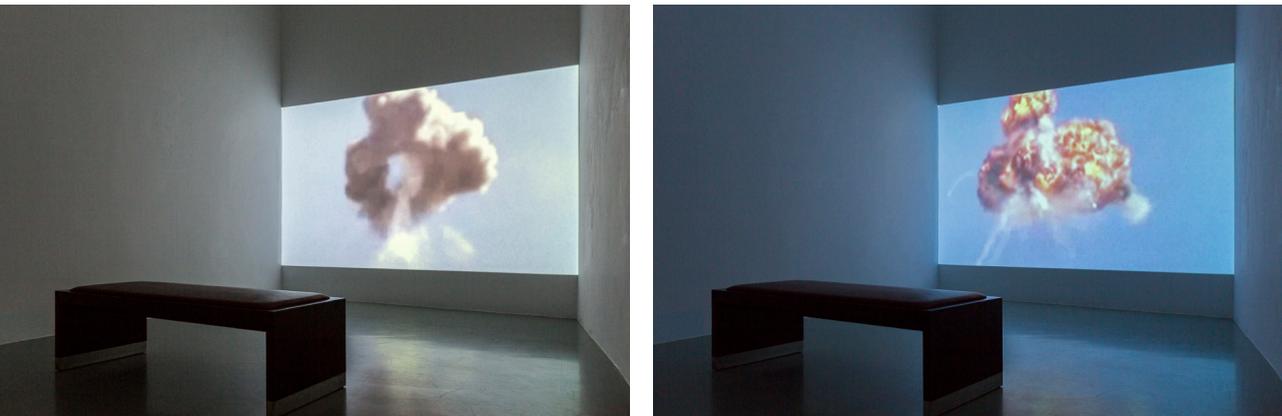


Figure 7. Exhibition views from *Jugendzimmer* at Gallery Crone, Vienna. Ammar al-Beik, *La Dolce Siria* (2014) (courtesy of Matthias Bildstein).

#### 4. Fourth Metamorphosis: The Museum and the Moving Image

The moving image's migration into the museum has not been an ideologically neutral phenomenon. Although it might appear today to have been an inevitable consequence of technological developments, the reasons for this medium's integration into art institutions are heterogeneous and linked to the role of museums. These exercise a twofold power: the ritual of investing art with value and, consequently, its preservation in the form of cultural heritage. As are all things and people endowed with power, museums are not innocent, because they select and thus exclude. Film has sought a spot within the museum since the start of the twentieth century. For instance, when the MoMA inaugurated its film library, it implicitly recognized its cultural and artistic value (Balsom 2014: 17). Times were changing and so was the idea of art, because of the technical reproducibility of photography and film of which Walter Benjamin spoke. But, contrary to his prophecy, the aura given by the rarity of the artifact was now being exchanged for the aura of perfect images of reality and glowing projections. Film's presentation within art institutions might be explained by their ability to secure the medium's artistic freedom against the dictum of the market. But Balsom (2014: 31) recognizes a paradox: while the migration of cinema from the film theater into the museum was seen by many as a 'rescue' from commercial exploitation, it is also true that it was not cinema in the conventional sense that had entered the museum. Godard's work testifies to this fact: his production for the black box differs

strongly from that for the white cube. The 'no man's land,' in these terms, are film festivals like Cannes or the special sections instituted by the Venice Film Festival and the Berlinale,<sup>11</sup> which set out to include other formats than the traditional feature-length film. Their existence is a symptom of the need to readjust fixed categories to include works that set out to transcend them. Today, artists' films such as al-Beik's can be found at these venues, as well as in art museums and galleries (Figure 6).

While the moving image's migration to the museum was often seen as breaking away from the film industry, others feared for the museum's integrity (Balsom 2014: 43–46). The reality of museums struggling to compete with entertainment industries, and of artists expressing themselves through moving images—that is, the same medium as, for instance, advertising—generates anxiety about the risks of cultural 'massification.' However, legitimate as this fear may be, it does not stem from a real disengagement by museums from their tasks of education and preservation. Rather, these institutions are faced with the challenge of reaching such objectives at a time when the rules of communication are rapidly changing. For one, the inflation of broadcasted image and audio information is affecting the capacity of audiences' reception. This is no longer the time of contemplation and slow-paced reading, but of quick and impactful messages. If museums adapt to this new reality, it does not automatically mean they will turn into places of spectacle. What we see today are truly postmodern museums, not only because of the architectures of some of them, but because of their artworks merging high and low cultures in a variety of media ranging from painting to new technologies.

The museum is a powerful institution where material and immaterial forms of knowledge become 'art' in order to be preserved and transmitted to the community. This power does not merely consist of a superficial investiture of objects with a title. Museums can *empower* a community with knowledge. This is the essence of the public museum, whose genealogy goes back to the Enlightenment's opening of royal collections of the public. Finding a new methodology that would ensure the reception of moving image-based works is therefore integral to contemporary museums' educational project. In this article, I attempted to sketch the basis of a theory on how to curate moving images beginning from an analysis of the space engendered by the artists within their works. The idea of a centrifugal versus a centripetal mode of reception allows to establish a dialog between the artwork's inward space and that of the exhibition hall. The objective of such distinction is not to create a binary scheme to split moving images into two strict categories. It is, rather, a call for curatorship to think of the exhibition space as a two-fold construct, as the stage of a relation between the materiality of the given space and art objects, and the ephemerality of that other diegetic space and time of the moving image.

1. See A. L. Rees, *A History of Experimental Film and Video* (1999); Raymond Bellour, 'Of Another Cinema,' in *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tanya Leighton (2008): 406–22; Erika Balsom, *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art* (2014); and Catherine Elwes, *Installation and the Moving Image* (2015).
2. The present distinction between centrifugal and centripetal framing is inspired by André Bazin's essay 'Painting and cinema' (published in *What is Cinema?*, 1958–1962). Here Bazin writes that painting is characterized by a 'centripetal framing', while film presents a 'centrifugal' one, given by film's allusion to a space and time extending beyond the limits of the frame.
3. Mehanna D (2021, 25 March) personal communication, e-mail correspondence. Mehanna is Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige's studio manager.
4. Ammar al-Beik's film trilogy on Syria includes *The Sun's Incubator* (2011), *La Dolce Siria* (2014), and *Kaleidoscope* (2015).
5. The exhibition *Away from Home* took place at Kunstverein Graftschaff Bentheim in Berlin from the 21st of February to the 8th of May 2016. For details, see [archive.kunstverein-grafschaft-bentheim.de/index.php?id=195&L=1](http://archive.kunstverein-grafschaft-bentheim.de/index.php?id=195&L=1) (accessed 01/11/21).
6. Al-Beik A (2021, February 24) personal communication, face-to-face interview.
7. The author's translation.
8. Forensic Architecture (n.d.) says the following about the presentation of its cases: 'We present our investigations in international courtrooms, parliamentary inquiries, United Nations (UN) assemblies, as well as in citizens' tribunals and truth commissions. We also present our work in keynote lectures, seminars, publications and exhibitions in art and cultural institutions. We use these forums to reflect on the political and cultural context of our work.'
9. A psychosomatic condition consisting in accelerated heartbeat and dizziness supposedly occurring under extended exposure to artworks and related phenomena. It owes its name to the author Stendhal, who describes having these feelings during his visit 1817 to Florence in his book *Naples and Florence: A Journey from Milan to Reggio*.
10. Böttcher S and Krämer L (2021, 1 March) personal communication, e-mail correspondence.
11. The Venice Film Festival inaugurated the section 'Orizzonti' at its 67th edition in 2010; in 2006, the Berlinale Film Festival opened the section 'Forum Expanded,' an appendix of the Forum, which has included films by unknown or underrepresented filmmakers since 1971.

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### **Disclosure Statement**

The author declares that there are no financial conflicts of interest to disclose nor personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

### **Author's bio**

Margherita Foresti is a PhD candidate in contemporary Art History at the University of Münster, Germany. Her ongoing dissertation project focuses on artistic research in the Middle East and North Africa. She is assistant curator at the department of graphic prints and photography at the Frankfurt History Museum. She previously obtained her MA in Modern and Contemporary Art History from the University of Cologne, with a thesis on selected works by Ahlam Shibli and Francis Alÿs. Her current research interests include contemporary art from the Middle East and North Africa, global art history, decoloniality, history and theory of photography, and film and media studies.

Address: Historisches Museum Frankfurt, Saalhof 1 60311 Frankfurt am Main.

E-mail: [margheritaforesti@gmail.com](mailto:margheritaforesti@gmail.com).

ORCID: 0000-0003-2166-9558.

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## ***Film Book Film (2021)***

Tafiana Macedo  
Artist, Portugal

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## ***Film Book Film (2021)***

Tatiana Macedo

*Film Book Film* is a transmedial artwork that starts with a children's book adaptation of a film, picking up the discarded book and translating it back to a film again. Accompanied by an original sound composition that reinterprets the original film score in conjunction with the grainy images in the book, the piece comes full circle. *Film Book Film* is part of the experimental cinema tradition of dematerializing the image—here

intricately done via sound—at the same time as it lifts the book up to get us closer to the images, proving their physicality but pushing them away, all along the lines and using the tricks of narrative cinema. A new experience evolves as the film alternates between objective and subjective shots where we are both readers and spectators, punctuated by humor.

*Film Book Film* is a transmedial artwork that starts with a children's book adaptation of a film, picking up the discarded book and translating it back to a film again. Accompanied by an original sound composition that reinterprets the original film score in conjunction with the grainy images in the book, the piece comes full circle.

One of the first challenges imposed by this idea was the copyright. Books, films, and music have strong legal copyright protection that I needed to address. I realized along the way that the problem with images has to do with their physicality: If I scanned the book, those printed pictures would regress to an immaterial form. This immateriality makes them regress to a 'pre-authorship' stage which then puts me in breach of copyright, meaning I cannot manipulate them as if they were my own. The only way to get around this was to work with the book as an object. The solution was to film the book and the pictures inside the book in order to make the video a matter of 'witnessing' an existing object. In the end, it is the music (the decomposition of sound) that performs most of the deconstruction and dematerialization of the image, together with the added layers of subjectivity imbued by the filming and editing.

One of the first things I knew was that I wanted to parody the genre of films and videos with or about books while at the same time letting go of the object and distancing myself from it in order to get closer to the image, the narrative, and the character's subjectivity. But I also knew that the more we get closer to an image, the more it recedes. So, I set out to make

a film from a book without it simply being a book film. It is indeed a 'Film Book Film' in the sense that it started with a film that generated a book that I then transform into a film again, retaining its narrative qualities. We are all aware of the language and techniques of narrative cinema such as plot, pacing, suspense, subjective shots, the counter shot or reverse shot, the Kuleshov effect, montage as 'conflict' according to Eisenstein, and the role of sound and soundtracks as emotional triggers, so I consciously and deliberately made use of them. I challenged myself to tell the same story and follow the linearity and sequencing of the book. But unlike in filmmaking, there are times when I return to a previous page (as we often do when reading a book). It was also very clear to me that the spectator would have to switch from viewing a film to 'reading' the book by reading the images, since I deliberately ignored the text .

Editing is of course a way of writing. It is always a meticulously long process for me, frame by frame. It's amazing how one millisecond can affect the perception of a cut (much like choosing words and punctuation in a text). But when it comes to moving images (and sound), viewers don't realize how precise the cut can be, since our brains get tricked easily through the senses.

Before I started filming, I approached the composer Hugo Vasco Reis with my idea of translating the book back to a film again and challenged him to freely interpret the film score *Reminiscence* by Maurice Solway, which appears on the last page of the book. I should mention that Maurice Solway himself plays the role of the old man who plays the violin in the film. Hugo then carefully deconstructed the score, listened to the original recordings and understood its harmonic field: the key was B flat major, the tempo was 'andante con amore,' and the duration was approximately two minutes. He then developed major and minor harmonies played simultaneously and oscillating microtonal frequencies (which I refer to as 'crackling particles') created digitally through granular synthesis and noise. These particles were an echo of the image grain from the analog photographs in the book. Towards the end the sound grain becomes denser and larger, achieving a climax that later dissipates and returns to the beginning in a nostalgic loop of memory and 'reminiscence.' You would never recognize the final sound mapping as the original score, but according to him, it works as a quote from the original. I then filmed and edited with his composition in mind. The crackling noise can be hard on the ears if you wear earbuds (which was not intentional), so I strongly discourage that—please do not wear earbuds or headphones while experiencing this piece.

There are several moments of 'play' in this piece, like the gestures of those hands that appear and disappear, which are both my own hands and my assistant's hands. I often use a subtle yet incisive humor in my work, and I need these moments of release from the tension created by the haptic observation and micro-actions that I often explore.

### Artist's bio

Tatiana Macedo's work develops transdisciplinarily between installation, photography, essay-film, expanded cinema, and sound. In 2020 Macedo was the subject of a retrospective, *Focus*, at Intersección Contemporary Audiovisual Art Festival in Coruna, Spain. In 2015 she won the 1st Sonae Media Art Award with the expanded video installation *1989*. Her debut film, *Seems So Long Ago, Nancy* (2012), shot at the Tate Britain and Tate Modern, was screened in international film festivals and art galleries. The film won the first SAW Film Prize from the American Anthropological Association (Washington, D.C., 2014). Her work has been exhibited at Jeju Biennial (South Korea), Culturgest (Oporto, Portugal), the Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology (Lisbon, Portugal), the National Museum of Contemporary Art (Lisbon), Rohkunstbau XXIII (Spreewald, Germany), Iwalewahaus (Bayreuth, Germany), Tegenboschvanvreden Gallery (Amsterdam), Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Lisbon), and Künstlerhaus Bethanien (Berlin) among other institutions, galleries, art fairs, and film festivals.



## **Net.Art Exhibited: Distributed Museums**

Maria Redaelli

Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy

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# Net.Art Exhibited: Distributed Museums

Maria Redaelli

Net.art represents an artistic language which, by virtue of its hypertextual essence, can connect people with one another by centering its practice on the interaction with audiences. A crucial component of net.art is direct experience: audiences truly engage with a net.artwork only when they interact directly with it. In a gallery or museum, net.art becomes more of a concrete document, an object of memory, losing its fundamental aspect of unfiltered practice, as well as the elements of surprise and positive

disorientation—this loss results from net.art's transposition into a physical place and transformation into an object to be exhibited. This visual essay dwells on pioneering projects that need to be reconsidered in order to further historical, museological, and curatorial discussion of net.art based on its intrinsic qualities, diffusion, and exhibition. The essay is not intended as an ending to the discussion or its resolution; instead, it aims to bring attention back to net.art's social aggregator function that was lost in the age of digital disillusionment.

**Keywords:** art history, digital art, ephemeral, exhibition studies, interactivity, moving image, museum studies, net.art, networks, TAZ reality

'The Net was a lot like television, another former wonder of the age. The Net was a vast glass mirror. It reflected what was shown. Mostly human banality.'

(Sterling 1994: 20)

This visual essay is dedicated to the modalities of exhibiting net.art, paying special attention to how audience perception and participation change when observing and engaging with a net.artwork in a museum or a gallery, as opposed to at home, autonomously. The essay argues that net.artwork exhibited in a museum/offline becomes something different, as it loses some of its ephemerality and temporal precariousness and becomes less of a puzzle. Indeed, as Annet Dekker (2018) notes, net.art is defined not only as a network, but also as something processual, ambiguous, and unstable. That is why exhibiting a net.artwork in a static and limited context such as a gallery or a museum changes its features. In Brian O'Doherty's (2012) words, in this case 'the context becomes the content' (p. 22)—that is, net.art becomes more of a concrete document, an object of memory, losing the elements of surprise and disorientation that usually characterize it.

These case studies demonstrate the relationships between net.art and museum institutions. This essay also considers the role of technology, namely the different tools that allow audiences to engage with net.art. The type of device and browser employed define user experience as well, which is why the visuals in this essay show the whole context—that is, the navigation bar of the browser, such as Safari. The screenshots presented in the essay were collected by the author on her Mac computer. Some other screenshots were taken from the web archive *Net Art Anthology*,<sup>1</sup> a web service which deals with the preservation of net.art and therefore presents works in their original form. Although the essay does not explicitly deal with issues related to the preservation of digital artworks, it is important to remember that these works are 'fragile,' in the sense that they depend on obsolete languages and software.

Net.art's first projects remain relevant to this day because of their unequivocally subversive character: they were conceived as provocative actions, born of the intention to create fully novel relationships within a parallel reality. They were part of democratic efforts aimed at establishing collectivity in a world where first capitalism and then neoliberalism had already instituted individuality as the highest of virtues. In this sense, moving images (starting with cinema and television) have been incorporated into the logic of the neoliberal market, and the public has become accustomed to passively consuming them. Even the Internet no longer exists as a free space, as it too has become mostly governed by the rules of the neoliberal system. As a result, the public now approaches net.artworks superficially, not being accustomed to recognizing the diversity of the images that bombard them. With the advent of social media, this phenomenon has become even more widespread. Moving images, the distinguishing feature of net.artwork, are routinely found on these platforms, to such an extent that users do not even register them as noteworthy anymore. The viewer is becoming—is being made—more and more passive. Audiences are constantly exposed to hundreds of unchallenging, even undistinguishable, images every day, every hour, every second, and they automatically apply the capitalistic, neoliberal logic of individuality even to images found on the Internet. It is almost impossible for viewers to encounter images that awaken them from this state of desensitized numbness.<sup>2</sup> In fact, despite their name, social networks are tools of narcissistic practice that incorporate the individual in a virtual bubble that shows the user only what she/he wants to see. In this sense, social networks create an illusion of control, when in fact, it is the content and the images that are controlling the user. Net.art projects, by nature, can operate outside of this logic and impact audiences by truly engaging them, rather than subjugating them to their control. For this reason, it is important to reevaluate the role of such net.art projects today and think about new curatorial and exhibition models, be they in person or virtual. The context in which an image or a moving image is presented can transform how that image impacts the audience.

## Approaches to Net.Art in the Museum

The Internet provides opportunities for creating networks. This may seem obvious, but when it comes to artistic practices, it is not. Working on the Internet means transposing the individual into a global community, which results in collective moments where everyone can act in concert (Tozzi 2004: 237). Since its appearance, virtual space has been ideal for establishing new networks that transcend artistic codes and the frontiers of genres—like the assumptions about art common in the postmodern and post-medium era<sup>3</sup>—and bypassed geographical borders. Of course, many other artistic movements and tendencies had transgressed and evolved the boundaries and practices of their predecessors. However, net.art developed and thrived precisely because of and thanks to the conditions provided by virtual space. It is an artistic language which, by virtue of its hypertextual essence, has the ability to connect people with one another by centering its practice on the interaction with audiences.

The term net.art was coined by Vuk Ćosić in 1995, who proposed it at the first international event called Net Art Per Se (Trieste, 1996). It was accepted by the participants as it outlined an artistic practice that produced a new kind of communication and new routes of meaning, i.e. new paths for artworks to convey ideas and feelings (Deseriis and Marano 2007: 32). Sometimes referred to as Internet art or Net Art,<sup>4</sup> net.art is art produced for the web (web-based art): processual, collaborative, distributed, expanding. The very essence of net.art is to establish and be established on a network that reaches the audience, who is at the same time a viewer, a user (Manovich 2002: 116–135), and an actor<sup>5</sup>. User experience is already mediated because of the use of devices, but most of the time artists try to decompose and recompose the interface to unearth the dynamics and mechanisms behind programming language (Tanni 2004: 277–287).

Many studies have focused mostly on the role of museums and galleries in the conservation and preservation of time-based art (Dekker 2018; Ippolito, Rinehart 2014; Noordegraaf, Saba, Le Maître, and Hediger 2013; Serexhe 2013). This visual essay refers to other texts based mainly on how the perception of net.art differs when experienced online or offline (Ghidini 2019; Goriunova 2012; Paul 2008; Verschooren 2007; Gere 2004; Casares Rivas 2003; Dietz 1998). Despite various theoretical discussions and different experiences, a methodological fog still surrounds the phenomenon. This ‘fogginess’ is increased by this historical moment, where people’s lives, including their cultural lives, have moved online. It is once again necessary to emphasize the fundamental separation between art produced on the net and for the net, and art that is *found* on the net, a gimmick now widely used by museum institutions. As has been said, this text will dwell on pioneering projects, reconsidering them in order to further historical, museological, and curatorial discussion of net.art based on its intrinsic qualities, diffusion, and exhibition. This article aims to contribute to the discourse by reevaluating past net.artworks that may spur new reflections in today’s continuously evolving

artistic landscape. The visual element will be used as a supporting tool for the analysis, allowing us to exemplify how the basic elements of net.art become altered in exhibition space.

I propose considering the act of exhibiting net.art in the context of the wider debate around the introduction of moving images to the museum and gallery. As Miriam De Rosa (2020) and Eivind Røssaak (2013) suggest, when audiences encounter a moving image in a museum, as opposed to the fixed image (that is, a canvas or a statue) they expect, they change their attitude towards what they have in front of their eyes. They are accustomed to walking, sometimes hurriedly, within the museum's space, passing in front of a work of art and duly following along the exhibition path. When dealing with moving images, the observer is forced to stop and truly consider what they are seeing to grasp the meaning. The exhibited moving images are largely defined by the environment that is created to interpret them. Let's consider that 'every exhibition tells a story, by directing the viewer through the exhibition in a particular order; the exhibition space is always a narrative space' (Groys 2008: 43). This is a significant detail that reveals that every exhibition that deals with moving images is unique and non-reproducible. By extension, for Boris Groys (2019), 'an exhibition cannot be reproduced' but only 'reenacted or restaged' (p. 176). Relatedly, Groys also argues that 'a digital image can not only be shown or copied [...] but only staged and performed' (p. 127), which denotes the 'performative character of digital reproduction' (p. 128).

In the case of net.art, Groys' interpretation is particularly fitting, as the observer is also a user, as already mentioned, and must confront the medium directly to create her/his own narration. In fact, to draw on Vincenzo Estremo's ideas (2016), curating data and digital images means manipulating them, thus proposing new narrations. We can then infer that net.art's ability to create new narratives arises from its main characteristic of openness. The net.artwork itself depends on the spectator/user who *intervenes* in it by interacting with the work and modifying it. The version of a net.artwork proposed by a cultural institution—and by those who work for it—depends on establishing a new environment, a new reality. The experience one draws from it differs from when the net.artwork is left to its own devices, a fact on which Marialaura Ghidini (2020: 303) also reflects. It should be considered that even the fictitious reality on which each user is able to operate autonomously on the Internet is extremely filtered. Indeed, as Groys (2019:175) tells us, the internet is a mirror that shows us only what we want to see. It then follows that the distinction between the two experiences (i.e., the one in the museum and the direct one, interacting with net.art autonomously) depends less on the mediation in and of itself than on the context that surrounds it. 'As a fiber of an organic whole, moving images weave into the environment, becoming part of its texture, a component of that place' (De Rosa 2020: 227),<sup>6</sup> and it is those same surroundings that make the audience conscious of the mediation implemented (Røssaak 2013: 130). More precisely, according to Groys (2008), again, 'the curator can't but place, contextualize, and narrativize works of art—which necessarily leads to their relativization' (p. 44).

In this context, it is also worth mentioning the distinction made by Nilo-Manuel Casares Rivas (2003: 101–104), who distinguishes two components of electronic art: the ripple and the corpuscular. The first is conceived as ephemeral and invasive, as it allows the artwork to get closer to the public without barriers, while the second is thought as material and concrete, as it might appear in a private space autonomously, as opposed to being experienced as a ‘museum fixation.’ Yet, following Groys’ (2008) reasoning, one might think that, when dealing with net.art, the role of the exhibition re-empowers the curator, allowing her/him to consecrate what is exhibited as art. The debate on whether this is possible certainly cannot be solved within the limited space and scope of this article. Rather, I would like to show and demonstrate how a net.artwork changes when exhibited online or offline.

### An Analysis through Visual Case Studies

As already anticipated, net.art longs for interaction among different artists (and people in general) from various countries; it promotes collaboration and exchange. Therefore, Craig Saper has proposed the expression ‘networked art,’ which is a very useful definition in the context of this work, but a bit too wide as it describes different artistic and cultural practices based on networks (Saper 2001).

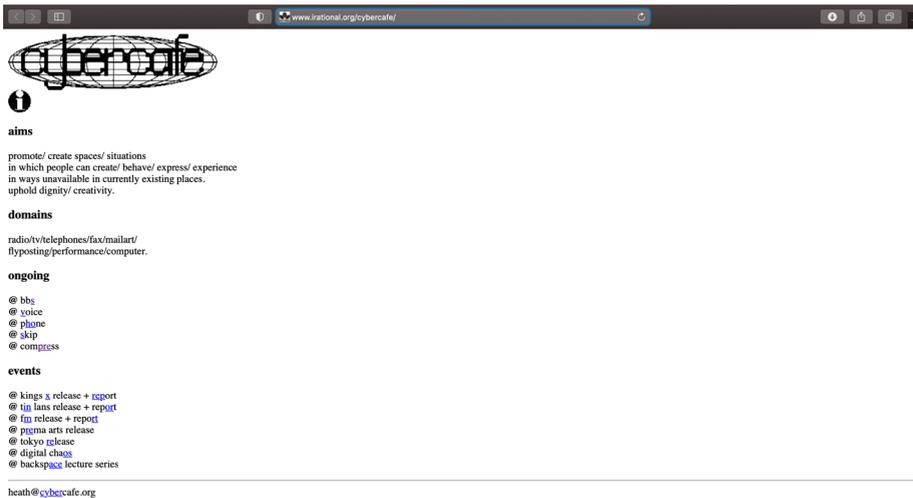


Figure 1. A screenshot of Heath Bunting’s *Cybercafe*, www.irational.org/cybercafe, 9 September 2021 (courtesy of the author).

Let us consider, for example, Heath Bunting’s *Cybercafe* (1994). He aimed to use the Internet as a platform to promote interaction with people, to create new forms of communication and networks. Indeed, ‘a network is about difference, transformation, and heterogeneity, realized through ongoing relations between various actants’ (Dekker 2018: 22). Another early example of this practice is Wolfgang Staehle’s *The Thing*. Similarly to Heath Bunting,

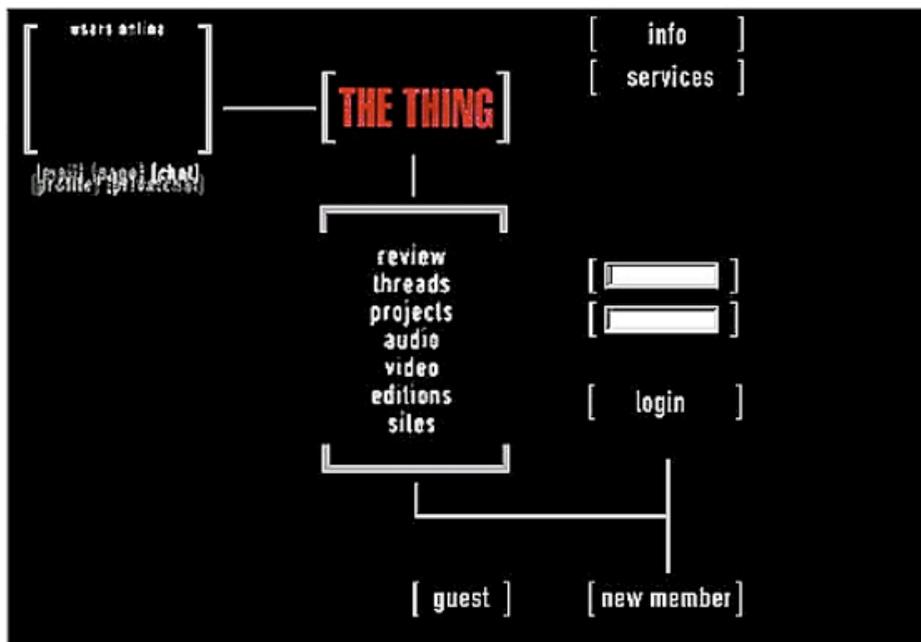


Figure 2. A detail from Wolfgang Staehle's *The Thing*, 22 July 2010 (courtesy of Wolfgang Staehle, licensed under Creative Commons 3.0).

he created a BBS (Bulletin Board System) which was meant as a generator of critical and theoretical artistic discussions. It was first a mailbox system but in 1994, thanks to the spread of WWW (World Wide Web), it went online and developed into a distributed research hub. Both examples worked by bringing people together, providing them with a place to meet and communicate outside the officiality of institutional walls. They thus created artistic communities which people could join simply by connecting remotely, without any boundaries, an idea that may seem obsolete today (as they may be considered predecessors of first online forums and then social networks), but that was completely avant-garde at the time.

During the '90s, pioneering net.artists moved inside an open space. They exploited an ephemeral but, at the same time, extremely tangible place<sup>7</sup> to create continuously expanding works, undefined and undetermined.<sup>8</sup> Net. artwork is defined by multiple possibilities of analysis and interpretation. As a guideline, it relies on Theodor Nelson's notion of hypertext as something which doesn't follow a linear and fixed structure, which has no end. 'The word "hypertext" [means] a body of written or pictorial material interconnected in such a complex way that it could not conveniently be presented or represented on paper. It may contain summaries, or maps of its contents and their interrelations [...] Such a system could grow indefinitely, gradually including more and more of the world's written knowledge' (Nelson 1965: 66).

Net.art's audiences are users who participate and produce meaning. Collaboration is the essence of net.art, which reflects the need for a democratic art that is available to everyone and free. This is evident



Exhibiting net.artworks requires artists to be programmers, producers, curators, and, of course, the audience, too. Autonomous and independent fruition are thus the basis of exhibiting net.artworks. Spontaneous contact with the work, sometimes being dazed and confused, maybe even shocked, is the starting point for developing viewers' sincere perception, critical thinking, and fruitful discussion. Indeed, when someone explores a net.artwork by herself, through her PC, most of the time she can directly write to the artist, inserting herself into the very same network. Freedom of interaction is unavoidable. This aspect of net.art is characteristic of contemporary culture more broadly as defined by Nicolas Bourriaud as 'a culture of use or a culture of activity' (Bourriaud 2005: 19).

'In this new form of culture [...] the artwork functions as the temporary terminal of a network of interconnected elements, like a narrative that extends and reinterprets preceding narratives. Each exhibition encloses within it the script of another; each work may be inserted into different programs and used for multiple scenarios. The artwork is no longer an end point but a simple moment in an infinite chain of contributions' (Bourriaud 2005: 19–20).

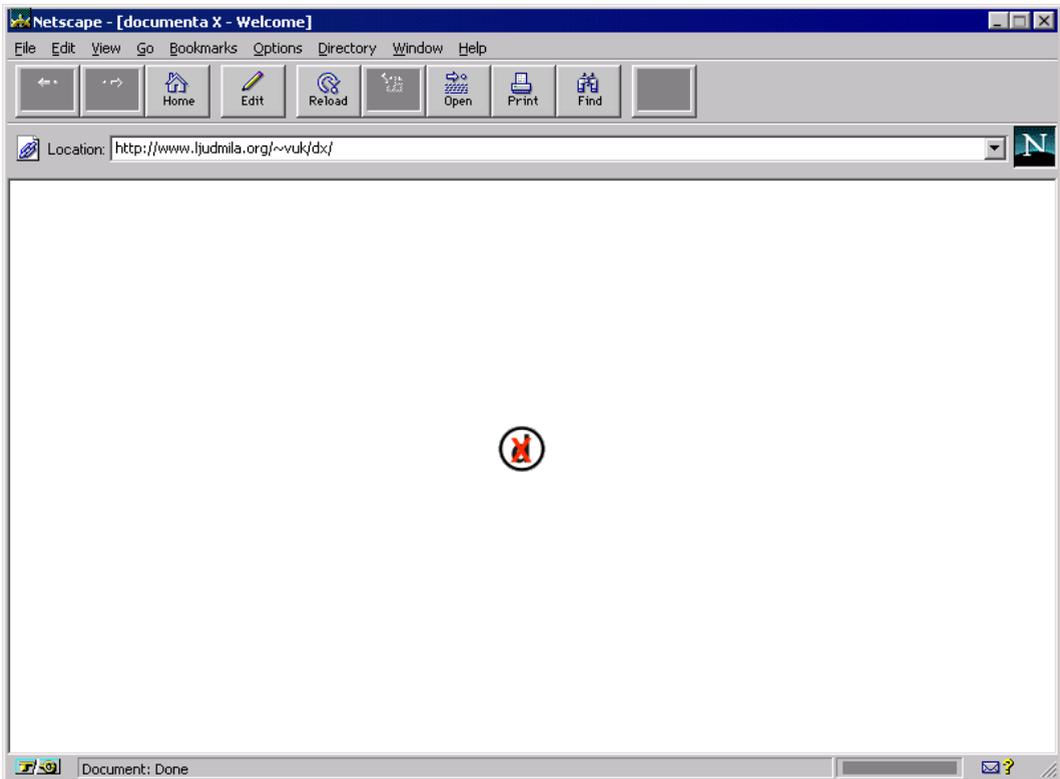
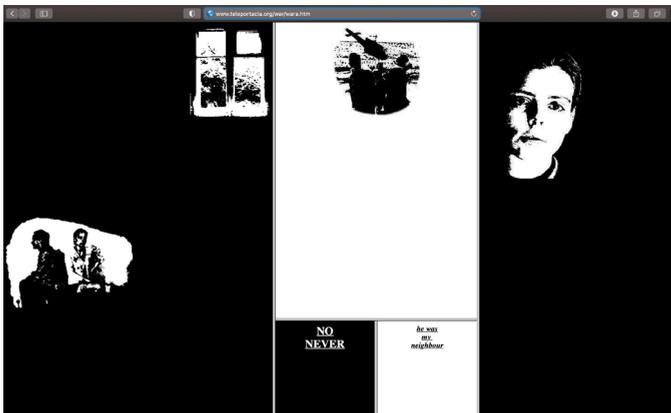




Figure 5. Above: Vuk Ćosić, *Documenta Done*, 1997, [sites.rhizome.org/anthology/documenta-done.html](http://sites.rhizome.org/anthology/documenta-done.html) as seen in Netscape Navigator 3.04 Gold for Windows (courtesy Rhizome and the artist). Below: Vuk Ćosić, *Documenta Done* at the exhibition *Net-art per me* for the Slovenian Pavilion during the Venice Biennale, 2001 (courtesy Rhizome and the artist).

Researchers tend not to consider exhibitions net.art, almost as if they were two separate things. Indeed, this is the case. Exhibiting net.art in museums does create unexpected new synergies, but it is tricky since, in a museum or a gallery, the audience traditionally expects to be given a complete, fixed, and well-determined object. Institutions have nonetheless been showing net.art, sometimes proposing a deconstruction and a 'concrete,' objectified composition of the net.artwork, sometimes offering technological support inside the institutional space.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps here we should remember Danto's discussion of the role of museums after the death of art: 'The end of art means some kind of demotion of painting. So does it also mean the demotion of the museum?' (Danto 1997: 173). The objectification of net.artworks in the exhibition context can prove to be that 'moment of truth and revelation' Marshall McLuhan anticipated when he stated, 'the moment of the meeting of media is a moment of freedom and release from the ordinary trance and numbness imposed by them on our senses' (McLuhan 1994: 55).



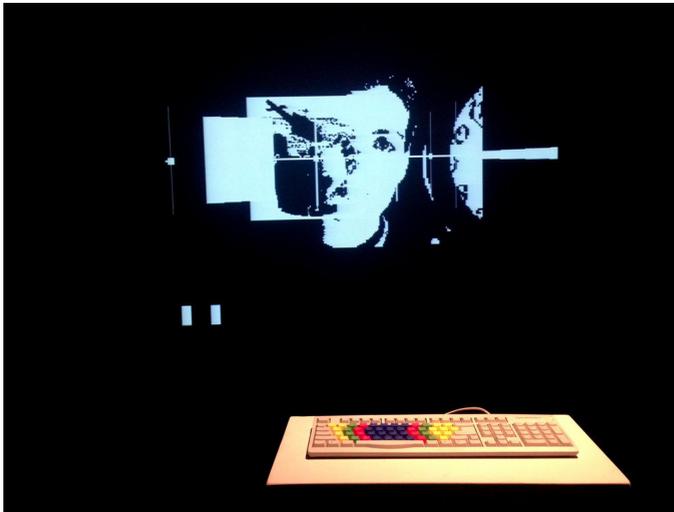


Figure 6. Above: a screenshot from Olia Lialina's *My Boyfriend Came Back From the War*, [teleportacia.org/war/wara.htm](http://teleportacia.org/war/wara.htm), 9 September 2021 (courtesy of the author). Below: the exhibition *Olia Lialina: 20 years of My Boyfriend Came Back From the War*, held at Mu in Eindhoven in 2016 (courtesy of the photographer, Rosa Menkmen, licensed under Creative Commons 2.0).

But, while exhibiting net.art can be a perfect way to promote and historicize it, offering it to people who know nothing about it may reduce the quality of their interaction with it. It is indeed hard to feel free to navigate through HTML pages, click on buttons, and reload pages when you are surrounded by people who are waiting for their turn at the same machine. Moreover, a gallery or a museum is a non-neutral space and the suggestions that arise from the visit are necessarily filtered. The exhibition space, despite how effective the curators' efforts may be in excluding external reality, will always contain traces of mediation (be it the curatorial choices, the place itself, or the exhibition occasion). Indeed, even if the curator's intervention can facilitate the audience's understanding and confidence in interacting with what is exposed, it also inevitably influences the audience's perception. This stands in contrast to what O'Doherty (2012: 128) has suggested, namely that new media now transform the gallery and not vice versa. Our point is that physical, institutional places tend to rule over artworks (be they net.artworks or traditional). They protect and maintain traditional habits such as amplifying (overamplifying, even) the role of curatorship, where instead ad hoc solutions should be sought and adopted.

Two interesting cases are Ćosić's *Documenta Done* (1997), an act of hacking to demonstrate the difficulties of incorporating net.art into institutional systems, and Olia Lialina's *My Boyfriend Came Back From the War* (1996). They both were exhibited in physical, institutional places, resulting in what has just been described: they became projects that lost their outrageous or intimate essence. But also, Jodi's *asdfg* (1999) is a perfect example of a work whose perception changes if experienced remotely or in a framed set. Both Jodi's and Lialina's cases ask for direct user interaction. Jodi's work may not be noticed if displayed, as the audience may be reluctant to interact with flickering images on someone else's monitor. For Lialina's work, the visitor would be expected to modify the narrative construction and

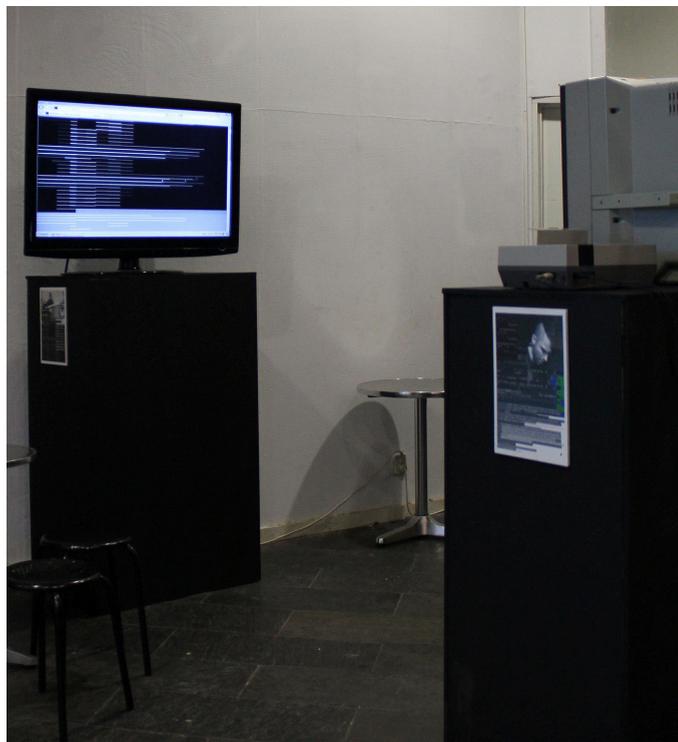
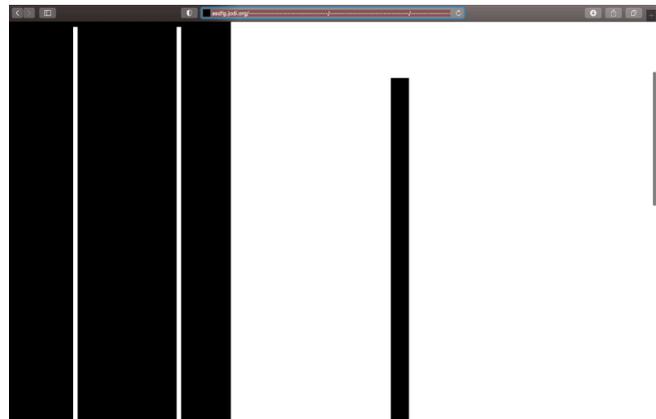
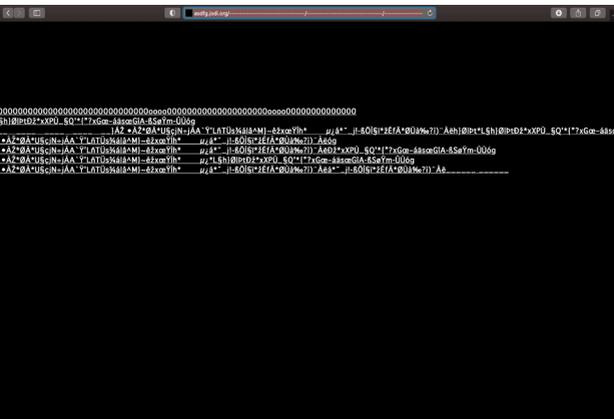


Figure 7. Above: Screenshots from Jodi's *asdfg*, *asdfg*. [jodi.org](http://www.jodi.org), 9 September 2021 (courtesy of the author). Below: Jodi's *asdfg* at the exhibition *Filtering Failure* held in Amsterdam in 2011 (courtesy of the photographer, Rosa Menkman, licensed under Creative Commons 2.0).

therefore the emotional perception of the story told, making the audience into a sort of co-author. Ćosić's instead is the perfect example of an act that, when put on display, loses its provocative impact. It represents something that has concluded, that is finite, and which thus becomes an object of memory.

As Natalie Bookchin and Alexei Shulgin (1999) suggest in their 'Introduction to net.art (1994–1999),' net.art can be considered a T.A.Z. (Temporary Autonomous Zone). As Hakim Bey (2004) claims, a T.A.Z. ceases to exist when it becomes known, when it gets absorbed by officiality and

loses its essential grey area. So, exhibited net.art shouldn't exist in only one place; it should be as free on the Internet today as it was in the technoutopian '90s described in the opening quote of this article.

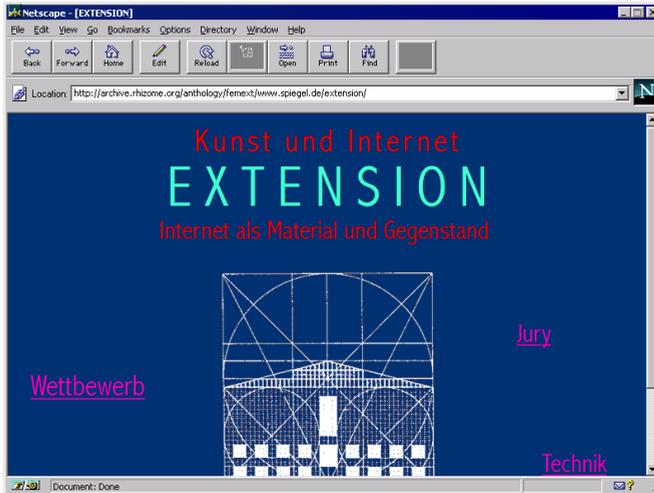


Figure 8. Cornelia Sollfrank, *Female Extension*, 1997, [sites.rhizome.org/anthology/female-extension.html](http://sites.rhizome.org/anthology/female-extension.html) as seen in Netscape Navigator 3.04 Gold for Windows (courtesy Rhizome and the artist).

The same net.artwork affects audiences differently when it is situated where it was conceived (the Internet) and exactly how it was meant to be experienced. Recalling Bey's definition, I would argue that net.art's fruition must be based on autonomous and independent interaction rather than being mediated and filtered by other curatorial and institutional choices. Ghidini (2019) refers to 'web-based exhibition [...] as a system of artistic production and display mediated not only by the curatorial role, but also by the communication patterns, formats of publishing and modes of distribution enabled by web technology—the mass media of our time.'

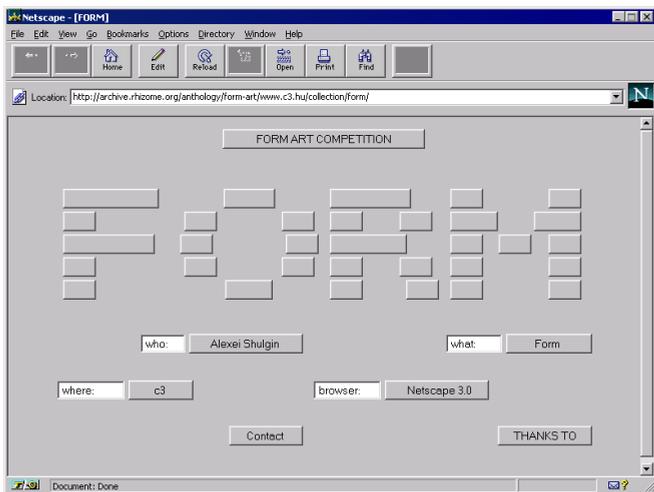


Figure 9. Alexei Shulglin, *Form Art*, 1997, [sites.rhizome.org/anthology/form-art.html](http://sites.rhizome.org/anthology/form-art.html) as seen in Netscape Navigator 3.04 Gold for Windows in 2021 (courtesy Rhizome and the artist).

A very important project that is focused on the relationship between institutions and net.art is Cornelia Sollfrank's *Female Extension* (1997), created as a statement about institutional discrimination in the art field. It was, again, a form of hacktivism that directly demonstrated the social potential of net.art.

Alexei Shulgin took a similar step, creating a competition based on his project *Form Art* (1997) making fun of the structure of institutional prizes such as Prix Ars Electronica. But while Sollfrank's work was a fake collaboration (she created hundreds of profiles who submitted trash data to Extension, the net.art competition organized by Hamburger Kunsthalle), Shulgin received actual contributions, thus creating a real alternative official art world. As for Ćosić's project, there interactions with the viewer/user take place remotely, so that they become mainly historical memory. Therefore, here lies the relevance of conserving net.artworks and works of new media art more broadly: preserving the traces of different projects allows for their survival without having to reconstruct them, which risks distorting them.

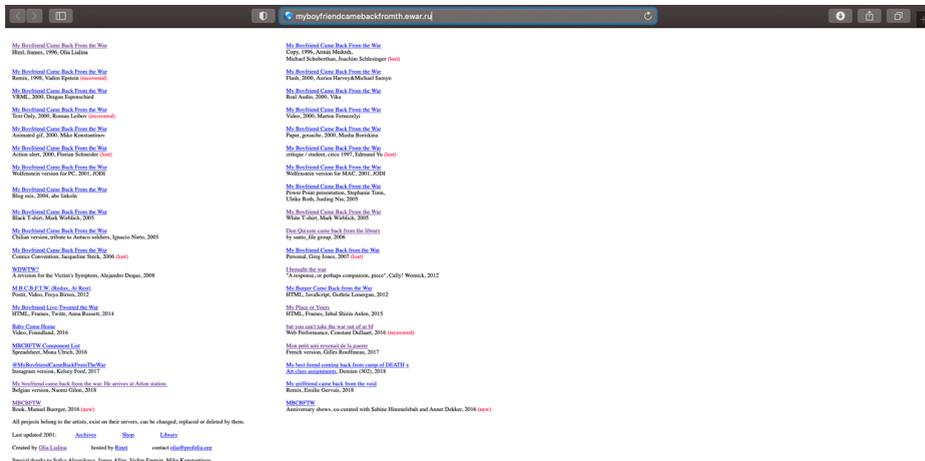
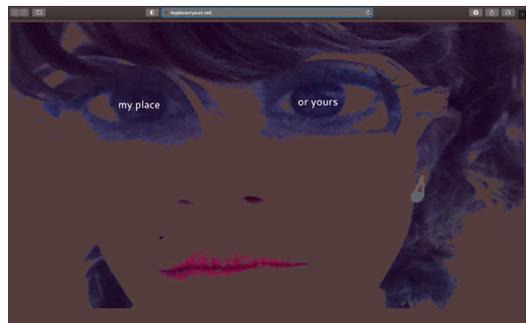


Figure 10. A screenshot of the home page of Orla Lialina's *Last Real Net Art Museum*, <http://myboyfriendcamebackfromth.ewar.ru>, 9 September 2021 (courtesy of the author).



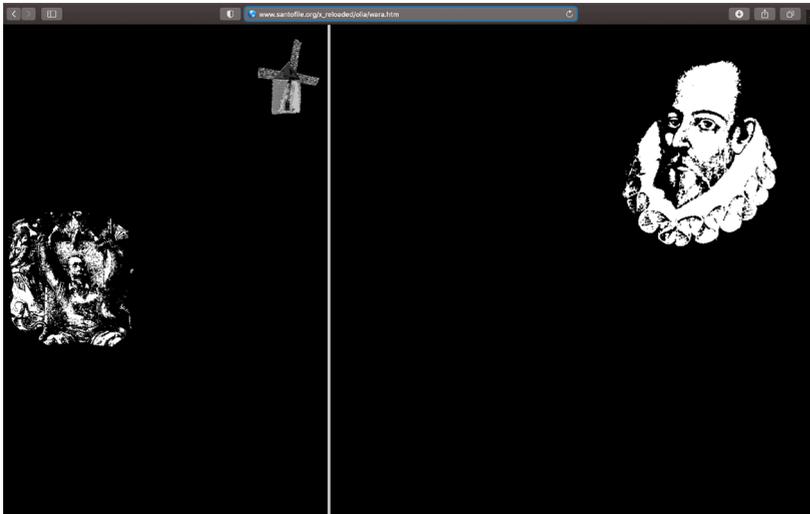
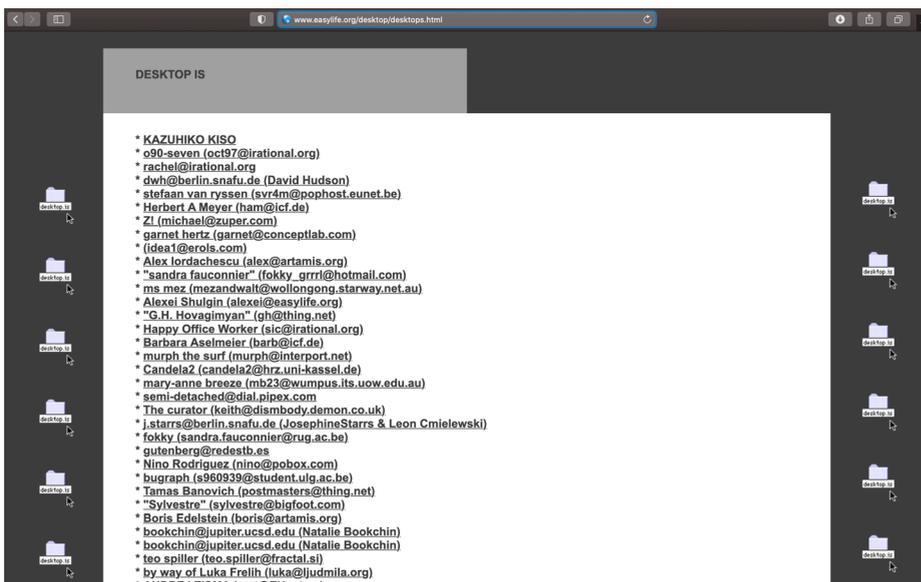


Figure 11. Screenshots of works from Olia Lialina's *Last Real Net Art Museum*, 9 September 2021 (courtesy of the author). Above left: French version of *Mon petit ami revenait de la guerre* by Gilles Rouffineau, 2017, adoptercritiquer.fr/guerre. Above right: *My Place or Yours* by Inbal Shirin Anlen, 2015, myplaceoryours.net. Below: *Don Quixote came back from the library* by santo\_file group, 2006, santofile.org/x\_reloaded/olia/war.htm.

Čosić's colleague Olia Lialina did something similar creating the first real net.art gallery (or 'former first,' as the artist refers to it on her website) and the last real net.art museum. These online galleries and museums are, again, founded on collaboration on the creation of an artistic network. The same principle can be found in Shulgin's *Desktop Is* (1997–98), where he collected frames of desktops that were sent to him. The user finds herself in a virtual art gallery that she can visit (browse) without limits or interferences. It is a work within the work, as the artistic platform itself contains and proposes other projects, enriching itself with facets that intrigue the user.



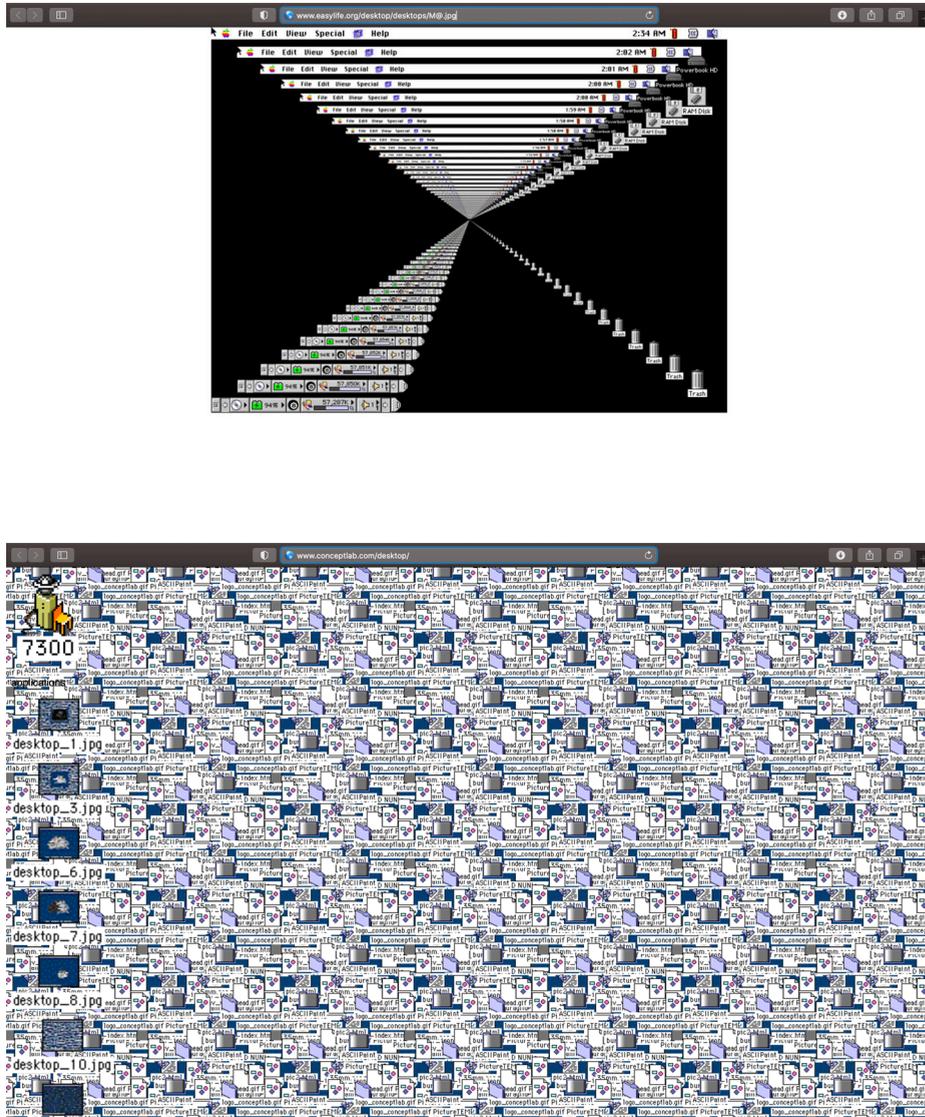


Figure 12. Screenshots from Alexei Shulgin's *Desktop Is*, [easylife.org/desktop](http://easylife.org/desktop), 9 September 2021 (courtesy of the author). Bottom left: [easylife.org/desktop/desktops/M@.jpg](http://easylife.org/desktop/desktops/M@.jpg). Bottom right: [conceptlab.com/desktop](http://conceptlab.com/desktop).

Founding a platform for online and offline artistic experiments is what John Borthwick and Benjamin Weil did with *äda 'web* (1994),<sup>11</sup> exploiting the web's possibilities both for medium-specific creations and for sharing other practices. It was another bid to offer an ephemeral but tangible place for art exhibitions and favored critical discussion, removing the limits implicitly imposed by institutional walls. As is the case with Lialina's and Shulgin's works, which we just examined, *äda 'web* is a work of art that contains other artworks. Once again, the viewer relates to the project by interacting with the machine without mediation (except for curatorial choices), deciding what, how, and how many times to click.

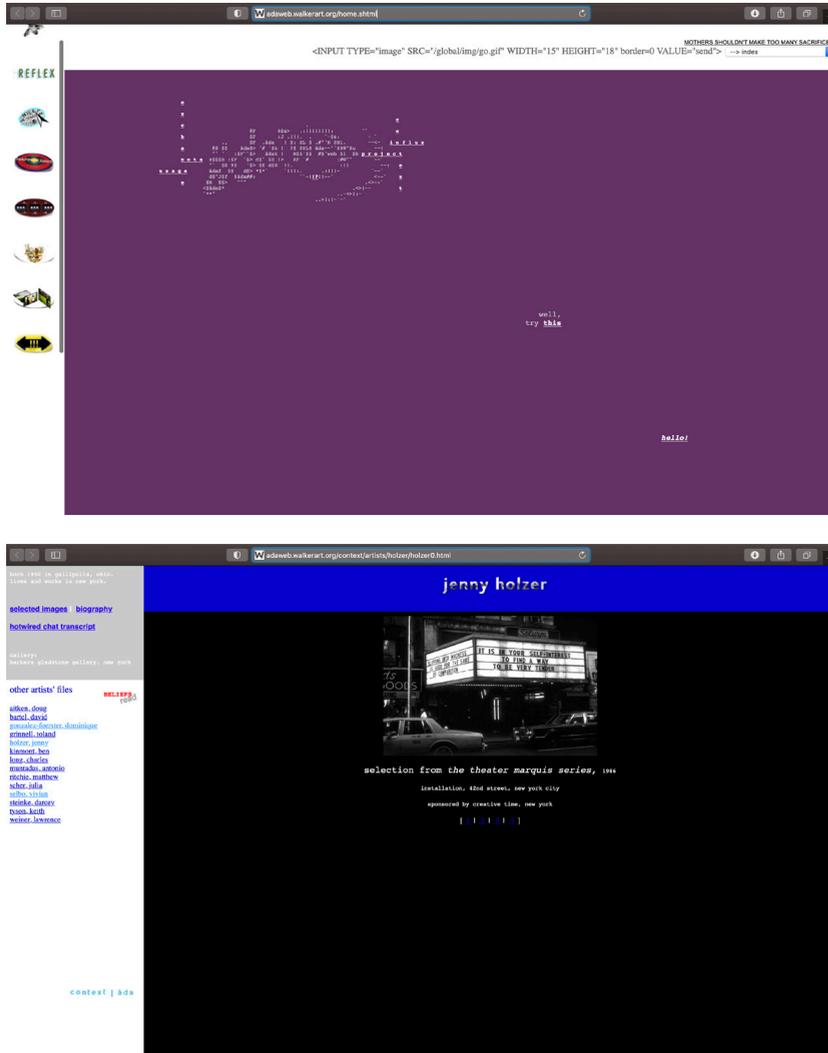


Figure 13. Screenshots of *ada>web* (courtesy of Walker Art Center).

## Final Remarks

In conclusion, net.art is an essentially collaborative artistic practice whose objective is to create a network and develop interactions. As such, it should always be exhibited maintaining its characteristic features without distorting the basic elements listed above. It would be interesting to research further whether ongoing projects are preserving their nature as T.A.Z.s, or if they are being inserted into and consecrated in the contemporary (meaning institutional) art world. Exhibiting net.art in a physical place, fixing it, does not necessarily entail the decay of this artistic practice, but it could mean that its intrinsic components—which have been examined above—are undermined.

The case studies considered belong to the beginning of net.art as a practice and continue to be key examples of net.art's original intention to transcend the 'curatorial turn' (O'Neill 2012) of the '90s, according to which exhibitions allow contemporary art to be studied and recognized, but which at the same time are highly mediated by the individual curator.

I find that the advent of social networks has inevitably changed the game, introducing a type of interaction between user and machine which is wholly different from the one net.artists aspired to create. Social networks have bolstered the confidence of the network's users, but they have also drastically lowered the expressive potential of the medium. Nowadays, moving images are unremarkable to us, and interacting with electronic and digital devices is a daily routine, even when we encounter them in artistic and cultural environments. We interact with technology in a distracted, automatic manner; we hardly expect it to surprise us. In a sense, we confront technology with bold superficiality. Refocusing on net.art's pioneering experiences is then fundamental to reestablish an enjoyment of human-machine interaction. This could be achieved by implementing virtual use platforms (some already exist) where the visitor can discover the exhibition autonomously. We must also consider that the net.artist is a curator as well as a creator because she must envision a path of exploration by the user who approaches her work. This widening of the artist's role does not limit the role of the institution, but rather could be an incentive to develop new ways of use that allow audiences to get in touch with an artistic language such as that of net.art (and digital art in general) still unknown to most.

How the experience of net.art can be combined with exhibition practices and museum needs remains to be explored and seen.

1. You can visit the site at [anthology.rhizome.org](http://anthology.rhizome.org) (18.11.2021).
2. A way to undermine this process has been proposed by Hito Steyerl (2009), who defends poor quality images that are 'copy in motion.' They are images edited and reworked to contrast with the high-resolution images that respond to the needs of the neoliberal market. This makes mass users aware of the surveillance they are subject to, allowing them to dominate virtual space.
3. Referring to Jean-François Lyotard's (1981) and Rosalind Krauss' (2000) concepts.
4. For a full definition see Sarah Cook and Marialaura Ghidini (2015).
5. The term actor here refers to the central role of net.art audiences and not the way ANT (Actor-Network Theory) has been intended by many. In fact, as Bruno Latour (1996) points out, 'nothing is more intensely connected, more distant, more compulsory and more strategically organized than a computer network. Such is not however the basic metaphor of an actor-network.'

6. Here we should also recall De Rosa's (2020: 224) distinction between space and place: 'I term the neutral environment of space and the marked environment place. Now, the main difference between space and place is that, because marked by its presence and action, that is, by the design it informs around itself and the disposition it elicits, place is the specific space of an entity—the space where I live is "my place."'
7. Charlie Gere (2004) wonderfully refers to this as 'cyberspace's simulacrum of presence.'
8. I am using Umberto Eco's (1976: 203) terms to denote an open work which needs the cooperation of the audience.
9. The work is available online at [whitney.org/artport/douglas-davis](http://whitney.org/artport/douglas-davis) (22.06.2021).
10. In her master's thesis, Karen A. Verschooren (2007: 152–173) proposes three levels of net.art's incorporation into the museum or gallery: 'separation,' 'segregation,' and 'integration.'
11. For the full story, see Domenico Quaranta (2004).

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### Author's bio

Maria Redaelli (1991) is a Ph.D. fellow in History of Arts at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. Her research project is focused on the development of new media art in Russia. She holds a bachelor's (2014) and master's (2017) degree in Foreign Languages and Literatures from Ca' Foscari University of Venice. She has studied at Tula State Lev Tolstoy Pedagogical University (2013) and the Russian State University for The Humanities (2015). She is currently part of the Scientific Secretariat at the Centre for Studies in Russian Art (Venice) and a member of the Contemporary Arts Research Team. She was part of the organizing committee of the International Conference of Ph.D. Students in 2019 and 2020, also co-curating the publication of its proceedings.

Address: Dorsoduro, 3246, 30123 Venezia VE, Italy.

E-mail: maria.redaelli@unive.it.

ORCID: 0000-0003-2501-1614.

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## **Notes on Unstable Cinematic Horizons: Depth, Frontality, and Circularity in Cinematic Art Installation**

Sara Castelo Branco  
Université Paris 1—Panthéon Sorbonne, France

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## Notes on Unstable Cinematic Horizons: Depth, Frontality, and Circularity in Cinematic Art Installations

Sara Castelo Branco

Adopting a transhistorical and interdisciplinary approach, this article seeks to reflect on the multiplicity of contemporary screens and their influence on today's modes of vision. Questioning the relational ontologies between screen, moving images, and body-technology, this article analyzes three exhibitions that incorporate non-linear practices, reconfiguring the screen in three essential dimensions: depth (*Baklite*, 2016, Alexandre Estrela), laterality (*Pedra*,

*Pedra*, 2018, Hugo de Almeida Pinho), and circularity (*Olho Zoomórfico/ Camera Trap*, 2018, Mariana Silva). The article also addresses changes undergone by the images' frames and the consequent paradigm shift in how the viewer physically relates to these images in order to consider perceptive, cognitive, and topological reconfigurations in moving image exhibition formats in museums and art galleries.

**Keywords:** art installation, expanded cinema, new technologies, multiperspectivity, screen

The intensive assimilation of screens in our daily experiences establishes a viewing space that shapes the way the body is mobilized. Don Ihde (1990) suggests that our body-technology relationship with visual devices projects a 'mediated presence' that defines and transforms our techno-perceptual experience. Our ways of seeing are thus shaped by interaction with certain spatial, environmental, and visual culture elements, which also invoke what Martin Jay (1999) defines as a 'scopic regime': the particular behavior of a society's visual perception, arising from its social, historical, and cultural practices and values. On the other hand, if we consider certain scientific studies related to animal behavior, namely visual ecology, we can even claim that body movement, and its surrounding environment, influences physiologically the way humans see: 'the field is everywhere alive with motion when the observer moves' (Gibson 1966: 196). The observer is thus someone who sees within a set of possibilities subjected to a system of conventions, which regulates and delimits what in a society is or is not visible—allowing certain images and hiding others.

Ernst Cassirer's (2001) notion of 'symbolic form,' which designates the great intellectual and social constructions through which humans relate to the world, was used by Erwin Panofsky (1997) to demonstrate that each historical period had 'its' perspective, that is, a symbolic form of apprehension of space, adequate to a conception of the visible and the world. *Perspectiva artificialis* founded the laws of a particular gaze that was preserved until the twentieth century, serving for centuries as a common protocol by which the visual world was conceived, perceived, and represented by Western art. In this sense, Hubert Damisch (1994) affirms that perspective does not have a *story*, but *stories*—and it was through these stories that perspective created a vision of the world, an exercise in thought and a certain conception of the visible. However, the authority of this paradigm of visibility is being supplemented by the advent of multiple perspectives, overlapping windows, and divergent vanishing points:

'Perspectives are twisted and multiplied. New types of visibility arise. [...] Our sense of spatial and temporal orientation has changed dramatically in recent years, prompted by new technologies of surveillance, tracking, and targeting' (Steyerl 2011).

This alteration in the field of the visible and in its frames presupposes the adulteration of that interior and abstract space that was continuously occupied in European art by Renaissance perspective—and continued by this perspective's integration into photography and cinema.

By providing this context, this article seeks to reflect on the volatility of contemporary screens and their influence on today's modes of vision that

'not only watch and display us from behind as we watch the display of others in front, but they also do so from the front and the sides and above, and even sometimes (perhaps perversely) from below' (Sobchack 2016: 158).

Questioning the relational ontologies between screens, moving images, and body movement, this article addresses the way art has become a space for reflection on contemporary transformations in how we look at images and discusses the emergent new spatialities of screens. The article approaches this topic through the analysis of three themes that correspond to three exhibitions: depth (*Baklite*, 2016, Alexandre Estrela), circularity (*Olho Zoomórfico/Camera Trap*, 2017, Mariana Silva), and frontality-laterality (*Pedra Pedra*, 2018, Hugo de Almeida Pinho).<sup>1</sup> These artists were chosen because their works intrinsically deal with matters of technology and its contemporary relationship with spatiality, framing, and the body. In this respect, the article also addresses changes undergone by the image's frames and the consequent paradigm shift in how the viewer physically relates to them in order to consider perceptive, cognitive, and topological reconfigurations of moving image exhibition formats in museums and art galleries.

## Contemporary Screens: Devices of Display and Visibility

Artificial perspective is inscribed in the most primal principle of the word *space* itself, which, derived from the Latin *spatium*, expresses the notion of distance and interval: 'a painted thing can never appear truthful where there is not a definite distance for seeing it' (Alberti 1970: 59). Perspective itself is also made in a separation between the world represented and the world of the viewer: in a spatiality mediated between two points and intersected by a sort of diaphanous fold between the gaze and the represented scene (Damisch 1994: 447). Similarly, Brunelleschi inferred the projective coincidence of the point of view and the vanishing point through the mirror apparatus, where the observer's monocular view would face the painting in the exact same position as the vanishing point (Bousquet 2018). This mutuality was defined by Pélerin Viator as the 'point of subject' (*point du sujet*): the artist and the observer are at the same fixed position in relation to the plane of the still image, where the stillness of the painting is also that of its observer, who assumes the monocular view of the painter (Damisch 2006).

Under the sign of Alberti's pictorial window, this paradigm of the Renaissance's artificial perspective defined an ordering of the space of images that would be technically virtualized from the twentieth century onwards through window-screens that, culminating in Microsoft's Windows, reversed the representations of materiality and temporality (Friedberg 2006). Alberti's perspective was produced by a divergence in human vision: it reduces the eye's mobility and innate binocular position to a static and monocular point of view, which likewise has become the dominant mode of experiencing the moving image (a single image viewed in a single fixed frame). Today, however, this paradigm is being transformed by a breaking of this continued pattern of perspective, where the immobile position of the subject's body is often in motion, leading the subject to observe images in multiple layers and framings. If cinema has preserved this perspectivist symbolic form to the present day, the screens of new technologies seem to invert the canon of perspective that prevailed in the moving image, shattering Alberti's metaphorical window into an infinity of window-screens:

'Screens are now everywhere—on our wrists, in our hands, on our dashboards and in our backseats, on the bicycles and treadmills at the gym, on the seats of airplanes and buses, on buildings and billboards. Our position is no longer fixed in relation to the virtual elsewhere and else-whens seen on a screen. As the screen has become ubiquitous, the virtual window is mobile and pervasive' (Friedberg 2006: 86–87).<sup>2</sup>

Thus, we are experiencing a paradigm shift that, according to Hito Steyerl (2011), has given rise to 'vertical perspective'—floating, immaterial, ubiquitous, and omnipresent representation. Steyerl refers to contemporary visual representations that manifest a delinearization of horizons and perspectives, such as multi-screen installations or 3D

technologies: 'cinematic space is twisted in any way imaginable, organized around heterogeneous, curved, and collaged perspectives' (Steyerl 2011). In contrast to this transitive and transient relationship with the image, the screens of smartphones, computers and tablets are increasingly private and portable, thus implying a union: either a physical link between body and vision, or the coexistence of different media that come together in these screens in the prism of the digital. This leads Matteo Treleani (2014) to point out that these screens no longer represent things: they are true 'visibility devices' (*dispositifs de visibilité*) that cease to be objects of the eye, becoming only 'seen.' The relocation of cinema to other devices changes the very nature of the screen, which is no longer a surface on which reality is represented, that is, a 'site of *epiphany*' (Casetti 2015: 5), but

'functions rather like a *display*, which is to say that it has become a place on which free-floating images stop for a moment, make themselves available to users, allow themselves to be manipulated, and then take off again along new routes' (Casetti 2015: 5, original emphasis).

Today, there is an axial repositioning of the screen from horizontal to vertical, or from vertical to horizontal, which produces a layered spatiality that leads to an opposition to the traditional frontal viewing mode of the screen. On the other hand, action no longer just takes place onscreen: it also takes place outside of it. 'These screens push us to act outside the limits drawn by the device' (Treleani 2014: 67).<sup>3</sup>

In this context, the screen departs from its conventional framing to enter a kinetic visual regime that breaks the idea imposed by perspective since

'it decodes and flattens the world, giving us immediate access to the speed, laterality, and peculiar superficiality of the images, allowing allowing them to accelerate towards the gaze and configuring them' (Loureiro 2014: 2).<sup>4</sup>

If Treleani declares that we are too impregnated by the culture of the screen under the auspices of the Albertian window to be able to imagine a support that is not anchored to this notion, he also speaks of a change in the framing of the image, which moves from the interior of the painting to its surroundings:

'One only has to look at people in the subway, glued to their smartphone games, to realize that the real issues are no longer within the frame of the screen but outside it. [...] The screen, in the end, blinds us, because by analyzing it, we easily lose sight of the relationship that content and applications have with the space that surrounds them' (Treleani 2014: 70).<sup>5</sup>

### **Cinematic Art Installation: Multiple Views and Movements**

In this new space of visibility enhanced by new technologies, mobility is essential to the configuration of cinematic experiences. In this sense,

contemporary screens establish spatial and perceptual limits linked to a visual navigation regime: 'visuality in today's culture is tightly connected to mobility—corporeal by means of physical travel, and virtual through media and communication' (Verhoeff 2012: 29). This enveloping experience is opposed to distance, contemplation, organization, and fixed ordering of perspective, forming a spatiality not of position, but of action, as it is in the movement of the body and the gaze that the image is realized.

In the text *En Sortant du Cinéma* (1975), Roland Barthes writes about a cinema that fascinates twice—through the image and its contiguities—as if the subject had two bodies simultaneously: a body that looks, lost in a mirror implicated in alienation and in the immersion of the projected image, and the emancipatory possibility of another body, ready to fetishize what exceeds the image (the grain of sound, the room, the dark, the obscure mass of other bodies, the rays of light, the entrance, the exit). In this way, this forgetting of self-awareness in cinema is made possible by an equal omission of the body, as the spectator is asked to be passive enough to forget about the device's framing. If cinema spectators are compelled to disregard spatiotemporal reality during the film, installation works encourage an awareness of the exhibition space through movement—thus transforming viewers, in the sense of Dominique Païni (2002), from 'homo-spectators' to 'homovisitors' who interact directly with the film, deciding on the angle, distance, position and duration of their experience, and perhaps allowing them to be editors of the film's own narrative.<sup>6</sup>

If today's spatiotemporal experience is fractured in virtual windows that are based more on the multiple and the simultaneous than on the singular and sequential (Friedberg 2006), the different visual apparatuses in art installations have made primitive use of several possibilities of the screen, perhaps announcing (even if unintentionally) this fragmented and accelerated regime that takes precise form precisely in the space outside the screen. Disembodied from the flatness of the screen, these screens are dissolved in the spatial principle of the installation. Installations with moving images presented in museums and galleries appear thus as an indicative site for this dynamic of multiplication, dissolution, or continuity of screens, constituting a plural device for managing different visualities.

This multiplicity of points of view leads to the emergence of an open space (in contrast to the spatial closure of Renaissance perspective) that is activated by visitors' movements. Intercepting optical practices with spatial experiences, cinematic installations encompass perceptual and bodily processes that

'involve an intriguing aesthetic problem insofar as it is the site where two different spatial ontologies meet: the intangible with the physical; the enclosed and framed with the continuous and open; flat space with deep space' (Hagman 2010: 21).

In this way, optical visuality becomes a haptic perception where the contemplative look gives way to a subject-object connection:

'Optical visuality depends on a separation between the viewing subject and the object. Haptic looking tends to move over the surface of its object rather than to plunge into illusionistic depth, not to distinguish from so much as to discern texture' (Marks 2000: 162).

It is therefore a kind of spatiality that involves not only the spatial orientation of the screen, but also the way in which the viewer's movement can occur along different spatial axes related to it.

Hito Steyerl (2009) associates this multiple movement with certain modes of distraction, stating that this is an experience no longer 'collective, but common, which is incomplete, but in process, which is distracted and singular, but can be edited into various sequences and combinations' (Steyerl 2009). In a similar perspective, Kate Mondloch (2010) argues that this spatialization of screens can produce a contrived response, rather than a sense of co-production:

'While installation art's bid for the spectator's involvement is routinely understood to constitute an open-ended invitation that constructs a critically aware viewer, the "invitation" runs the risk of demanding a predetermined and even compulsory response' (Mondloch 2010: 26).

Given this context, we can affirm that such installations with moving images herald and are symptomatic of this contemporary state of transition to other visual paradigms, constituting a plural device for the management of different visualities and spatiotemporal reconfigurations.

### **BAKLITE (2016): Depth**

Alexandre Estrela's (born Lisbon, 1971) work is based on the observer experiencing an experimental and processive state, an *image-state*, which does not end after the evidence of the first viewing, but opens up upon rereading in an ongoing action of discovery. Since the 1990s, Estrela has been working on the formal and conceptual issues involved in video, moving image, and the matter of images, developing synesthetic, visual, and auditory explorations of mechanical and digital phenomena. The solo exhibition *Baklite*<sup>7</sup> continued the artist's distinctive line of work, drawing on the ability of technological devices to reconfigure the visible in order to deconstruct and mislead the viewer's perceptual apparatus. If the filmic image is commonly flat and framed, Estrela's work diverges from this supposed leveling of the screen and the immateriality of the video image, intersecting it with matter and physicalizing the projection surfaces. The screen is unsubmitive and resists its preordained passive function, acting on the projections.

This ability of the image to materialize itself from physical qualities is present in some of Estrela's works at this exhibition, like *IKEBANA* (2016),

a video projection that outstretches the limits of its screen, expanding it materially to the surface's reverse and obverse. In an insulated space that is not visually contaminated by the other works of the exhibition, *IKEBANA* consists of a video projection XGA on loop, with color and no sound, projected on a small screen of wood leaning against a wall on the floor. This work is composed of a quick succession of photos that trigger a three-dimensional illusion: a bouquet of dried flowers appears, and its shadow is projected on a surface with two eyes that stare at the viewer (actually two holes), suggesting a space behind the projection plane.

When we enter the exhibition, *IKEBANA* seems to be a simple video projection, but as we physically come closer to the screen, a materiality is revealed. A three-dimensional object piercing the screen (the dried flowers) creates an illusion of depth, thus invoking Japanese *ikebana* floral arrangements, whose translation ('live flowers') seems to refer ironically and symptomatically to this particular and dynamic nature of images. This issue is triggered by the presence of a shadow in the video that does not correspond to the flowers, mobilizing a spatiotemporal delay between the matter and its silhouette, between the object's materiality and the video image and shadows. Although they are apprehended as spatial movements, what is close or distant also has a temporal dimension: by perceiving what precedes and what comes after, the subject performs a spatial displacement that gives rise to a measure of time. In *IKEBANA*, the look takes place precisely in this time and spatiality built between the movement of a first sighting, and the visuality of a second sighting when we approach the video installation.

Whether in the negative space of the holes in the screen surface or in the dried flowers that depart from it, this work insists on an expansion towards the 'outside,' breaking the traditional surface-frame separation—despite being fully realized in a physical approximation between the looking and the work, followed by a shift in the gaze that allows the screen to enunciate itself as a discourse. While the works maintain a rectangular frame that separates the real space from the virtual space of the image, the artist's work, on the other hand, three-dimensionalizes and expands the elements of the screen's surface. The frame is no longer just an object of geometric circumscription, but a field of gradations (carried out in front, in the middle, and behind), introducing the objectness and virtuality of the moving image twice.

Although Gilles Deleuze (1986) states that framing is, above all, a limitation, he also recognizes that its limits can be understood in two ways: one, mathematical; the other, dynamic. If, in the first case, the picture is made in geometric variations, the latter suggests 'imprecise sets, which are now only divided into zones or bands. The frame is no longer the object of geometric divisions, but of physical gradations' (Deleuze 1986: 14). Deleuze states that it is with the appearance of sound that the 'out-of-field' reveals its transformation into an image, which fills the visual unseen with a specific presence. The out-of-field thus articulates what is contiguous to the visual image: the sound that betrays what is not seen, but which is perceptible

by the preceding image or by the image that will follow (Deleuze 1986). The author therefore demonstrates that the out-of-the-field establishes 'direct relationships with visibility systems, from the relationship between viewer and image: it is lateral and frontal, it is superficial and immersive' (Loureiro 2014: 4).<sup>8</sup> Anticipating characteristics of viewers' relationships with screens today, Deleuze invokes electronic and numerical images, where there is a gradual annulment of the perspectival regime because the out-of-field has been dissolved in an increasingly kinetic experience:

'The new images no longer have any outside (out-of-field), any more than they internalized in a whole; rather, they have a right side and a reverse, reversible and non-superimposable, like a power to turn back on themselves. [...] And the screen itself, even if it keeps a vertical position by convention, no longer seems to refer to the human posture, like a window or a painting, but rather constitutes a table of information, an opaque surface on which are inscribed "data," information replacing nature, and the brain-city, the third eye, replacing the eyes of nature' (Deleuze 1989: 265).

As with the notion of the out-of-field, the concept of the frame appears in another way in the composition of artistic installations, involving a certain variable framing, which seems to be symbolically revised in the dynamic frame as defined by Deleuze (2009). These dynamics of framing emerge in installations through the arrangement of the works in space in different relationships and intensities. If the installation is an artistic form that takes place in the function of space, the frame serves here to define a spatial organization that dictates the distance or depth of the works in relation to the viewer, causing the latter to create a certain mental composition. From this perspective, in Alexandre Estrela's installation, the occurrence of the image is articulated through a perceptual and physical involvement, without visual guidelines, as happens in our relationship with screens today in which

'both spectators and screens are primarily mobile and responsively "smart" in relation to each other now, their movements and interactions almost completely destabilizing the fixed position and physical passivity initially associated with watching cinema (or television) from a distance and sitting down' (Sobchack 2016: 158).

### ***Olho Zoomórfico/Camera Trap (2017): Circularity***

Our vision has often been subjugated to the rectangle or the square, disregarding the particularities of the geometry of the eye:

'The visual field is round, yet movable: in its movements, it describes weird geometrical shapes, which are not always modeled according to Euclid's diagrams. [...] To cage the eye between the rigid 25 x 19 squares is hence a crime against aesthetics, against logics, against physiology' (Toddi 2016: 28).

Based on this return to the circular and mobile condition of vision, the solo exhibition *Olho Zoomórfico/Camera Trap (2017)*<sup>9</sup> by artist Mariana

Silva (born Lisbon, 1983) proposed a reflection on the mass extinction of animal species, having as a starting point our representations of nature and animal ecosystems through image capture practices in their natural habitat—that is, by the application of hidden cameras with their predatory ancestry to monitor the animal environment.

Mariana Silva's artistic work is marked by a strong conceptual component that reflects her concern with cultural and sociological issues, particularly with the boundaries between culture and nature. The exhibition *Olho Zoomórfico/Camera Trap* was longitudinally sectioned by the work *Media Insecto (Flocks, Herds and Schools)* (2017), a curtain cut into wide sheets, on which the artist printed archival and computerized images of large masses of bird migrations detected on radar at different times of the night. The exhibition was completed by two looped video installations, *Camera Trap* (2017) and *Zoomorphic Eye* (2017), composed of round and convex screens, presented side-by-side, whose images dealt with the human relationship with nature and virtual images and technology. Developed within an indeterminate future temporality, the film *Olho Zoomórfico* presents images of the daily life of Ngueve and Margot, two biologist friends who share a house with a cat, and Gani, an animal photographer. These characters debate subjects related to the extinction of species following the arrival of a virtual reality device that allows Ngueve to experience different representations of the world, displayed on an adjacent screen:

'The characters live in a time when universal basic income has been implemented, as well as limiting human entry into nature reserves. If greater equality between humans looms on the horizon, the rights of registration of animals no longer seem to be within the reach of men, but only of machines and computers' (Nunes 2018).

The film *Camera Trap* displays several pages of the book *How to Hunt with the Camera, A Complete Guide to all forms of Outdoor Photography* (1926), from an approach to the camera trap to the beginnings of the modern technique of wildlife photography. The book mentions how the first conservationists captured images through devices linked to upper-class hunting. Camera traps track animals using a kinetic dimension, as the photographic record is activated by the movement of organisms in their environment. In an interaction between the human, the animal, and the technique, this film projects a three-dimensional perspective and convex distortion onto images of ostrich, bears, moose, cougars: animals that look back at us. In this way, the film problematizes and questions different power structures—the colonial, predatory, and mercantile relationships associated with the representation of animals by the camera.

The concave circular structure in which the videos are shown evokes the similar system in which their images were filmed: the fisheye lens is an ultra-wide angle that produces a strong panoramic or hemispheric visual distortion. The term 'fisheye' was coined in 1906 by the American physicist and inventor Robert W. Wood based on the supposed ultra-wide hemispherical

view fish would have when looking from the inside out of the water. This lens produces images with straight lines of perspective (rectilinear images) but uses a special mapping that gives the images a convex non-rectilinear appearance. Likewise, these two screens question the perspectivist nature intrinsically inscribed in the camera, leading us to reflect on, according to Silva's exhibition statement (2017), to what extent the perspective system associated with it is adequate to perceiving the true interactions of species in real ecosystems and the different scales at which climate change is expressed. The circular and volumetric viewing space of these screens also seems to evoke the embodied experience of contemporary perception: the screen appears as an object in itself and as a place of spatial extensions. According to Vivian Sobchack (2016), if screens were once a 'screen-scape,' they have now entered a 'screen-sphere':

'a newly configured domain of two connected but radically different kinds of phenomenological and phenomenal space—the one three-dimensional, the other of an additional but non-Euclidean and undetermined "n-dimension," each enfolded one in the other. This is what I call our "screen-sphere"' (Sobchack 2016: 162).

Contemporary screens are a phenomenon that breaks the horizontal plane of a scape, as their omnipresence surrounds us on all sides and in all directions, like the circumference of a circle or a sphere 'adding volume to what once was regarded as only a planar topography' (Sobchack 2016: 165). This disorientation is due in part to the loss of a stable horizon of orientation, arising from the decrease in the importance of the dominant paradigm of linear perspective, which has given rise to the growing importance of the 'God's-eye view' of Google Maps or Satellites (Steyerl 2011).

Spheres were introduced to sciences in the nineteenth century to describe the physical and inorganic realms of the Earth in an ideal spatial form. In 1875, Austrian geologist Eduard Sueß conceived the term *biosphere*, a sphere that encompassed all life on Earth: 'Sueß reflected on the "zone" on an Earth "formed by spheres" to which organic life was constricted; "on the surface of continents," he asserted, "it is possible to single out a self-contained biosphere"' (Höhler 2015: 55). If the lines of circular shapes invoke questions related to involvement, totality, convergence, integration, or return, they also appear in *Olho Zoomorphico/Camera Trap* as an element of conscious interconnection with nature and animals—a physical and symbolic reflection outside of square limits.

### **Stein (2018): Laterality/Frontality**

The etymology of the word *screen* derives from a noun that describes an object of protection against the heat of fire, thus encompassing

'the ideas of protection, divider, barrier, interposition, interceptor, filter, moderation, mask, or surface

that one inevitably encounters in attempting to define the word screen through its multitude of synonyms' (Chateau and Moure 2016: 13).

It would only be at the end of the nineteenth century that the term *screen* began to be used in the language of 'the physicist, the illusionist, and eventually the cineaste—the meaning of a white or opaque reflective surface onto which images are projected, displayed, or attached' (Chateau and Moure 2016: 13). This origin of the word—associated with protection, obscurity, and concealment—refers to the relationship between what is shown and what remains under cover (Chateau and Moure 2016). Georges Didi-Huberman (2007) thinks along similar lines, identifying the image as having a *visual* and a *visible* that do not coincide: what is *visible* in an image would be the manifest, which is in accordance with the established criteria and codes that aim to order the vision, while the *visual* is latent and illegible; it is the uncertain and the non-knowledge. Therefore, the image succeeds precisely because of this understanding that there is always something that is unseen in what is seen.

Hugo de Almeida Pinho's (born Ovar, 1986) works deal with modes and methods of collaboration between science, art, and emerging social forces, as well as dynamic relations that shape the complex transformation processes between human beings, the environment, and technology. The artist's solo exhibition *Pedra Pedra* (2018)<sup>10</sup> linked the idolatrous image with the technical one to reflect on how technology intervenes in the reality of images, apprehending them as cult, magical, or shamanic figures—elements that mediate the absent and the present, the visible and the hidden, and whose use today seems to fulfill the place of man's transcendence to the world. On the other hand, the exhibition inscribed an idea of duality between primitive and contemporary technology: although silex and silicon have the same Latin etymological origin (Vann 2008), they symbolize the first and latest moments of a possible history of stone. If silex was the paradigmatic tool for hunting and fire, the silicon resulting from the purification of stone is now one of the crucial elements of computer microtechnology and solar energy.

*Pedra Pedra* addresses a volatile characteristic intrinsic to images—and a constituent sense of the screen itself, which, as we have seen, is perceptually organized 'in the game of showing/hiding, a game of the visible or the invisible in which the gaze lodges' (Caccamo and Catoir-Brisson 2016).<sup>11</sup> In the exhibition, the work that best exemplifies this articulation between the visible and the hidden is the light box *Stein* (2018), which presents an image of silicon still in its pure state overlaid by a 'privacy filter,' a film that keeps the screens of smartphones or tablets hidden for those who look at them from the side. Citing this place where images remain invisible and hidden on their sides, this image is linked to the word 'lateral,' which derives from the Latin *lateralis*, sharing a similarity with 'latency,' which, from the word *latere*, expresses a 'bending down to hide,' a 'being secret' or 'unknown' (Harper 2021). Latency is shaped in the hidden, but always potential, character

of something that is not active, but can become so. Thus, this light box comes under the sign of *laterality* (of looking in another way) and *deviation* (of moving in a different direction), and therefore the possibility of another movement and, above all, the primordially of action—because the word deviation implies the idea of detour, of change of direction and an alternative route in the presence of a more convenient pattern.

In *Stein*, the transformation into an image on the screens takes place through spectators' own motion, as the image is manifested or covered by their movements, making them more self-aware of their own process of viewing. This open and inconclusive encounter with the viewer seems to symbolically inscribe the transformation in the viewer's experience of contemporary digital media itself, media which conceive a visual style that 'privileges fragmentation, indeterminacy, and heterogeneity and emphasizes process or performance rather than the finished art object' (Mitchell quoted in Bolter and Grusin 1999: 31). On the other hand, *Stein* attempts to reproduce the linear and frontal monocular regime by cancelling the laterality and in this way critically questioning a kind of subjugation and blindness in the relationship that we have with contemporary technology.

Although contrasting depth with a certain flatness of the spatial differences between the near and the far, Friedrich Kittler (2010) groups Alberti's window and computer windows into a single lineage, stating that it is

'the ancestor of all those graphic user interfaces that have endowed computer screens with so-called windows for the past 20 years. Alberti's window—like Microsoft Windows—was naturally rectangular and could thus be easily broken down into smaller windows' (Kittler 2010: 62).

However, the computer changed the unique framing of perspective to a multiplicity of windows within windows, frames within frames, screens within screens. If the variations in scale, position, and angle of the cinematographic camera somehow distort the fixity of vision, they occur, however, in a sequential way and not in the same plane (Friedberg 2006). Although *Stein* involves a frontal look so that the image can be seen, paradoxically, movement is an essential condition for its definitive fulfillment: its focus is as much on what is seen as on what is unseen. In this way, this work invokes both a continuity of the perspectivist window announced by Kittler and its deconstruction by the spatiality created by the spectator's movement suggested by Friedberg.

Rudolf Arnheim (2002) distinguishes several different types of center in the image—the geometric center, the "visual center of gravity," the secondary centers of the composition, the diegetic-narrative centers—which vision organizes relative to a center of reference ("absolute") that is the spectator subject' (Arnheim 2002).<sup>12</sup> Arnheim also demonstrates the existence of two visual systems, the *centric* and the *eccentric*, present in architecture, painting, and sculpture. If film stresses a fixed frontality that inevitably works towards a center—even when internally unframed—the kinetic and spatialized condition of the installation decenters the screen in favor of a spatial

condition recentered on the relation between body and work (Arnheim 2002). Hugo de Almeida Pinho's work is shaped precisely in this spatiality between the observer and the object, which distorts the fixed paradigm of artificial perspective in order to add variations of movement towards the screen. This allows for an *eccentric* movement in relation to the screen, where, like in eccentric motion in mechanics, the axis of rotation is placed off-center or in a different center: it is intended to transform a continuous rotation movement into a different kind of movement.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, this work is made visible by bodily movements in space, as happens in the new spatialities of twenty-first-century screens:

'Whereas we foreground and focus here on on-screen space, on-screen space is seen to both reflect and partake in an overall shift in the production and perception of space as such' (Soether and Bull 2020: 15)

## Conclusion

A *parergon* is an ancient Greek philosophical concept defined as a supplement or as something that is separate, not only from the thing that frames it, but also from what is outside that frame. In Greek, the term *parergon* (*para* = against; *ergon* = work) means 'beyond, additional, or beside the ergon' or 'outside the work' (Oxford University Press 2021). This expression was defined by Jacques Derrida (1987) as what

'comes against, beside, and in addition to the *ergon*, the work done (*fait*), the fact (*le fait*), the work, but it does not fall to one side, it touches and cooperates within the operation, from a certain outside. Neither simply outside nor simply inside. Like an accessory that one is obliged to welcome on the border, on board (*au bord, à bord*). It is first of all, the on (the) bo(a)rd(er) (*Il est d'abord l' à bord*)' (Derrida 1987: 45).

The three screens in this article invoke this similar idea of a frame that goes beyond the frame: the focus is no longer just on an image inscribed between certain limits, but on a trans-screen dimension made by an eccentric relationship that involves a certain spatiality and bodily involvement. These particularities made these screens find affinities in the multiplicity of nuances of the term 'para,'

'an antifetical prefix that simultaneously designates proximity and distance, similarity and difference, interiority and exteriority [...]. These works thus rearrange the intrinsic/extrinsic to the work, the unstable threshold between inside/outside, and it will not only be the frame of a painting, but it is also organized on the inside/outside pair' (Rodrigues 2013: 31).<sup>14</sup>

Summoning the particularities of the *parergon*, Victor Stoichita (2019) writes about framing in art, in particular about the effect of the frame within the frame, and the representation of doors and windows in modern

painting, where the window opens the interior to the outside, letting in light and offering a view to the outside:<sup>15</sup>

'It is the window and not the door that, since Alberti, has played the role of metaphor for the painting. But if the window structurally implies looking from the inside at the outside [...], the door can also be the object of a visual investment, but in the opposite direction. If we look through a door to the outside, it only functions as a pseudo-window. It's the inward look that defines it' (Stoichita 2019: 109).<sup>16</sup>

It is thus possible to conclude that in the works discussed here, the outline of the screen, far from closing off perception, opens onto a field of possibilities in an ambition to 'go beyond the frame.' Therefore, these works are experienced as events in space between transitive (representing something) and intransitive (showing something being represented) dimensions. In this sense, these installations address the condition of the screen as an image-state that takes place in the duration and spatiality of an experience, imposing certain laws of presence and multiple points of view related to our own contemporary experience:

'We live today primarily *in and through* screens, rather than merely *on or with* them. They no longer only mediate our knowledge of the world, ourselves, and others; beyond representation, they have now become the primary means by which our very "being" is affirmed' (Sobchack 2016: 161).

1. My decision to analyze these three Portuguese artists in this article is also related to the doctoral research on Portuguese contemporary art that I am currently doing.
2. Although there have been scattered examples of images in multiple frames and screens throughout the history of cinema and television, it was only with the advent of digital technologies that, according to Friedberg (2006), the 'window' began to include multiple perspectives within a single framing, that is, an everyday relationship with a vernacular system of visuality that is fractured, multiple, and synchronous in space and time.
3. Translation from the original French by the author.
4. Translation from the original Portuguese by the author.
5. Translation from the original French by the author.
6. However, contemporary discourses that propagate the notion that the movie spectator is passive, while the gallery visitor is inherently active, rest on a deterministic mystification that 'mythifies both cinematic spectatorship and the exercise of power into ahistorical constants, ignoring their status as historical contingencies that change over time' (Balsom 2013: 50). In likening the gallery and museum visitor to a flâneur, Dominique Païni originates one of the most evoked associations in studies on the moving image in the context of contemporary art (Païni 2002: 69). Raymond Bellour affirms, however, that this spectatorial condition, concretized in a constant

attentive and inattentive apprehension, can lead the spectator to establish interesting connections, or offer a simple accumulation 'wherein eminently disposable moving images provide a kind of video wallpaper for a stroll through a technological wonderland' (Bellour quoted in Balsom 2013: 54). Similarly, Hito Steyerl associates the multiple spatialization of screens with modes of distraction, separation, and difference, which is no longer 'collective, but common, which is incomplete, but in process, which is distracted and singular, but can be edited into various sequences and combinations' (Steyerl 2009).

7. Exhibition presented at CAV—Centro de Artes Visuais, Coimbra, 2016, curator Sérgio Mah.
8. Translation from the original Portuguese by the author.
9. Exhibition presented at Museu Calouste Gulbenkian—Project Space, Lisbon, 2017, curator Leonor Nazaré.
10. Exhibition presented at Appleton Square, Lisbon, 2018, curator David Revés. For more information, see [appleton.pt/hugo-de-almeida-pinho](http://appleton.pt/hugo-de-almeida-pinho) (21/10/2021).
11. Translation from the original French by the author.
12. Translation from the original Portuguese by the author.
13. Centering and decentering are concepts that are intrinsic to the installation, especially in relation to a kind of 'emancipatory' activation that, in contrast to a purely contemplative experience, implies a 'viewer's engagement in the world. A transitive relationship therefore comes to be implied between "activated spectatorship" and active engagement in the social-political arena' (Bishop 2005: 11). This decentering of the spectator contradicts what is, for Panofsky, the rational and self-reflective Cartesian subject of perspective: 'In the 1960s and 1970s the relationship that conventional perspective is said to structure between the work of art and the viewer came increasingly to attract a critical rhetoric of "possession," "visual mastery" and "centring"' (Bishop 2005: 11).
14. Translation from the original Portuguese by the author.
15. According to Stoichita (2019), doors can also function as a kind of window in the Albertian sense when they offer us a view of the space behind the door.
16. Translation from the original Portuguese by the author.

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### **Author's bio**

Sara Castelo Branco (born 1989, Porto, Portugal) is a PhD student in Arts and Sciences of Art and Communication Sciences at the Université Paris 1—Panthéon Sorbonne (Paris) and Universidade Nova de Lisboa (Lisbon) and an FCT grantee. She investigates relations between art and cinema in the context of Portuguese contemporary art and has programmed screenings of artists' films and experimental cinema in institutions such as Arsenal—Institut für Film und Videokunst (Berlin), CRIPTA 474 (Turin), Galerias Municipais de Lisboa (Lisbon), and ZDB (Lisbon). She holds a master's degree in Art Studies—Art Theory and Criticism (Faculdade de Belas Artes da Universidade do Porto) and a bachelor's in Communication and Cultural Sciences (Universidade Lusófona do Porto).

Email: saracath1@hotmail.com.

ORCID: 0000-0001-9930-7472.

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## **Рок, баня и музей. Обзор видеоархива Сергея Борисова из коллекции Музея современного искусства «Гараж»**

Ирина Гахова

Музей современного искусства «Гараж», Москва

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## Рок, баня и музей. Обзор видеоархива Сергея Борисова из коллекции Музея современного искусства «Гараж»

Ирина Гахова

В фокусе экспериментального эссе, представленного в виде серии TikTok-видео, находится видеоархив Сергея Борисова — фотографа и документалиста перестроечной и российской неофициальной художественной культуры. Проблематика данного исследования связана с рефлексией о месте документальных музыкальных материалов (концерты «Кино», «Наутилуса Помпилиуса», панк-фестивали и т.д.) в современном российском музейном дискурсе в контексте теснейших связей музыкального андеграунда и художников, занимающихся образительным искусством в России. Архив также включает в себя документацию важнейших событий

российского искусства: «Искусство против коммерции» в Битцевском парке (1986), первого советского аукциона Sotheby's (1988), столичной премьеры фильма «Асса» Сергея Соловьева (1988) и легендарной выставки-акции в Сандуновских банях (1988), организованной «Клубом авангардистов» (КЛАВА) и др. Являясь по своей сути метаданными, связанными с объектом, такие архивные записи дают больше информации, чем отдельные произведения искусства, и представляют большую ценность не только в качестве материала для научного исследования, но и как часть музейной экспозиции.

**Ключевые слова:** музыка, советское неофициальное искусство, перестройка, андеграундная культура, архив, видео

Проблематика данного исследования связана с рефлексией о роли документальных музыкальных видеоматериалов (например, записи концертов группы «Кино», «Наутилус Помпилиус», панк-фестивалей и т.д.) в современном российском и русскоязычном музейном дискурсе о наследии музыкального и художественного андеграунда позднесоветского периода. Исследование использует метод и форму TikTok-видео для того, чтобы проанализировать материалы, которые включены в видеоархив Сергея Борисова (род. 1947), фотографа и документалиста перестроечной и российской неофициальной художественной культуры. Борисов зафиксировал важные события того времени, например первый советский аукцион Sotheby's (1988), премьеру фильма «Асса» Сергея Соловьева (1988),

легендарную выставку-акцию в Сандуновских банях (1988), организованную «Клубом авангардистов» (КПАВА). Архив Борисова — часть архивной коллекции Музея современного искусства «Гараж», включающей в себя множество материалов, среди которых архивы художников и коллекционеров, документы московских галерей, пресса об искусстве, институциональный архив Музея «Гараж» и видеозаписи различных событий советского неофициального и современного искусства.

Исследование состоит из концептуальной части и цикла из десяти видеозаписей, каждая из которых длиной от 30 секунд до 2,5 минуты. Исследование проводилось на базе архива Музея «Гараж»; при производстве видео были реализованы оцифровка аналоговых носителей с последующей адаптацией оцифрованных видео под формат экрана телефона и монтаж с использованием дополнительно отснятых материалов.

Главный вопрос исследования — соотношение (архивных) объектов и метаданных. Это соотношение получает новый смысл в эпоху цифровой культуры за счет использования новых средств работы и организации данных. В частности, исследование анализирует данное соотношение в контексте «зафиксированного» архива (архив музея) и «подвижного» архива (социальные сети) современной культуры.

Ответ на поставленный вопрос состоит в переосмыслении концепции «положения культуры», предложенной Хоми Баба (1991). Он касается переосмысления соотношений методов анализа и экспозиции культурного наследия. С одной стороны, исследование переосмысляет исторические и современные проблемы архивирования культурного наследия, анализирует синтез искусств в андеграундной культуре, который совпадает с синтезом дискурсов в социальных сетях, и интерпретирует «исторические» события, важные в контексте выхода из «подполья» музыкальной и художественной советской сцены. С другой стороны, площадка соцсети TikTok деконструируется с точки зрения культурного наследия прежней эпохи, в данном случае аудиовизуальной культуры позднего СССР, запечатленного на аналоговую камеру Сергеем Борисовым.

В данном исследовании исторический материал понимается в широком смысле. Так он включает «легенды» и «заявления» участников художественного процесса. Такого вида включения характерны для современной цифровой культуры, которая кодирует любую информацию и практики как данные. Например, исследование отмечает тенденцию к синтезу искусств и тесной взаимосвязи художественной и музыкальной «тусовки» в среде ленинградского андеграунда. Художник Тимур Новиков «создал» вместе с Иваном Сотниковым музыкальный инструмент утюгон, который он назвал «первым советским экспериментальным аналоговым синтезатором» (по факту, инструменты данного типа появлялись и до этого). Утюгон использовался на концертах «Поп-механики», а сам Новиков был официальным художником группы «Кино». Сергей Курёхин, по словам Новикова, устроил его в Ленконцерт на должность артиста, при этом он «числился там как саксофонист, так как должности художника при «Поп-механике» не было». Данный факт кодирован в Архиве Музея (SB-18-01),

а значит, может быть «считан» социальными сетями на уровне метаданных. Другой пример — тенденция переосмысления современными пользователями социальных сетей смыслов песен и смещения фокуса восприятия, как, например, в творчестве Виктора Цоя с экзистенциального на социально-политическое прочтение его творчества. Метод и формат TikTok-видео позволяет увидеть эти факты не как противоречия, а как новое «положение культуры».

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### **Об авторе**

Ирина Гахова — хранитель медиа архива Музея современного искусства «Гараж». Выпускница МГХПА им. С. Г. Строганова. Сферы научных интересов: советское неофициальное искусство, архитектура советского модернизма. В качестве видеооператора занимается пополнением архива хроникой текущих событий в сфере современного искусства.

Почтовый адрес: 119049, Москва, ул. Крымский Вал, д. 9, стр. 4.

E-mail: [i.gakhova@garagemca.org](mailto:i.gakhova@garagemca.org).

ORCID: 0000-0002-3498-9684.

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## **Conserve, Show, Restage, Revivify. The Film as (Trans)portable and Projectable Museum**

Eugénie Zvonkine  
University of Paris 8, France

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## Conserve, Show, Restage, Revivify. The Film as (Trans)portable and Projectable Museum

Eugénie Zvonkine

This text examines two cases in order to start outlining the aspects of a specific relationship between cinema, on the one hand, and museum and exhibition spaces, on the other. It studies two films (*Assa* by Sergei Solovyov and *Jean-Luc Godard, The Disorder Exposed* by Céline Gailleurd and Olivier Bohler) as models of cinematic conservation

and curating invisible and ephemeral museal art forms. These films aim at making visible a work of art made invisible by censorship and the socio-political system in place, or by its public failure, on the one hand, and its brevity, on the other. The author shows how these films work as a (trans)portable museum.

**Keywords:** museum, cinema, Soviet cinema, documentary cinema, exhibition, memory

Amidst the great spectrum of relations between cinema and museum, going from utter fascination to rejection, one of its less studied vectors is the idea that cinema could be (and sometimes already is) the guardian, the missing link, the keeper, and curator of the museum spaces and of pieces of art that initially belong to it. This short text will examine two case studies in order to start outlining the aspects of this specific relationship between cinema on the one hand and museum and exhibition spaces on the other. Of course, a large scale of interactions exists between video, cinematic renditions, and museum and exhibition practices, among which the category of ‘exhibition films’ made on a regular basis to accompany exhibitions has to be taken in account. Some of them are made without an independent artistic scope, and only to document an exhibition, others present inventive and artistic approaches. The lockdowns around the world, for instance, have inspired museums to invent new ways to convey the museal space through moving image to the audience. These videos are of course very important for spectators and scholars to be able to experience the exhibitions that are no longer available to them. One might imagine a whole scale of films that make an account of real or invented exhibitions. On one side of the spectrum, we could find films whose goal is to make an account of an event rather than to integrate one form of art into another. The two feature films that I intend to analyze in this paper would be situated on the other side of the spectrum.

These are, of course, only two examples from a large collection where real or invented museum spaces are used and represented in feature films.

In France, two edited collective books were dedicated to this specific practice in cinema (Le Maître and Verraes 2013, Jibokji et al. 2018). The authors suggest that we consider cinema as 'a museal potency'—*le cinema comme puissance muséale* (Le Maître and Verraes 2013: 5). Taking the film *Cinema Museum* by Mark Lewis (2008), Le Maître showed how the experimental director and visual artist 'transformed a medium into an instrument of *musealization*' (Le Maître 2013: 24). My text would like to prolong these reflections and analysis by dwelling on the film as a *conservation* and *curating* practice of invisible and ephemeral art forms.

*Assa* (1987) by Sergey Solovyov, the film in my first case study, aims at making visible a work of art made invisible by censorship and the socio-political system in place. In the other one, the exhibition is also invisible, but more because of its public failure on the one hand and its brevity on the other hand. Even though the museum is an institution present in the form we know it since the seventeenth century (Poulot 2008), the art exhibition itself is in most cases an ephemeral form. In both films I will analyze here, cinema prevents the oblivion of the art piece and pushes the cinema to embody what André Bazin called its ontological function, that of embalming (Bazin 1945). For this reason, I will prefer the term 'museum' to qualify the spaces created by the films, rather than simply equating them to audio-visual exhibitions. Indeed, whereas the exhibition's aim is to present artefacts to the public (and the word's etymology shows that the word was used in different social situations of public displays), and it is most often an ephemeral form, the museum works not only as a display but also as a conservation and preservation space.

Both these films are thus related to what Barbara Le Maître theorized as a 'fiction of restoration' (Le Maître 2018): a film that by its mere existence not only 'projects' a possible utopia of conservation of artefacts from the past but sheds light on them and even changes their future in real life.

My examples come from very different socio-historic and cultural contexts in order to authorize us to observe how these questions are decided and adapted by artists and directors in different contexts. My first example is the cult Soviet film *Assa* by Sergey Solovyov (1987) and my second one is the contemporary French documentary *Jean-Luc Godard, the Disorder Exposed* [*Jean-Luc Godard, le désordre exposé*, 2012] by Céline Gailleurd and Olivier Bohler.

### **Assa as a 'portable museum'**

The film *Assa* is from the start conceived by Solovyov himself as an *œuvre* linked to contemporary artists. He discovered the artwork of the 'New Artists,' a group created by Timur Novikov in 1982, and decided to put some

of it inside the film. He described this encounter as a vivifying moment for his artistic inspiration: 'I am thankful to this film because it made me discover a completely new continent. It was as if I had been sprinkled with living water' (Solovyov, quoted by Aleynikov 1988: 64). These artists were in fact known only by a small segment of the public and the film thus became a way to present their artwork to a much larger audience. Solovyov formulated this in the following way: 'They were half-forbidden, and I was completely authorized!' (Solovyov 2012). Remember that some of the artists whose work will appear in *Assa* were part of the famous 'bulldozer exhibition' which happened on the wasteland between the streets Profsoiuznaia and Ostrovitianova in Moscow on 15 September 1974. This exhibition of non-conformist and avant-garde art was repressed by actual bulldozers sent by Brezhnev, that destroyed most of the art pieces there. However, as Emanuel Landolt reminds us, this decision 'and the indignant reaction on the international level that followed, forced the regime to soften the political repression, which profoundly changed the artistic landscape (with the first organization of semi-official exhibitions)' (Landolt 2015: 6). This is why Solovyov uses this apparently strange formula of 'half-forbidden' to qualify the artists he collaborated with for his feature film. They survive in the margins, unknown to a large public.

Making the most of his status in the Soviet context as a renowned and respected film director and of what it allowed him to do, Solovyov was completely aware of his part as a conservator, a keeper of these art pieces inside his film. The actor who played the main part in the film, Sergey 'Afrika' Bugayev, a musician and a plastic artist, talked about their collaboration as a way of 'relocating' their art inside the film: 'We transported our ways, our forms of work and of relationships on the platform of Solovyov's film. We were very thankful to him because he was very attentive to and respectful with every proposal and suggestion made by Sergey Shutov and Timur Novikov' (Bugayev in Barabanov 2019: 255).

While preparing the film, Solovyov discovered the flat that Novikov transformed into the art gallery named 'Assa.' He immediately was impressed by the artistic potency of what he saw, but also took on the role of an art curator and conservator: 'Sergey Bugayev 'Afrika' took me to his room, where he lived, which was later reproduced exactly as it was in the film *Assa*. When I entered it, I immediately said: "(...) this needs to be transported in the film exactly in the same way as the Hermitage Museum was evacuated during the war. You need to put a number on every item, take it away and reinstall it identically on the set"' (Solovyov in Barabanov 2019: 71-72).

I used the term of 'relocating' on purpose; this is a notion proposed by Francesco Casetti (Casetti 2015). Casetti uses it to theorize moments when cinema tends to be presented *not* on the wide screen and thus is being relocated to another screen such as the computer or other interactive screens. This term is also quite useful in our case as it emphasizes the spatial transference of the artworks from the real-life space which is accessible only to few viewers and spectators and which is ephemeral (nowadays, only a few testimonies exist of this gallery and of its precise installation) to a more lasting

venue that is also accessible to many more viewers: the set and the film itself. In this sense, it is also quite striking that the title of the film is the same as the name of the art gallery as if one was trying to substitute one for the other.

Igor Aleynikov in his critical review of the film insisted on this merger between cinema and other arts which could open 'large new perspectives in our national cinema that are still unexplored' (Aleynikov 1988: 64). The necessity of cinema as a platform for underground and non-conformist artists becomes obvious from the story of the film *premiere*. It was to be organized in the cinema Udarnik, one of the oldest movie theatres in Moscow. Opened in 1931, for a long time considered as the most important movie theatre of the country, in 1989 it still had 1200 seats. Solovyov wanted to accompany the *premiere* screening of the film with an exhibition of avant-garde painters from Moscow and Leningrad, as well as with a concert by underground rock groups (about Solovyov's relationship with the rock groups, see Safariants 2018 and 2019). As Aleynikov put it, he wanted to 'drag out a whole layer of culture from the "underground"' (Aleynikov 1988: 64). Solovyov even had the goal to create on the basis of this event the Moscow Centre of Arts that would highlight the symbiosis and collaboration between different art forms (cinema, painting, music, etc.) But the event aroused many concerns, the director of the cinema started complaining to administrative authorities about the project, considering it as ideologically questionable. Finally, the premiere was forbidden at that venue (for the full story of this *premiere*, cf. Solovyov 1988.) The first public screening of *Assa* finally took place on 24 March 1988, at the DK Melz, aka the Dvoretz na lauze, also an important venue, but not as big (800 seats) nor as central as the Udarnik: whereas the Udarnik is situated in the heart of Moscow, the Dvoretz na lauze is far from the centre and far beyond the Garden Ring. This clearly shows how the Soviet administration tried and effectively managed to marginalize the avant-garde and underground artists in those last years of the Soviet era.

However, the film did perform its part as a 'portable' museum since it started showing in different cinemas in April 1988 and gathered in total more than 17 million viewers during the Soviet period. Even though some of the spectators (or maybe many of them) might not have been aware of the art pieces they saw in the film, they still were made available to them on a very large scale. This is what Natalya Surkova, now an art curator in the city of Perm, tells about her discovery of the non-conformist painters through the screening of *Assa* which she watched in a local cinema theatre in 1988: 'At that time, it was my very first encounter with contemporary art. How could we even know this existed? Until 1989, Perm was a closed city, and I didn't know any local artists at the time' (Surkova 2020).

### **The film incorporates the artwork**

The art pieces inside the film are quite a few. Among them we can quote the most important ones: *The Communication Tube* by Guennady Donskoy,

Mikhail Roshal-Fedorov, and Viktor Skersis (group Gnezdo, 1975'), *The Iron Curtain* by Gennady Donskoy, Mikhail Roshal-Fedorov, and Viktor Skersis (group Gnezdo, 1975'), the lamp *Hand with a gas mask* by Sergey Shutov. Sergey 'Afrika' Bugayev shows a notebook with his drawings during the film. The first Bananan's dream in the film is an experimental animation made by painting on film by Sergey 'Afrika' Bugayev. The second 'dream' is an excerpt from the film *Nanainana* by Evgeny Kondratyev (1984). Thus, Solovyov really becomes a curator of contemporary art, introducing in his film excerpts from other films, just as they could be screened in a museum. Even though these art pieces might not be numerous enough for a real-life museum, they still appear on a much larger scale than contemporary art would normally do in a Soviet film at the time, which confers a specific status on this film.

What is especially interesting to us is how these art pieces are integrated in the cinema and fiction canvas of the feature film.

There are three different modalities in which Bananan's room is shown in the film. The first one is that of the 'guided tour,' a traditional stylistic exercise in a museum (on the 'guided tour' in cinema, see Lavin 2013). There are two of those in the film. The second one, made by Bananan himself when he comes back to his room after being beaten up, shows in a quite obvious way the director's desire to make the spectator 'visit' this space as a museum visitor, since Bananan, being the lodger and the owner of this room, is not very likely to explore and to discover different items. Still, this is what he does, and the camera lingers on his hands touching and moving around different art objects in the room.



Figure 1. Bugayev visiting his own room. Screenshot of Sergey Solovyov, *Assa* (1987), DVD Extralucid Films 2021.

The longest sequence when we find ourselves inside the room takes place an hour after the beginning of the film. We are inside the 'exhibition' space of the room. Alika and Bananan are talking, and Alika starts looking around the room. She asks: 'Who is this?' This question reroutes the sequence

into a 'guided tour' of the room. Bananan does not stop at the object he was questioned about and continues explaining other items to Alika: 'This is very much my favourite singer, Nick Cave. And this is Yuri Gagarin, the first man in space. And this is the *Communication Tube*.' The camera, in tune with this new turn of events, leaves the characters and gets closer to the wall, sliding along the wall and the described artefacts. The *Communication Tube* is presented just as in a museum since there is not only the object itself but also a text with a title plate and directions for its use on the wall next to it.



Figures 2 and 3. Bananan points out the artefacts and the text presenting *The Communication Tube*. Screenshots of Sergey Solovyov, *Asa* (1987), DVD Extralucid Films 2021.

We discover another cinematographic modality of integrating art pieces into the film canvas immediately afterwards. The feature film literally engulfs the art object, since it becomes interactive and then participates in the dramaturgy of the characters' relationships. Bananan explains to Alika how the *Tube* works in 'position number one' (Alika speaks, he listens) then in 'position number two' (he speaks, Alika listens). This display authorizes Alika to share with him her close relationship with the mafioso Krymov and her



Figures 4, 5, 6. Alika and Banana use *The Communication Tube* in positions 1 and 2, Alika and Krymov 'invent' position 3. Screenshots of Sergey Solovyov, *Asa* (1987), DVD Extralucid Films 2021.

reluctance to leave him, even though romantic feelings start to grow between herself and Bananan. Afterwards Bananan offers the *Communication Tube* to Alika who brings it to the hotel room where she stays with Krymov. This time, she explains to him how it works, and it is a new occasion for meaningful discussions. When Krymov, who has already discovered her feelings for Bananan, tries to force her to tell him about it, they both freeze, their ears pressed to the tube, in a new position, that could be 'position number three.' Thus, the film gives a new life to the art piece and even invents new uses for it.

I would argue, however, that the most present and perceptible modality used by Solovyov in his film is that of withdrawal, of difficulty to see and enjoy this art, since it constantly appears and disappears from our view, reminding us of its ephemeral quality. The first time we see Bananan's room, it appears as a luminous rectangle and a sort of artistic 'parenthesis' in the rather dark and very Soviet flat where he lives. Its bright colours strike us, but then the image goes black, and the vision of the room comes back a few seconds later only to disappear again, thus teasing the spectator—Bananan is playing with the lights, switching them on and off. Bananan and Alika then leave the flat and we won't be authorized over the threshold of the room for seven more minutes. The next morning, we will catch another glimpse of the room, which accentuates again the moment of discovery, curiosity, and unattainability: Alika slowly opens the door to the room and the sequence ends abruptly. This image of entering the museum space is reiterated once more, in the second part of the film, when Krymov slips inside Bananan's room. The camera is again positioned outside the room and this time, when Krymov opens the door, his progression is stopped by an artwork we hadn't seen before — the *Iron Curtain*. It hangs in the doorway, preventing us from seeing the room. Krymov hesitates in front of it, leaving enough time for the spectator to read the inscription on it, then moves it aside with a strong metallic noise and enters the room. We stay outside the space and observe it from a distance. Later, we will find ourselves inside the room with Krymov who turns on and off the lamp created by Shutov, thus once again making our vision uncomfortable and intermittent.

It is precisely this aspect of mixing all these oeuvres inside one canvas, that has an official author (the film director) is what we can consider as problematic about this 'portable' museum. Thus, Avdotia Smirnova recounts the scandals made by Mikhail Roshal-Fedorov and other artists about not being credited clearly enough in the film (Smirnova in Barabanov 2019: 238). An ignorant spectator might think that all these art pieces are Solovyov's or his team's inventions. The reaction of the artists also means that they indeed considered the film as a kind of a portable museum space and a platform for their art that failed to promote their names.

### **'Everything must go'**

Gaillourd and Bohler's *Jean-Luc Godard, the Disorder Exposed* opens with a reminder of the ephemeral aspect of the museum exhibition of art—it



Figure 7. *The Iron Curtain* temporarily stops Krymov from entering Bananan's room. Screenshot of Sergey Solovyov, *Assa* (1987), DVD Extralucid Films 2021.

starts with a sequence where we see workers dismantling and folding the poster of the exhibition curated by Jean-Luc Godard in the Pompidou Centre in 2006. The workers finish their work, carelessly throw the poster in their van, close it, and address the camera in a joking tone: 'Farewell, Godard!' Afterwards, in a staged sequence, the camera follows André S. Labarthe, the famous documentarist and film critic, who enters the Pompidou Centre and pretends trying to buy a ticket to the Godard exhibition. 'But this exhibition is over for years now,' answers the museum employee. Both these sequences clearly state one of the main ideas of the film: the museum exhibition is an ephemeral form, and it becomes unavailable even though we might like it to be conserved for the years to follow and next generations of visitors. The initial title of the documentary project was, by the way, *Farewell, Godard! Everything Must Go*, making it obvious that one of the main themes of the film would be the oblivion and destruction of the remnants of this exhibition.

The choice of this exhibition is particularly interesting for two reasons. First, it is an exhibition commissioned by the Pompidou Centre to one of the most famous film directors. But the second reason is also quite interesting: this exhibition was a resounding failure. Many texts have already been written about this exhibition and its failure to meet the public or even to satisfy its organizers and the director himself (see Godard 2006, Fabre 2006). Daniel Fairfax stated that the disputes around the exhibition equalled a 'boxing match' and were able 'to create a genuine sense of scandal within the museum institution' (Fairfax 2015: 24-25).

Most visitors hated the 2006 exhibition, as the film makes us aware through several quotes from radio or else from visitors' reactions. The reasons of the failure might also be twofold. The initial concept by Godard for the exhibition, entitled *Collage(s)*, was never realized. The Pompidou Centre decided instead to produce a previous project for an exhibition that the director had—*Travel(s) into Utopia, 1946-2006, In Search of the Lost*

*Theorem.* In her paper on Godard and the museum, Jennifer Verraes reminds that Godard's 'hostility towards institutions in general' extended to the museums: 'he not only battled with all the institutions that intended to exhibit his work (the MoMA, le Fresnoy—National Studio of Contemporary Arts, the Pompidou Centre) but also refused with tenacity to use the museum as a set for his films' with only three brief exceptions: *Bande à part* (1964), *Allemagne année 90 neuf zero* (1991), and *Our Music [Notre musique, 2004]*' (Verraes 2018: 266). The other reason is what spectators and art buffs expect from an exhibition curated by a film director. Their 'horizon of expectation' (according to Jauss's terminology) is not met by the exhibition. Gailleurd as a scholar wrote that 'one of the main theories that Malraux develops in his texts about art ends here: the museum is not any more capable to separate the œuvre from the world.' (Gailleurd 2009: 32). In the film we see the non-cathartic disposition of the objects that compose the exhibition, bathed in a 'neutral lighting, without any trace of aura' which contributes to a 'desacralisation of the art' (Gailleurd 2009: 33). A sequence of the film edits together the indignant commentaries from visitors, which go from questions such as 'Why turn the Pompidou Centre into an attic?' or 'Are the perplexed looks on the visitors faces part of the concept of the exhibition?' to direct insults—'It is disgusting.'

### The 'dreamed up' museum

The origin of the documentary is a salvation gesture by the two young directors who also happen to be cinema scholars, both of them. When they learned that all the elements composing the exhibition were thrown away or given to a charity, they were desperate to safeguard 'an archive' (Gailleurd 2021, personal communication<sup>2</sup>) of the exhibition and asked the permission to film the uninstalation of the exhibition with a small video camera. Then they took the paper rolls with quotes out of the Pompidou Centre bins and went to the charity—Emmaüs, an association who collects used items to be given away or sold for little money to the poor—and bought everything they could and that seemed valuable from the exhibition. For several years they lived with the furniture from the exhibition in their Parisian flat and conserving panels from Pompidou in their safekeeping, before the idea of the film dawned on them.

In the film, the directors of the documentary decide to perform a double salvation of the exhibition: they edit video materials of the exhibition they filmed when it was happening, and they use archival footage from Godard's previous interviews and films, and they invite André S. Labarthe to help them decipher the meaning of this artistic event and why it was not understood by the public.

Once more, the exercise in style that is a guided tour takes here diverse and playful forms. A sequence extracted from the film *Amateur Report [Reportage amateur, Maquette expo, 2006]* by Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Mieville shows us Godard explaining the exhibition *Collage(s)*

as it should have existed on a small-scale model. He points out the different rooms and their names: *The myth*, *Mankind*, *The camera*, *The films*, *The unconscious*, *Bastards*, *The reality*, *Murder*, and *The grave*. His hand pointing out these little spaces and tiny objects reminds us of a reversed museum tour, where the museum is small and the visitor a giant. Gailleurd and Bohler also invent another device: in response to the classical 'white cube' of the museum, they propose to the spectator a 'black cube.' It is not the 'black box' as Erika Balsom calls the movie theatre (Balsom 2013: 39-43), but an exhibition and screening space all at once: in a completely black room, they dispose *fac-similes* of exhibit items and different sizes of screens where they show excerpts of the exhibition, of Godard's films and of the shows Labarthe made with Godard over the previous years. Labarthe, the only authorized visitor of this 'black cube,' reacts to these excerpts and comments on them. Once again, the film not only preserves the artefacts of the exhibition, but goes further, staging the 'relocation' in a visible and underlined way inside the film.



Figures 8 and 9. André Labarthe inside the black cube. Céline Gaillourd, Olivier Bohler, *Jean-Luc Godard, le désordre exposé*, 2012 (image courtesy of the directors).

As Gailleurd herself puts it, this black space and the sequences that happen inside it were an attempt to compose a 'dreamed up museum, dreamed and reorganized by Labarthe' (Gailleurd 2021). This dreamed up museum has of course its roots in the 'imaginary museum' by André Malraux which brings together and makes it possible to juxtapose and compare artworks from different countries and cultures (Malraux 1965). However, the black cube invented by Gailleurd and Bohler makes this imaginary museum spatialized, they give it three dimensions even though they are then filmed and reprojected on a bidimensional screen.

Two years after the completion of the documentary, Anne Marquez who had collaborated with the commissioner of the exhibition, Dominique Païni, dedicated a thesis and then a book to this exhibition, entitled *Godard, his back to the museum. The story of an exhibition* [*Godard, le dos au musée. Histoire d'une exposition*, 2014]. She suggests interpreting the story of this exhibition as the first true attempt by Godard to 'relocate' his artwork from the screen to the museal space. For her, 'even though it takes the form of a failure, this "displacement" reveals to be fertile' and helps to understand Godard's work (Marquez 2014: 9). She also states, following the hypothesis by Gailleurd and Bohler, that Godard's link to the museal space is much stronger than one could fathom, because of his discovery of cinema through the contact with Henri Langlois (Marquez 2014: 7). The documentary film directors insert in their film an excerpt of an interview where Godard says: 'Unlike other people, we learned about cinema at the museum. And his museum was also a movie theatre.'

The film by Gailleurd and Bohler thus seems to come full circle, by reintroducing the exhibition in a cinematic apparatus.

### **Back to narrativity**

Their documentary, even though it is entitled 'the Disorder Exposed,' reintroduces a sense of narration inside the apparent chaos of the exhibition. While Fairfax argues that *Travel(s) in Utopia* is an experimentation at montage in space just as Godard's films are experimenting with editing in time, the documentary reintroduces some historicity in the discovery of the exhibition by summoning elements from Godard's films and past interviews to juxtapose them with the scenes from the exhibition. The film ends with images of the exhibition being uninstalled and most of its items sent to Emmaüs. This is how Gailleurd and Bohler described this sequence in their script: 'In the courtyard of the association are exposed, in the open air, those that belonged to the exhibition *Travel(s) in Utopia*: an armchair, a coffee table, centenary olive-trees, a bed, drowned amongst others, anonymous and everyday-looking objects. Slight vertigo seizes us when we realize how they blend in with the crowd. On each one, there is a tag with a modest price' (Gailleurd and Bohler 2012: 29). And then something magic happens: one of the Emmaüs 'companions,' whose face we do not see, starts re-visiting the dismantled

exhibition, offering to the spectator an ultimate guide tour on the remnants of the project. He points out a drawing and starts wondering if it is 'a nose or an eye, because if it is a nose, it is a cyclops, but if it is an eye, it is a clown.' He then approaches the black panels where are glued the etching of a crucified man by Goya and small wooden crosses aligned. He then starts interpreting what we see with a 'surprising erudition' (Gailleurd and Bohler 2012: 30), but also with an unfeigned enthusiasm which most of Pompidou Centre visitors clearly lacked: 'He crucified the image. It is quite remarkable.' He goes on like this for some time, making us participate in his playful and insightful interpretation.

**COMMUNAUTÉ EMMAÛS – NEUILLY-SUR-MARNE :** Dans la cour de la communauté sont exposés, en plein air, parmi une foule d'autres objets, ceux qui appartenaient à l'exposition *Voyage(s) en Utopie* : le fauteuil club, une table basse, les oliviers centenaires, le lit, noyés au milieu d'autres, anonymes et usuels. Léger vertige de constater à quel point ils se fondent dans la masse. Sur chacun, une étiquette indiquant un prix modique.



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Puis, avisant un des panneaux noirs de Godard où sont collées une gravure de Goya représentant un crucifié et des croix en bois alignées en petites rangées, l'homme poursuit, avec une érudition étonnante : « Regardez, il a mis une croix, il a crucifié l'image. C'est assez remarquable d'ailleurs. Puis, il a fait une sorte de petit cimetière de croix ... (Il se saisit d'un panneau portant une formule mathématique) ... Et quand on regarde bien l'équation  $X+3=1$ , le X est une croix. C'est un rébus non ?  $X+3$  ça donne 1. Ça veut dire que de toute manière quelque soit le nombre de croix que vous ayez ça donne une seule chose c'est la mort. Tous ces symboles, ça donne la mort. Ce que vous avez été, après, vous n'existez plus. ».

Figures 10 and 11. Excerpts from Céline Gailleurd and Olivier Bohler's script, 2012. Céline Gailleurd, Olivier Bohler, *Adieu, Godard ! Tout doit disparaître [Farewell, Godard! Everything must go]*, script, 2012 (courtesy of the authors).

Thus, just as in Solovyov's film, art is not only preserved from oblivion, but it is performed inside the film as 'thrown in the big wide world' to create the possibility of a playful and joyous interaction with the public. Just as Alikà naturally uses the *Communication Tube*, the Emmaüs companion reveals to be a much better art viewer than many when he encounters the artwork outside of the museum. The last 'relocation' of the exhibition to charity guarantees the success of its reception inside the cinematographic oeuvre.

Both films, suffused with a strong feeling of melancholy concerning the fleeting of the ephemeral forms of art, not only function as 'portable' museums, but also restore artworks to their status and meaning through their staged exit from the museum space and an interaction with an unprepared but willing and benevolent audience. They both present situations where artists (the directors of the films) not only devote a part (or the whole) of their film to function as portable museums, but also invent new ways of incorporating one artform into another. Considering these two quite different films together also allows us to see how films can participate in an interdisciplinary discussion on the museum, since both oeuvres challenge the idea of the museum as a non-performative place by allowing the artefacts to be brought to life through their interaction not only inside the film, but also by means of it, preparing the artefacts for further interactions and performances.

1. You can see the artpiece here: <http://www.museum.ru/alb/image.asp?4155>
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### Author's bio

Eugénie Zvonkine (PhD and Accreditation to supervise doctoral research) is an associate professor in the film studies department at the University of Paris 8. She writes on history and aesthetics in Soviet and post-Soviet cinema from the 1960s to the present day. She has published three monographs on Soviet and post-Soviet cinema, including *Kira Mouratova: un cinéma de la dissonance* (2012), and (co-)edited the collective volumes *Cinéma russe, (r)évolutions* (2018) and *Ruptures and Continuities in Soviet/Russian Cinema: Styles, Characters and Genres Before and after the Collapse of the USSR* (2019). She was also a regular contributor to *Cahiers du cinéma* from 2010 until 2020. In October 2021, she was named a Junior member of the French University Institute (IUF).

Address: University Paris 8, 2, rue de la Liberté, 93200 St-Denis, France. E-mail: [eugenie.zvonkine@univ-paris8.fr](mailto:eugenie.zvonkine@univ-paris8.fr).  
ORCID: 0000-0002-3851-8046.



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## **Moving Image and the Museum: Speculative Spaces in 3 Acts**

Luísa Santos

The Catholic University of Portugal, Portugal

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# Moving Image and the Museum: Speculative Spaces in 3 Acts

Luísa Santos

For the closing of Issue 4 of the *Garage Journal*, titled 'In and Out of the Museum: New Destinations of the Moving Image,' I thought I would adopt one core methodology common both to the practices of film and of curating: storytelling. All stories have a time, a space, and characters. Following the Rashomon effect<sup>1</sup>, each one of the below stories could offer entirely different

points on the relationships between the moving image and the museum. Similar to how a soundtrack can set a specific mood in film to heighten the emotional impact of the sights and sounds of a story, place and space can also serve to enhance the impact of characters (artworks) depicted in exhibitions, while characters can help to heighten the effect of events described in writing.

**Keywords:** contemporary visual art, exhibition space, moving image, museum, speculation

For the aims of the current essay, I use three short stories, each embodied by a main character. They include:

1. The first story, Salomé Lamas' *A Torre* (2015), will reveal the mutual fascination between cinema and contemporary visual art at formal, conceptual, and methodological levels;
2. Then, the second story, Ângela Ferreira's *A Tendency to Forget* (2015) will offer a critical dialogue in which different actors (such as artists, filmmakers, curators, and anthropologists) reflect upon when addressing the social and political concerns;
3. Last is *HAPTIKOS* (2021), by Inês Norton, which visually translates the ways in which audiences are immersed in new relationships and (particip)a(c)tions upon entering the exhibition space(s).

## 1. *A TORRE* (2015) | Cinema and Visual Arts, From Immersive Storytelling Towards Speculative Futures

Salomé Lamas studied cinema and visual arts but rather than conventionally moving across these two fields, she 'has been attempting to make these languages its own, treading new paths in form and content, challenging the conventional methods of production, modes of exhibition and the



Figures 1-2. Screenshots of Salomé Lamas' *A Torre / The Tower* (2015). HD video, 16:9, black and white, Dolby 5.1 sound, 8 min., Portugal—Germany—Moldova. In collaboration with Christoph Both-Asmus (images courtesy of the artist).

lines between various filmic and artistic forms of aesthetic expression' (Lamas 2021). From a disciplinary viewpoint, Lamas' work combines various methodologies and expressions, which is visible in the ways in which she presents her work, from film, video, publications, and sound installations. At the conceptual level, Lamas has coined her work as critical media practice *parafictions* via storytelling, memory, and history to highlight the traumatically repressed and the historically invisible.

*A Torre / The Tower* (2015) is an eight-minutes film-installation, shot in Portugal, Germany, and Moldova, in collaboration with Christoph Both-Asmus and first shown at the Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves

(Porto, Portugal) within the individual exhibition of Salomé Lamas titled *Parafiction* (2015). Since then, it has been shown in multiple occasions, as an installation in museums and as a film in cinemas. Filmed in black and white, nature is portrayed in its immensity through the dense images of a forest and the sounds of the wind. In this murmur arise piano notes, in a composition carefully prepared by Alvin Singleton, and we see a man walking, lonely, and sinking into the depths of the woods to emerge at the top of a tree in a relationship remindful of *The Ecological Thought*, in which Timothy Morton opens up a reflection to an all-embracing ecological dimension. Defending that ecology is more than global warming, recycling, and solar power and that it moves beyond everyday relationships between humans and nonhumans, *The Ecological Thought* shows how everything—from the human and the nonhuman realms—is interconnected (Morton 2010).

As we start wondering about a possible fiction in *The Tower*, the narration stops. From the enigmatic apparition of the lonely man in the wide nature, the story remains to be told. Narrative is an integral part of our lives as human beings. Narrative theories (in film and curatorial practices as well as in literature, media studies, psychology, or neurology) have shown the roles of narratives on our ways of being in the present, remembering the past, and projecting the future. Scholars such as Mieke Bal, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Tony Bennett have been exploring the different relationships between the making of narratives and the museum. *The Tower* was thought in different presentation formats: as an immersive installation for an exhibition setting; as a projection for an auditorium; and as a film for a screen. While all of the formats are interconnected by the same aim (telling a story) and the same setting (a museum), I will be focusing on the first, the immersive installation. Once we enter the exhibition space, such the video-room of the MAAT in Lisbon where it was shown in 2016, it feels as if we are walking the space of the character of the film (in a cinematic, rather than in a playful / videogame like way). At the MAAT, the film filled the whole wall, from the floor to the seven meters high ceiling while the sound of the wind occupied the space through a sound shower system that made it dramatically real and close to our bodies.

While discursive exhibition spaces are designed as spaces 'that foster negotiation and debate, polarize and politicize space, and invite discussion fraught with contradictory views' (Macalik et al. 2015: 1), immersive exhibitions like the film-installation *The Tower* (aim to) create knowledge in the realm of experience and affect via speculation. As such, the narrative in *The Tower* is open and the film exhibited becomes a firsthand experience to be completed by the audience.

Filmmakers make narration choices assuming that their audiences will watch their films in the order they were constructed (Carmona 2017), whether it is a linear or a non-linear order. While the purpose of narration in film could be to make sure that the spectator perceives and understands the narrative content as referred by David Bordwell (2008), Lamas chose to create a narrative that it is not meant to be completely comprehensible—

or, in other words, the narrative is meant to frustrate the spectator's narrative comprehension. Alike immersive exhibitions, puzzle-like incomprehensible film structures may result in provoking experiences or challenging audiences' natural mind state. Bordwell also refers to Art Cinema narration in its alternate use of *siuzhet*<sup>2</sup> and style in their dominant positions to create ambiguous open-ended narratives and psychologically incoherent or unclear characters.

Salomé Lamas' work uses precisely these structures—the main role of narration is to cue the audience's narrative comprehension and, therefore, there is no apparent narrator in a film narrative sending a message but only a perceiver. As such, Lamas invites us to speculate about the manifold relationships between humans and nature in ways we would probably not have imagined by ourselves in our everyday life. Remindful of Fan Kuan's painting *Travelers Among Mountains and Streams* (c. 1000), *The Tower* goes beyond telling a story or making it comprehensible to provide the spectator with an experience of being confronted with the immensity of nature. Visually combining empty spaces with crowded portions as a visual translation for opposites intertwining with each other, like Fan Kuan, Salomé Lamas organized and presented different aspects of the landscape within a single composition using a shifting viewpoint. The various details placed throughout the image cause the viewer's eyes to move from each minute depiction to the next always from the human and terrestrial world in the mountains.

From near to far, Salomé Lamas has described with detail the solemn grandeur of a majestic landscape. The lonely man in the depths of the woods epitomizes the insignificance of humans compared to nature while leaving room for closing the narrative—what is he doing? What is going to happen with him? The abyss at the foot of the man and the wide nature, we project our sensibilities onto the main character and, as it were, see through his eyes, enter into his experience in a self-identification through another process remindful of Lacan's mirror-stage.

In his essay *The Mirror Stage* (1949), Lacan defines the mirror-stage as a turning point in the growth of the child, from the age of six months and up to the age of eighteen months. It's in that timeframe that the child recognizes his/her own image in a mirror as identification. Before the mirror stage, the child only recognizes him/herself as an integrating part of his/her mother. Upon his/her recognition as a separate entity, he/she enters into the Symbolic Order, coinciding with the world of the laws that compose society, patriarchal authority, and culture. At the moment of the mirror-stage, he/she feels what Lacan has described as narcissistic joy. At the same time, however, and while becoming aware of the loss of the mother, he/she begins to repress the desire to become one with the mother again. The child will continually search for the mother along his/her life in a constant flux between the symbolic (the world of fantasies and images that allow for a self-identification through another) and the imaginary (the social and cultural symbols that allow for the self-articulation—of repression—of feelings) realms (Lacan 1949; Davis 1983).

This mirror-stage is used in psychoanalytic Film and Literary theory to explain how the spectator becomes sutured into the film / text: when the individual watches a film he feels the same *jouissance* he felt as a child in the mirror phase. This becomes possible when he becomes a spectator in film, especially but not exclusively, in the shot/reverse-angle shot. According to Jean-Pierre Oudart, one of the theorists of suture, the viewer adopts first the point of view of one of the characters in the film, say in a conversation, and then the other character point of view (1977). Thus, in the shot/reverse-shot the spectator becomes both subject and object of the look.

*The Tower* is not a purely cinematic work, neither a purely art-installation—it wasn't made for a cinema nor for a museum setting only, it was conceptualized for both. This is particularly clear, on the one hand, in the ways in which it 'lures the ego through being an image of its mirror-self, the screen is ready for narcissistic looking, a mirror for mirroring, thus a double of its double' (Metz 1982: 2-4). On the other hand, in its immersive character, it implies a bodily experience that allows for the dramatic understanding of our (tiny) existence in contrast with nature's immensity.

With this *jouissance* and under the current environmental crisis, we are also propelled to think about the effects of humans in nature. There are consequences to our actions. We watch / walk past the trees and the lonely man (is he a character of a not-so-distant future?) venturing into the woods uneasily and, hopefully, while we rejoice with our own individuality, we will speculate about possible futures which designs are of our own responsibility. Such an understanding is, in fact, comparable to the experience of the sublime—it is as striking in its potential for a beautiful world as much as it is petrifying in the ways in which it seems to go beyond us and defy our own existence.

## 2. A TENDENCY TO FORGET (2015) | (Political) Acts of Reading Moving Images

Ângela Ferreira's (Mozambique, 1958) work often finds a departure point in historical episodes bearing ties with modernism in its association with colonialism, its collapse, and its traumas, through installations which combine drawing, photography, film, and sculpture that operates in an expanded field trespassing the domains of architecture and design.

The work *A Tendency to Forget* (2015) is an in-situ installation, firstly shown at the Berardo Museum in Lisbon in the frame of an individual exhibition under the title of this work and is part of Ângela Ferreira's practice-based PhD research. Composed of a large-scale sculpture, a series of photographs, and a film, the work puts the ethnographic practice of Jorge and Margot Dias at center-stage to highlight the hidden political agenda of their fieldwork in Mozambique. The work is an invitation to think about the past, to establish connections between events, characters, and objects and to assemble these into micro-narratives of the colonial past and memory, alternative to the grand narrative disseminated in the wider cultural field.





Figures 3, 4, 5. Ângela Ferreira, *A Tendency to Forget* (2015). Sculpture: (MDF, pine beams, iron), LCD; 180 x 485 x 580 cm / 6 photos: Inkjet print; 200 x 300 cm / Video: 16:9, colour, sound; 15' loop (images courtesy of the artist).

Upon entering the exhibition space, we are prompted to enter into the sculptural component of the work that houses the film in which the narrative unfolds. Sustained by columns and beams and with a small auditorium in the back, the sculpture is reminiscent of a building—more specifically, the building of the Portuguese Ministry of the Defense (former Overseas Ministry / *Ministério do Ultramar*). While the series of the seven photographs that depict the façade of the building of the former Overseas Ministry and the National Museum of Ethnology are placed on the walls of the exhibition room, the film is visible from the highest point of the sculpture turning it into a screening surface while demanding an action—climbing the stairs of the sculpture—from the audience. The photographic series makes evident the relationship between the two buildings depicted implied in their architectural features and in their location, facing each other in Restelo, in Lisbon, which, in turn, translates their scientific and political links, particularly in the tie between its first director, the anthropologist Jorge Dias, and the *Estado Novo*, a connection that was first presented by Harry West in his *Inverting the Camel's Hump. Jorge Dias, His Wife, Their Interpreter and I* (2004). The way in which the entrance is performed, via a spiral shaped staircase as if coming from the deep of the building, alludes to the intimacy and secrecy of the matter of the reports resulting from the investigation undertaken by the anthropologists. The elevation of the sculpture is also a reminder of how distant the physical space is from the existing discourse. The political component is then evident from the photographs, the formal features of the sculpture, and from the act of entering in it to watch the film, which turns each member of the audience in a voyeur, just like the anthropologists and the responsible people of the Overseas Ministry who commissioned the ethnographic project of Jorge Dias.

Jorge Dias was invited by the *Estado Novo* to lead the Mission for the Study of Ethnic Minorities, also known as MEMEUP (*Missão de Estudos*

das Minorias Étnicas do Ultramar Português),<sup>3</sup> a project that operated within the framework of the Center for Political and Social Studies of the Investigations Department of the Ultramar. From the regime's point of view, the aim was to make a survey of the political and social situation in the colonies. Within the duration of the Mission in Northern Mozambique between 1956 and 1961, Jorge Dias, his wife Margot Dias, and Manuel Viegas Guerreiro, wrote a yearly report describing the circumstances of their fieldwork and presenting the results of their observations of a political and social nature. Given the political context of the time (a dictatorship), the reports studying the Makonde people were of very reserved circulation.

Ângela Ferreira's film, screened on the top of the sculpture, crosses Margot Dias' ethnographic films on the rites of the Makonde people with images from the documentary film *Moçambique—no outro lado do tempo* (*Mozambique—on the other side of time*), by Beja Filmes. The reading of Jorge Dias' secret reports is played over Margot Dias' footage, confronting the narration of the filmmaker's diary entries with the footage of the commercially produced film documentary portraying the life of the colonizers in Mozambique in a process that puts the observer in the position of the observed—'returning the gaze' (Everett 2001). In other words, the film *A Tendency to Forget* puts the focus on us rather than on the Other(s).

The structure of the film is articulated in a series of female and male voices alternated along the various chapters of the narrative. Two types of archival images and two types of audio registry compose the film. In the first part, a female voice cites the diary of Margot Dias in a description of different moments of her life, ranging from notes on her daily life as a mother to her observations as an ethnographer in Nigeria, South Africa, and Mozambique. Archival images from Mozambique, with glimpses from the urban life of Maputo / Lourenço Marques and Pemba / Porto Amélia in the 1960s and early 1970s (before the Portuguese Carnation Revolution), accompany the female voice. These archival images show a nostalgic viewpoint of the colonial past reminding of the impossibility of letting go of the imperial past (Gilroy 2005). As such, the female voice describing the African is seeing herself, since the ethnographer is one of the persons who could have been portrayed in that context. In this mirror play, full of reflections, the camera is turned to the filmmaker and observes her in turn. In the second audio registry, a male voice reads excerpts from the reports written by Jorge Dias at the end of each mission and under the request of the Overseas Ministry, observing and analyzing the political context of Niassa and its neighboring territories, reports that at the time were confidential but are now available publicly at the Torre do Tombo in Lisbon. The male voice is accompanied by a video recording showing a TV in which the ethnographic films of Margot Dias are being transmitted. This confrontation highlights the duality between the observations of the ethnographer who, in studying the Makondes' rituals, took political conclusions. In this process, *A Tendency to Forget* returns the gaze that the Makondes didn't get to express.

The texts selected in the citations along the film reveal that the contents of Jorge Dias' reports were not exclusively ethnographic, putting the finger on the problematic relationship between a scientific project and the colonial politics. In Ângela Ferreira's film, there is a conscious selection of material—much more than analyzing the protagonists (Jorge and Margot Dias), the work intends to make evident the manifold processes of silencing and of amnesia disseminated in the ways in which Portuguese history is told. On the other hand, it also exposes the lack of ethics and trust implied in the ethnographic missions that analyzed and exposed Makondes' rituals without their permission, as pointed out by anthropologist Harry West in 2004 in a work that has been systematically dismissed in the Portuguese context. This process is reminiscent of Jean Rouch's first film, *Au Pays des mages Noirs* (1946–47), which resulted from a trip to Africa by Rouch with his friends Jean Sauvy and Pierre Ponty that was financed through the articles sent to the *France Presse*. Produced by Les Actualités françaises and edited with inserts of wild animals and with a voiceover and narration that would transform the gaze of the film and with which Rouch would deny having had any involvement—in fact, his following films progressively diverged from the exoticism and sensationalism (Leprohon 1945).

In her work, and by selecting and editing sensitive archival imagery, Ângela Ferreira moves beyond the usual question 'Who has the right to represent whom?' to ask what to do with images of representation. The artist decided to include the films of Margot Dias but, with this decision, it became clear that an editing process was needed. Besides the selection of sequences and the video montage, Ângela Ferreira adopted the technique usually employed by the media when identities of individuals are to be kept secret, pixelating the faces. Even though the quality of the original material was low enough to make all individuals non-identifiable, the use of this technique became a tool to highlight the problem, reminding us that we are watching images whose premises and contents are questionable.

'The reader brings 'pre-understandings', a set of contexts and beliefs and expectations, to the work' (D'Alleva 2012: 110). These pre-understandings presuppose, however, as Heidegger put it (1927, 1971, 1935), that the reader emerges from and exists in the world and can only know things as being-in-the-world: understanding is rooted in time and rooted in history (cf. D'Alleva 2012). There is, thus, a dynamic hermeneutical relationship between the notions of cultural memory as something silently inscribed onto time and place and brought to life by its sheer materiality and cultural memory as an active discourse constru(ct)ed by active agents such as artists and articulated through the material existence of works of art. Cultural memory (Nora 1989) might then be considered as a process of translation which occurs amongst and amidst these two notions, being in itself a process of hermeneutic decoding of the textualized significations of art and art history. By transcending art-historical boundaries, Ângela

Ferreira brings new insights into the historical grand-narratives of colonial power and gives light to micro-narratives which, in turn, relate to other (sub)types of power, namely gender issues in their relationships with science and history, and identity and institutions.

Having the National Museum of Ethnology (MNE) as one of the spaces in the installation, the artist also reflects upon the power role of museums in society, particularly within the post-colonial discourses. The building of the MNE is portrayed in *A Tendency to Forget* as a symbol of the scientific research conducted by the Portuguese academy without forgetting that Jorge Dias was the force behind its creation and that, naturally, his memories are a fundamental part of the founding of the MNE. Furthermore, the MNE is the institutional guardian of the fieldwork (video and written notes) produced by the researchers, whose publishing rights were given and sold by the authors to the Portuguese government, represented by the MNE. As reminded by Jyoti Mistry and Nkule Mabaso, 'the legacies of racial privilege sedimented in institutional structures [have] not been responsive to the growing urgency for transformation in art institutions and universities: its hiring practices, student recruitment, the curriculum, the recognition of art practices that acknowledge and accommodate different epistemologies and aesthetics' (2021). Accordingly, Hall suggests that museums must define their specificities from the whole that is missing, the acknowledging of the Other, because its real relationship with the Other doesn't function today in dialogue with the paternalistic or the apologetically discourses (2001). In this frame, the existence of ethnological museums is the main focus, due to its collections, in urgent need of proper reading and context, but also due to its discourses linked with the validation of Ethnography and Anthropology. It is precisely in this conceptual space, reminding the current state of the post-colonial discourses in the Portuguese context, that *A Tendency to Forget* tells its stories. The installation draws a non-linear narrative made of various small stories, connections and images inviting for the construction of an alternative history. This process is explored in a methodological approach reminiscent of speculative design: a tool to present visions of potential futures as a means of critique and provocation of such futures (cf. Helgason and Smyth 2020). In this case, by suggesting new ways of looking at the past, the work speculates on the fabrication of memories for a possible future that can (and should) uncover our colonial legacy.

An installation that begins from a reflection on architecture, *A Tendency to Forget* operates as a reminder that 'buildings can be read as political texts' (Ferreira, 2014). The reason why it is incredibly successful lies in the skillful ways in which it moves across and beyond the fields of sculpture, film, sound, photography, architecture, the archive, and the curatorial in an expanded practice. All of the elements that compose the installation—the film, the sculpture and the photographs—are complementary and equally important in telling the usually untold narratives and encouraging the construction of new memories.

### 3. *Haptikos* (2021) | (Human) Acts of Immersion



Figure 6. Inês Norton, *Haptikos* (2021). Film, sound, sculptures, dimensions variable (image courtesy of the artist).

A small, dark, and cold space creates an illusion of entering a science fiction film. So could be the description of entering the exhibition space of *Haptikos* (2021), in the Uma Lullik Gallery in Lisbon, an immersive installation by Inês Norton.

*Haptikos* is composed of a 2'54" video, sound, and two sculptures. In the video we can see a hand covered with a latex medical glove that moves its fingers, reproducing the movements that we make to access the content in our electronic touch devices, such as tablets and smartphones. Pedro Tudela produced the ambient, metallic, and synthetic sound that accompanies the images of the video specifically for the project. Facing the video, we find a box, a tray of water, with a clinical, polished, and aseptic look. The box is an ecosystem inhabited by a set of 3D-printed sculptural white objects reminiscent of both the marine world and the human body, in a limbo between human and non-human. These shapes that resemble corals, mineral formations, bones, fragile and synthetic structures float as if suspended. On the wall, a gigantic black shell made from aluminium houses a small white pearl inside.

The title of the work tells as much of the ideas tackled in the work as the above description of its formal features. The title adopts the Ancient Greek term ἁπτικός (*haptikós*), from ἅπτω (*háptō*, 'to touch') + -ικός (-ikós, 'suffix forming an adjective from a noun'), meaning 'concerning the sense of touch.' In the domain of technology, haptics identifies all the technologies that provide the sensation of digital touch feedback, also called haptic feedback. Haptics is a bidirectional technology: it involves both an action (interaction) and a reaction (haptic feedback). While the action is the intention of the user to interact with a haptics-enabled content, the reaction is the haptic feedback that the digital content transmits to the user. As such, interaction and haptic feedback are

equally important (Marks 2000).

*Haptikos* is composed of a 2'54" video, sound, and two sculptures. While these are the components that—formally—shape the work, *Haptikos* is not complete without the interaction of the audience with the work and the feedback that the work gives back to the audience via the experience of entering in the icy (a hidden piece pumps out, joule by joule, the room's thermal energy), dark space.

The extent to which the audience is integrated into the *Haptikos* calls into question the distinction between its object and its subject, which in Inês Norton's work is not clearly separated. Alfred Gell defines works of art as the intersection of four different relational elements: artist; recipient; index; and prototype (1998). While for Gell the index is the art object, the prototype is that which is taken from the index through a natural process of inference (Layton 2003). In these terms, the parts—video, sound, and sculptures—of the *Haptikos* constitute the index, which mediates the relations between artist and recipient. Right when we enter the room, the division between the index and the recipient ceases; we become physically and psychically integrated with the work on a performative level: the audience becomes the index. Just as in dance and theatre, 'there is a seamless continuity between modes of artistic action which involve "performance" and those which are mediated via artefacts' (Gell 1998: 58).

During the moments of watching the video and listening to the sound, recipients are one with the index; they are simultaneously both the subject and object of the work. If during these moments recipients are the index, or object, of the work (along with the sculptures, the sound, and the video), then their experience constitutes its prototype: it is their experience of being in the cold room which is the entity naturally taken from the fused physical indexes of the work; that is, their own body inside a cold and dark room. *Haptikos* aspires to activate the viewer, inspiring personal liberation through open-ended and explicitly physical engagement. Art historian Dorothea von Hantelmann succinctly expresses the merging of subject and object in her essay on Carsten Höller's *Test Site* (2006) at Tate Modern, stating that 'the visitor's experience is [...] not just an important part of the work; it is the work and it is the meaning of the work' (2006: 30). This is reminiscent of Michael Fried's idea that 'the experience of literalist [minimal] art is of an object in a *situation* — one that, virtually by definition, *includes the beholder*' (1998: 53). Adopting Fried's idea of theatricality, experienced from within, in *Haptikos*, the visitor is both the performer *and* the audience.

This relationality is very clear in the ways in which the audiences enter and feel the physical space of *Haptikos*. But how do these relationships influence the ways in which the audiences experience the moving image component of the work? How do they affect the viewer? Being able to choose is crucial in forming one of the bases of the interactivity between artist and recipient mediated by the object, which tells us that to consider *Haptikos* only in terms of the physical experience of entering and feeling the work is a mistake. From first being faced with the work, the recipient makes a choice whether or

not to watch the moving image for its whole (short but cyclical) duration and whether or not to touch the sculptural elements and in doing so is in a position of agency of different levels.

Upon watching the moving hands on the projection, the audience experiences some disorienting moments of adjustment, finding a proper sense of place and scale in their surroundings—the gestures of the hands are as familiar as uncanny in their floating and lonely presence—whereby a degree of agency is restored. These dynamic moments of transition on either side of the experience—being forced into an inhospitable temperature and choosing whether or not to stay the needed time to observe the sculptural elements, watch the video and listen to its sounds—constitute the greatest intrigue of *Haptikos*; the exact moments when agency is abandoned and regained. As we watch the video, we are impelled to another choice—to use or not our own hands and touch the mysterious sculptural elements to get to know more of their actual realm: human or non-human, alive or dead, natural or artificial.

*Haptikos* was expressly made for its recipients and their experience to encourage a reflection upon the potential relationship between nature and humans remindful of what Natasha Myers has coined as the ‘plantropoceno,’ in which she puts the plants at the center of a new world (Myers 2016). History tells that humans tend to see them/ourselves as the solution to all of the problems (that they / we have caused). In our contemporary times, nevertheless, the belief that technology can save us all from global warming, without considering the condition of all types of life-forms, is as arrogant as putting the human at center stage (Fuad-Luke 2021: 13). Even though the Anthropocene has made humans aware of the urgency of the climate changes and the risk that we have put our own survival into, along the last millennium, we didn’t care too much about the existence of other species probably because we weren’t conscious of the relationships and interdependencies between all of the living forms that inhabit the world. It is precisely around these interdependencies that the *Haptikos* revolves.

Having said this, whether visitors to the *Haptikos* can genuinely be seen to act as agents in this way is a big leap of faith. To say they did through the imaginative projection of the artist is, in a sense, a way of confirming the agency of the artist—rather than of the audience—by highlighting her intention to affect a particular visitor experience. As Gell has noted, assigning the role of agent or patient to the audience is a matter of perspective (Gell 1998: 57). Such uncertainty is especially true in relations that stray from the immediacy of the art object that mediates agency (touch the ecosystem with the impact that this will have in it and, consequently, on us) and patientness (watch the video, listen to the sound). Nevertheless, no matter what the choice is—to engage with the work as a video and a sculpture; that is, contemplatively and reflectively; or to apprehend it from a relational perspective, as in Bourriaud’s notion of relational aesthetics, the distance between Inês Norton’s work and the audience is collapsed, ‘the beholder contributes his whole body’ (Bourriaud 1998: 59). In fact, in the *Haptikos*, the subject/object distinction is eradicated

through the simple act of entering in the work / room. Experienced from within at all times, the visitor becomes, without a choice of his/her own, both the performer and the audience (Fried 1998: 163-168).

Although the process of entering in the work is one that is—besides the uncomfortable cold—passive for the audience in a sense of physical effort, it is anything but pacifying in terms of their mental and emotional state remindful of Caillois notion of ‘a vertigo of moral order,’ which he links to ‘the desire for disorder and destruction, a drive which is normally repressed’ (2006: 78). Watching the odd yet familiar sliding movements of the fingers on the projection onto the wall, listening to the metallic sound and seeing the icy sculptures may not induce moral chaos but it does activate a drive for disorder in the individual by providing a desire and urgency for change of the environment found. Prompting an awareness of our own daily gestures, making our members extensions of technology rather than the opposite, it offers an alternative; one that activates the individual’s capacity of self-reflection as well as creative speculation—what would happen if our human gestures would be less aseptic and more human? In this way, *Haptikos* is subversive in its proposal to be adopted as a model for human behavior outside of the art gallery. The potential of doing so affirms the political value of *Haptikos*, not as a fictional utopia but a concrete space that presents a better, more life-affirming way of interacting with the human and non-human parts that make the plural world we live in.

On this basis, it is questionable whether such a microtopia can aspire for the wide-scale transformation of human behavior. Or, adopting Claire Bishop’s words if a (relational) work of art simply ‘gives up on the idea of transformation in public culture and reduces its scope to the pleasures of a private group of individuals who identify with one another as gallery-goers’ (2004: 69). Even though *Haptikos* has not proved, at least up until now, efficacious as a model of change in human behavior and even though its interactive potential is limited to gallery-goers, perhaps, after all, the value of *Haptikos* is in presenting us with a possibility.

As a new representation of Hindu mudras (symbolic or ritual gestures), Inês Norton’s hands move to the rhythm of new asanas (body postures), presented here as gestures for meditation that make use of poses that refer to the ways we use technology today. In this choreography of a fictional *neo-Buddhism* that acknowledges contemporaneity, *Haptikos* speculates on a future *post-spirituality* era in which past / present / future; religious / profane; ancient / contemporary; human / non-human live together.

The viewers of *Haptikos* are involved as agents in its formation as its co-creators in the speculation of possible futures. As such, *Haptikos* can be understood as a kind of game taking place between Inês Norton and its visitors; it is a structured interplay between two sides. *Haptikos* lives through collaboration as much as it does through speculation. It is the ways in which it asks for interaction that makes it unique and relevant in a world that is more and more mediated by screens and less by physical actions.

## EPILOGUE | Speculating Imaginary Spaces

The idea of narrative—both linear and non-linear; both fully or partially open for completion from the audience—serve as a trope for speculating along the three above described works. The glue that unites narrative and speculation—as much as it does moving image, installation, and the exhibition space(s)—is the construction of a set of possible spaces.

The word speculation has two main different applications: high risk-high gain economic activities such as real estate; and making conjectures without grounded evidence. Artists use the second of these meanings, as an empirical practice. In many respects it reflects the ethos of art practice, the notion of art itself conveys an openness to the possibilities that may come with a dynamic complex world where constraints (like the limitations of materials and technologies) may be viewed as both limiting yet—to some degree—also very much enabling. Speculation—as derived from Alfred North Whitehead's exhortation *Philosophy can exclude nothing* (1966: 2) and taken up to gain prominence of late within the social sciences notably by Isabelle Stengers (2002)—is a notable response, or a set of responses, to phenomena that cannot be held, observed, and acted upon without either the taking of risks or the experiencing of consequences. In other words, while sometimes speculation connotes an activity of anticipation and even exploitation of expectations, it is also adopted under an approach remindful of speculative design, which might be described as a tool to present visions of possible futures as a means of critique of hegemonic narratives and provocation of such futures (Smyth and Helgason 2020).

The threads that run through the aforementioned engagements with the speculative are, on the one hand, a transformed interest in the possibility of extracting from the present certain immanent potentialities that may be capable of opening up a transition into otherwise unlikely realities to be and, on the other hand, through their open-ended format, the uncovering of untold—and, therefore, unknown but existing—narratives. Furthermore, in these examples, speculation works as a particular way of engaging with the dynamic and transformative nature of 'things' in order to explore their situated and contingent characteristics as well as their capacities to affect and be affected.

Much like architectural projects such as *The Continuous Monument* (1969) by the Superstudio<sup>4</sup>, which never aspired to be realizable buildings, the focus of the moving images-installations described in this text rested primarily on the effect the stories produced on the viewer. The stories told in the three examples were deliberately ambiguous, left to the imagination of the viewer to make their own assumptions about its meanings and effects. In this way, these stories took place both on a material, lived dimension, but also on the plane of imagination and representation. The work of imagination, as Professor Arjun Appadurai has suggested, is pivotal for conflict to take shape, to produce effects, but also to be understood and dealt with on an everyday level (1996).

Speculating—just as the moving image and the curatorial—is based on imagination, the ability to literally imagine other worlds and alternatives. In *Such Stuff as Dreams: The Psychology of Fiction*, Keith Oatley writes that ‘[i]magination gives us entry to abstraction, including mathematics. We gain the ability to conceive alternatives and hence to evaluate. We gain the ability to think of futures and outcomes, skills of planning. The ability to think ethically also becomes a possibility’ (2011: 30). Moving images, particularly the ones with both a physically and psychologically immersive character, prompt us to enter in this realm of possible worlds. At best, they create the spaces for completely new narratives and, as such, new ways of perceiving (and constructing) the world we live in.

1. Rashomon effect is a reference to the 1950 Akira Kurosawa film where a sexual encounter and death are witnessed by four characters each with a unique, and dramatically different, view of the same fundamental events.
2. *Siuzhet* is the particular way the story is narrated. Contrary to the order of the *fabula*, that is strictly chronological, the order of the *siuzhet* corresponds to the way the events are presented in the narrative by the author (V. Bartalesi, C. Meghini and D. Metilli, 2016). Coined by Russian Formalism, one of the most well-known examples of *siuzhet* was introduced by Viktor Shklovsky who has described the distinction between *fabula* (story) and *siuzhet* (plot), or, the *events* of the story and the way the story is *told* (Genette, 1979).
3. Portaria 16 159, February 6th 1957.
4. The purely theoretical drawings from *The Continuous Monument* series illustrate Superstudio’s conviction that by extending a single piece of architecture over the entire world they could ‘put cosmic order on earth.’ The white, gridded, monolithic structures span the natural landscape and assert rational order upon it. Superstudio saw this singular unifying act, unlike many modern utopian schemes, as nurturing rather than obliterating the natural world.

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### Author's bio

Luisa Santos (PhD) is an independent curator, researcher, and assistant professor at the Faculty of Human Sciences of the Catholic University of Portugal. She holds a PhD in culture studies from the Humboldt-Viadrina School of Governance, Berlin, and an MA in curating contemporary art from the Royal College of Art, London. In 2017, she initiated *4Cs: From Conflict to Conviviality through Creativity and Culture*, a European Cooperation project involving eight institutions across Europe. She is a member of the editorial and scientific boards of several peer-reviewed journals, including Büchner-Verlag's *Yearbook of Moving Image Studies*. For *The Garage Journal* she is co-editing a special issue on the moving image in museums.

Address: Universidade Católica Portuguesa | Lisboa, Palma de Cima, 1649-023 Lisboa - Portugal.

E-mail: [luisa.santos@ucp.pt](mailto:luisa.santos@ucp.pt).

ORCID: 0000-0003-3460-0496.

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**Annie Dell’Aria (2021) *The Moving Image as Public Art: Sidewalk Spectators and Modes of Enchantment*. Cham, Palgrave MacMillan. ISBN 978-3-030-65903-5**

Natasha Nedelkova  
University of Paris 8, France

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## **Annie Dell’Aria (2021) *The Moving Image as Public Art: Sidewalk Spectators and Modes of Enchantment*. Cham, Palgrave MacMillan. ISBN 978-3-030-65903-5**

Natasha Nedelkova

This book provides an elaborate analysis of moving image artistic projects exhibited in public spaces in the United States of America. Annie Dell’Aria examines moving images as public art, focusing on a non-exhaustive but relevant selection of artworks that, over the past four decades of their presence and engagement with viewers in cities, have produced new forms of spectatorship. At a time when screens are increasingly becoming a constitutive issue of the urban fabric—especially since 2010, the year that marked the omnipresence of LED screens in public spaces—Dell’Aria offers an analysis of moving image public artworks by mapping their aesthetic innovation and values, as well as their social significance. Moving images, in the context of public art installations, can produce ‘new spaces, construct new modes of attention, and generate varied responses to a place’ (p. 16).

The author investigates encounters between spectators and moving image artworks in public spaces through the concept of ‘enchantment.’ Enchantment is a mode of encounter that is surprising and wondrous and that ‘disturbs our usual disposition while returning us more completely to the world’ (p. 9). This concept is central to the main argument of the book: that moving image artworks can have significant impact on producing new spaces for both public art and public life. In urban contexts, moving image artworks play with the moving image’s inherent properties such as mobility, materiality, and immateriality, as well as ‘produce moments of enchantment that can renew, intensify or even challenge our experience of public space’ (p. 6). Focusing on several important aspects of art in public space, such as public interest, public place, and public funding, Dell’Aria points to specific ways in which moving image art projects negotiate between public and private funding, maintenance, and preservation.

In chapter 1, Dell’Aria introduces the book’s conceptual framework, presenting it as interdisciplinary. Hers is a research project that brings together perspectives from contemporary art and film and new media studies, with relevant insights from the fields of urban studies and anthropology. The author also introduces her methodology, which consists of an aesthetic analysis of specific artworks found in public spaces, also including their context of production. Dell’Aria looks into public art policies and programs and is also interested in the reception of the artworks, interviewing some of the viewers.

Chapter 2 is entitled ‘Enchantment: Encountering moving images on urban surfaces’ and introduces the concept of enchantment in its ethical

potential (Bennett 2001) to influence spectators' sensory attunement to the world in an encounter shared with others in the public space. The case studies of the proto-filmic installation *Masstransiscope* (1980) by the artist and experimental filmmaker Bill Brand and of the video installation *SONG 1* (2012) by Doug Aitken interrogate the artworks' capacities to engage attention and activate new dynamics in public space.

Chapter 3 is entitled 'Commercial breaks: Intra-spectacular public art' and focuses on public art in New York's Times Square and other hypermediated commercial districts. Through a study of the projects *Messages to the Public* (1982–1990) and *Midnight Moments* (2012–present), artworks such as Jenny Holzer's *Truisms* (1978–1987) and Pipilotti Rist's *Open my Glade* (2000), and Alfredo Jaar's anti-colonialist work *This Is Not America* (1987), Dell'Aria focuses on how artists use highly commercialized spaces such as Times Square and their possibilities of artistic and public enunciation.

In chapter 4, 'Screen spaces: Zones of interaction and recognition,' the screen takes the role of an architectural generator for new socially engaged interactions with the public. Dell'Aria gives a closer look to Jaume Plensa's *Crown Fountain* (2004); Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's *Level of Confidence* (2015), *Re: positioning Fear, Relational Architecture 3* (1997), and *Under Scan, Relational Architecture 11* (2005); and other installations. In this chapter, Dell'Aria concentrates on public artworks that initiate interactions with passers-by and create zones that produce social gathering.

In chapter 5, entitled 'The light festival phenomenon,' Dell'Aria examines light festivals, analyzing the implication of moving image artworks in both how moments of meaningful enchantment are produced and in how they can become instrumentalized by an experience economy.

In chapter 6, entitled 'The paradox of permanent moving images,' Dell'Aria offers analyses of Dara Birnbaum's *Rio Videowall* (1989) in Atlanta and of drive-in cinemas in suburban Northern Virginia. The author then narrates the short life of *BBC Big Screens*, an innovative platform for public art, and its precarious balance between national and local control, and the challenges around the creation of a permanent public screen for media art in Indianapolis. This chapter points at the vulnerability of moving image screens' precarious position 'between the realms of advertising and art' (p. 28).

In chapter 7, 'Superimpositions: Forms of moving image site-specificity,' the author focuses on site-specific artworks that blend the past, the present, and possible futures, activating a kind of 'magical production on the structure of a feeling (p. 229).' In this chapter, case studies of projects by Diller Scofidio + Renfro, Sherrie Rabinowitz, Tony Oursler, and Krzysztof Wodiczko explore moving images' capacity to manifest superimpositions of then and now, historical hauntings, wormholes, and apparitions of marginalized people and entities in public space through art.

Chapter 8 concludes with a 'Postscript: Reflections from a summer without public space,' where Dell'Aria explores public art initiatives after the COVID-19 crisis, especially those connected to Black Lives Matter protests. The crisis changed our collective perception of public space. Carrie Mae Weems's

work *Resist COVID Take 6* (2020) used screens in public space to express gratitude to front-line workers of color. Dustin Klein and Alex Criqui as well as Monument Lab staged numerous projections in public places to point out social injustices.

Dell'Aria focuses on artistic projects that reimagine the screen in public space, eschewing the screen's commercial and informational functions in favor of artistic expression that often entails social emancipation. New forms of spectatorship emerge as viewers encounter moving image artworks in the urban space; they are new forms of engagement with screens that contain aspects of 'mobility, distraction, embodiment, sociability, and emplacement that challenge critiques that allude to public screens induced passivity' (p. 263). A place for visibility, contestation, or social gathering, screens as public art can locate moments of enchantment that invite us to rethink public spaces and our role inside them. Dell'Aria's book offers an important insight into the production, preservation, and reception of moving images as public art. The study is rich and well-documented, examining significant artworks and provides an important contribution to a topic that is becoming more and more relevant: the increasing presence of screens in public spaces. This book is important both for scholars working in film and media studies and those in contemporary art, and would be of great use to any reader curious about moving images in public spaces.

### Author's bio

Natasha Nedelkova is an artist and researcher interested in film and media studies, and in contemporary art and visual studies. She is a PhD candidate in Film Studies at the University of Paris 8 Vincennes-Saint-Denis under the mentorship of Professor Christa Blümlinger. Her PhD project in practice-based research is entitled *Performing the Masks*. The project focuses on the practice of self-representation in film and time-based art. While submerged in heavily computational visual regimes, *Performing the Masks* focuses on works that negotiate between positioning collective and individual representations on screen while framing, reinventing, and editing the self-image.

Address: 2 rue de la Liberté, 93200 Saint-Denis, France.

E-mail: nedelkovan@gmail.com.

ORCID: 0000-0002-3753-0385.

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**Sztulman P; Zabunyan D (eds) Politiques de la  
distraction. Dijon, Les Presses du reel. La Grande  
Collection ArTeC. ISBN 978-2-37896-160-2**

Екатерина Оде  
Ecole Normale Supérieure, Франция

Этот материал опубликован в номере 04 «В музей и из него: новые маршруты движущегося изображения», под ред. Евгении Звонкиной и Луизы Сантуш.

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## Sztulman P; Zabunyan D (eds) *Politiques de la distraction*. Dijon, Les Presses du reel. La Grande Collection ArTeC. ISBN 978-2-37896-160-2

Екатерина Оде

При всей многозначности название книги<sup>1</sup> далеко не передает широчайший спектр ультрасовременных вопросов, которые она охватывает, избрав своим сюжетом сложный феномен дистракции и дистрактивное внимание. Под дистракцией понимается, с одной стороны, простая, присущая нам всем способность к отвлечению (в самом обыденном смысле: «немного отвлечься — сходить в кино...»), но во всей ее эстетической и политической значимости, когда, например, такое отвлечение становится единственной отрадой рабочего класса в капиталистическом или тоталитарном обществе. В то же время дистракция описывается авторами особенно подробно через феномен рассеянного внимания, некогда усмотренный в самой основе кино как мыслительного аппарата и вместе с тем аттракциона для развлечения.

Книга — результат коллективного междисциплинарного исследования, объединившего философов, специалистов по теории и истории кино, теории медиа, а также по психоанализу для совместного осмысления и реактуализации уже известного кракауэровского концепта дистракции (*Zerstreuung*) как некоторой «от-раз-влеченности». Затрагивая вопросы эстетики кино в рамках культурной политики разных стран, детской психологии воспитания (Монтессори), проблем чтения и письма, видеоигр и гоббсовской теории государства, такое коллективное осмысление подробно останавливается на феноменах дистрактивного зрительного восприятия и рассеянного слушания, сыгравших важную роль в культурно-медиальном повороте последнего столетия. Редакторы книги Поль Штульман и Дорк Забунян, как и остальные ее 16 авторов, принадлежат современной тенденции к междисциплинарным исследованиям, которая все более утверждается во французской академической среде. Забунян — профессор теории кино Университета «Париж 8», специалист в области философии Мишеля Фуко и Жюль Делеза, автор книг «Кино [мн.] Жюль Делеза» (Zabunyan 2011), «Фуко в кино» (Foucault, Maniglier and Zabunyan 2018), «Фикции Трампа. Мощь зрительных образов и власть» (Zabunyan 2020) и других. Штульман — историк искусства и арт-критик, преподаватель Школы декоративных искусств, автор нескольких эссе (Perret and Sztulman 2011; Sztulman 1998, 2019) о современном искусстве и различных модусах его репрезентации, включая живопись в кино, рок, комиксы и видеоигры.

Отправной точкой их общей рефлексии послужили два текста, авторы которых представлены как диссиденты Франкфуртской школы.

Первый — статья Зигфрида Кракауэра, известная русскоязычному читателю как «Культ развлечения» (*Kult der Zerstreuung*), об оформлении кинозалов в Берлине в первой половине XX столетия (Krasauer 1977 [1926]). Второй текст — отрывок из известнейшего эссе Вальтера Беньямина о технической воспроизводимости произведения искусства в версии 1939 года (Benjamin 2012 [1939]). Кракауэр, как известно, сосредотачивает внимание на свободной креативной силе кино, которая выражается напрямую через его массовый характер и противостояние старым буржуазным категориям, ранее доминировавшим на территории искусства. Эта массовость сопутствует сложноустроенности и многоуровневости киноразвлечений: паласы, огромные дворцы кинопредставлений, становятся местом проведения культурных мероприятий, затрагивающих абсолютно все органы чувств (световые представления, музыкальный аккомпанемент, осязание толпы...), где сам кинопоказ — лишь часть целого события.

Штульмана и Забуняна заинтересовал у Кракауэра один противоречивый момент. Говоря о культуре дистракции (*Zerstreuung*)<sup>2</sup>, Кракауэр описывает феномен массовости киноискусства как основу раскрытия самой сути новой (в том числе политической) реальности, вместо того чтобы представить нам всю двойственность дистракции, то есть показать ее «негативную» сторону как модус (вне-)внимания, и таким образом критически отнестись к самому описываемому им феномену.<sup>3</sup> Основная гипотеза Забуняна и Штульмана состоит в том, что Кракауэр защищает здесь понятие массовости перед нависающей в то время риторикой фашизма, в которой снова (как в буржуазном искусстве) пропагандируются магистральные линии (в том числе идеологические) как для развития кино, так и для городской жизни в целом. Если дистракция предполагает отхождение от доминирующих категорий, то массовость предстает свободным стихийным механизмом высвобождения тем и образов, человеческой и социальной природы, которые раскрываются в эстетике и городском оформлении кино как комплексного и спонтанного механизма.

Беньямин же говорит именно о новом способе восприятия произведений искусства, которые теперь оказываются рассеяны в урбанистической среде и неотделимы от городской архитектуры Берлина. Именно Беньямин обозначает переход к новому модусу эстетического внимания, где уже нет концентрации на одном объекте, так как оно расфокусировано. Здесь у Беньямина пересекаются случайность взгляда, архитектура и новые диспозитивы эстетического опыта. Восполняя оставленный Кракауэром пробел и следуя за Беньямином, Забунян и Штульман предлагают нам переосмыслить дистракцию как рассеянность (от лат. *distrahere* — «тянуть в разные стороны») и как особый модус внимания, опираясь при этом на политическую значимость феномена отвлечения-развлечения (от лат. *divertire* — «отворачиваться»). Соответственно, цель общего исследования — не прояснить концепт *Zerstreuung*, а скорее оценить актуальность всей двойственности этого явления в аудиовизуальной культуре последующих лет и сегодня. Например, Ив Ситтон противопоставляет беньяминовскую дистракцию различным формам нарушения

внимания. Он последовательно доказывает преимущества дистрактивного внимания, которое (в противовес концепциям концентративного внимания) оказывается единственным возможным способом не просто сохранять экополитическую бдительность сегодня, но и противостоять угрозам коллапса в современном мире (*effondrement*).

Авторы книги подходят к феномену дистракции чрезвычайно разносторонне: понятие деконструируется, разбирается на смысловые категории, каждая из которых заслуживает отдельного внимания. Так, в статье о кино в советскую оттепель Евгения Звонкина, изучая дистракцию как способ сопротивления (*résistance*), показывает, что дис-трактивный компонент «влечение» (от *traction* — «тяга», «мотор движения», «быть ведомым» и т.п.), присущий и русскоязычным понятиям от-раз-влечения, оказывается смещен в сторону официального политического дискурса СССР. Отступление от него осуществляется в кинофильмах периода оттепели именно на перцептивном уровне. Когда, например, в фильме Элема Климова «Добро пожаловать, или Посторонним вход воспрещен» (1964) пионер Иночкин отвлекается от речи директора летнего лагеря (воплощения советской политической идеологии в целом) на летящий самолет, вместе с его взглядом происходит и заразительное отвлечение общего внимания на уровне почти эмпирического ощущения, за которым спонтанно следует и камера. Фильмы Киры Муратовой этого периода, как показывает автор, также выстраиваются через контрастное чувственное отвлечение от бесчувственного и задеревенелого политического дискурса (часто через рассеянное не-слушание произносимой официальной речи) на уровне экстрадиегетического восприятия. Отвлечение распространяется не только на персонажей фильма, но переживается и зрителями через саму физическую реальность ощущений, которую дает нам почувствовать кинематограф, встающий теперь на путь свободных ощущений вместо использования привычных ранее канонических пропагандистских монтажных решений, где, например, всеобщее одобрение показывалось как эмоция, которую должен испытывать советский гражданин. Таким образом, обращая наше внимание на радикальную роль массового «от-влечения» от официального дискурса в культурной политике эпохи, Евгения Звонкина показывает, как советский кинематограф трансформируется в эпоху оттепели, создавая пространство для спонтанного восприятия (и — можно предположить вслед за автором — для кинокартин следующих лет, включая отвлеченный стиль Андрея Тарковского и др.).

В статье о дистракции как политизации искусства Паскаль Русс пишет, что если у Бенямина, читателя Фрейда, дистракция (и тут Бенямин переходит от фрейдовского *Ablenkung* к кракауэровскому *Zerstreuung*) предстает категорией восприятия, открывая новый горизонт (Русс утверждает, что Бенямин понимает дистракцию именно как «бессознательное восприятие»), то у Эрнста Блоха и самого Кракауэра доминирующей перспективой остается массовое развлечение, характерное для исторического контекста эпохи. В книге далее предлагается

погружение в фильмы Жоржа Мельеса и Чарли Чаплина (Эмманюэль Дрё), представляется анализ развлечений на Кони-Айленд в 1870–1920-е годы (Барбары Тюркье), а также разворачивается исследование о первых фильмах с анимацией, создающихся в этот же период в Японии (Мари Прюво-Деласпр).

Важная роль в книге отведена трансформации привычных эстетических аудиовизуальных норм и самого восприятия в связи с переходом на новые носители (диски, радио, компьютерные игры и проч.). Например, Даниэле Бали и Анн Зайтс применительно к феномену рассеянного слушания в медиатеории предлагают понятие «(ан-)акусматического» (*l'an-acousmatique*). Авторы следуют за Пьером Шеффером, предложившим концепт акусматического (*l'acousmatique*) в 1960-е годы в рамках теории звукозаписи и *конкретной музыки*. Авторы понимают теоретический жест Шеффера как способ «сконцентрировать внимание» на слышимом звуке, изолировав его звуковой (*конкретный*) образ от зрительного, что лишь отчасти соответствует музыкальной задумке Шеффера. Стремясь найти способ тематизировать рассеянное внимание изнутри шефферовской риторики, авторы предлагают перевернуть концепт, назвав его «ан-акусматическим», и сделать из него способ воспринимать слышимое как бы рассеянно, без привязки к его единичным звуковым образам. Следует, однако, напомнить, что концепт акусматического у Шеффера уже является результатом его критического прочтения Беньямина и полностью продолжает идеи, предложенные в ранних работах Шеффера о кино. Там уже тематизирована абстрактная и рассеянная составляющая слухового восприятия и аудиовизуальной записи как продукта, использующего новый «предметный язык», еще неподвластный нашему привычному мышлению. Понимание концепта акусматического как исключительно музыкального или как только звукового феномена оставляет в стороне проблему восприятия его содержания, аудиовизуального языка («языка вещей»), трансформации самих объектов и их границ во время аудиовизуальной съемки или записи («технической воспроизводимости», которую Шеффер предлагает считать трансформацией). Таким образом, нет необходимости в переворачивании понятия акусматического: оно само по себе уже чрезвычайно полезно для медиатеории, которая, напомним также, не является историей технических изобретений. Например, Афанасий Кирхер, известный иезуит, о котором идет речь в статье Бали и Зайтс, давно изучается медиаархеологией и аудиовизуальной археологией (в том числе одним из многочисленных учеников Шеффера — Жаком Перрио).

В эту же категорию попадает дистракция в перспективе цифрового пространства виртуальных игр (Виктор Моисан прибегает, например, к теории *Flow* у Михая Чиксентмихайи и показывает свойство игр растягивать время на уровне его восприятия, в том числе через пространство), а также диспозитивы литературного письма (Мадлен Актипи) и чтения (Петер Зенди). Важно отметить, что издание коллекции «Артек» также позволяет заглянуть и в сам процесс диалога, итогом которого является книга. Так, необходимым этапом исследования стала выставка

художественных работ и аудиовизуальных материалов, которые создавались и изучались авторами и участниками проекта (в 2019 году). Ряд фотографий в середине книги, таким образом, тоже способствует определенному отвлечению от текста в сторону графических форм, фильмов и их образов. Предлагается осмысление феномена дистракции и в психоаналитической перспективе. Софи Мендельсон отталкивается от фрейдовского понятия зигзага в исследованиях истерии и затем приходит к его же концепту рассеянного слушания (1912) и к лакановской теории акта, затрагивая «отхождение» (например, через *lapsus*) на спонтанно возникающую с этим жестом территорию бессознательного.

Не хватает в сборнике альтернативного современного феноменологического взгляда на феномен дистракции. Если, например, Штульман и Забунян вслед за Беньямином отождествляют дистракцию с французским понятием *rêverie*, то феноменолог Натали Депра, предложившая перевод с немецкого и внушительное исследование гуссерлевского семинара о проблеме внимания (Husserl and Depraz, 2009), наоборот, противопоставляет ультрасовременные цифровые формы медиадистракции дисперсивным состояниям типа *rêverie*, уходящим в прошлое, указывая на необратимую трансформацию последних: из форм отсутствия они превращаются сегодня в рассеянное присутствие, создавая «плюриинтенциональные» формы внимания, имеющие ряд преимуществ (Depraz, 2014; Depraz and Gyemant, 2021).

В целом «негативной» стороной дистракции, поскольку она оказывается одновременно новой формой апперцепции, становится в результате внутренний конфликт форм притяжения внимания или влечений (*attractions*). Тем не менее в горизонте французской мысли понятие дистракции связывается с новым типом удовольствия, возникающим при возможности спонтанно покинуть магистральный путь движения, не следовать более за объектом влечения, свободно избираемым или же навязываемым идеологией. Рассредоточить внимание, расфокусировать взгляд, раздвинуть точку слушания, охватив всю широту аудитивного поля, потерять себя среди альтернативных модусов мышления и еще не осмысленных впечатлений в новом физическом или виртуальном пространстве — не только многообещающий способ наслаждения, но и, возможно, самая адекватная форма бдительности в радикально изменившемся мире.

Реализуя и сочетая интердисциплинарные подходы к дистракции сегодня, книга ставит многие вопросы о будущем, дает материал к размышлению об уже освоенных формах дистракции. Например, возникшее в XX веке измерение массовости в области искусства, очевидно, ранее связывалось Кракауэром с различными формами свободы. Насколько же свободным оказывается созданное в последние десятилетия публичное медиапространство сегодня (в эпоху новых медиа и постправды, использования алгоритмов искусственного интеллекта и социальных сетях, потребительской, коммерческой и идеологической диктатур в мировом кинопроизводстве и т.д.), ставшее, к слову, совершенно необходимой средой обитания современного человека как вида?

Однако книга пригодится не только исследователям медиатеории, принадлежащим, например, к петербургской школе медиафилософии (Валерий Савчук), где не так давно появился целый центр философии компьютерных игр. Вобрав исследования специалистов столь разных дисциплинарных областей, книга заинтересует как теоретиков кино, философов культуры и психоаналитиков в междисциплинарном пространстве, так и историков искусства в целом и, конечно, художников, кураторов, коллекционеров. Открывая нашему вниманию проблематику и концепт дистракции, издание позволяет иначе взглянуть на линии развития массового искусства в XX веке, лучше ощутить его возможности сегодня и в будущем. Таким образом, книга последовательно показывает масштаб того, насколько центральной является сегодня проблематика дистракции: она — в самом сердце функционирования средств массовой информации и искусства вообще (которое вынуждено все больше нас информировать, чем развлекать). При наличии основательного введения, открывающего перспективы эстетического, исторического и политического подходов к проблеме дистракции, отсутствие в книге заключения еще раз подчеркивает сугубо актуальный характер поставленных в нем вопросов, незавершенность и открытость исследования, казалось бы, столь близкого нам в повседневной жизни феномена.

1. Название — «Политики Развлечения рассеянности» — вряд ли можно перевести одним словом. Необходимо сохранить смысл немецкого понятия *Zerstreuung* и французского *Distraction*, которые мы попытались раскрыть далее в тексте.
2. Основная сложность заключается в лингвистической интерпретации феномена *Zerstreuung*. Во французском языке самым точным по смыслу оказывается *distraction*, которое, однако, не полностью соответствует немецкому понятию. Кракауэр мог бы использовать выражение *Distraction* или *Ablenkung* («ответвление», «отхождение»), которое мы встречаем у Фрейда (см. статью Паскаля Русса в рецензируемом сборнике), но выбрал *Zerstreuung*, сочетающее в себе рассеянное внимание, отвлечение, удовольствие развлечения — своего рода рассеянную беспечность.
3. Здесь есть чему удивляться: интеллектуальная традиция, к которой принадлежит Кракауэр (и, как правило, любое философское исследование), предполагает наличие противоположной точки зрения на исследуемый объект, некую критическую часть. Кракауэр же ограничивается лишь «позитивным» описанием феномена *Zerstreuung*, что ему несвойственно. Авторы сочли необходимым восполнить этот пробел именно сегодня, когда концепт оказывается еще более актуален.

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## Об авторе

Екатерина Оде защитила диссертацию по философии и теории кино в университете Ecole Normale Supérieure (SACRe, по направлению *research-creation*). Специалист по акустической теории (Пьер Шеффер и Мишель Шион), занимается постфеноменологией кино, теорией и философией медиа. Автор ряда статей, в том числе о фильмах Маргерит Дюрас, эстетике кино- и звукозаписи у Пьера Шеффера, а также автор короткометражного фильма «На расстоянии» (2021). Окончила магистратуру по новой французской феноменологии (ENS-EHESS) и, ранее, философский факультет СПбГУ. В 2018 году была лауреатом стипендии Эдгара Морена (IMES), преподавала в Университете «Париж 3» (Sorbonne Nouvelle), сейчас — исследователь при междисциплинарной лаборатории SACRe (ENS).

Почтовый адрес: SACRe (ENS-PSL), 45, rue d'Ulm, 75005, Paris, France.

E-mail: ode.ekaterina@gmail.com.

ORCID: 0000-0003-4794-855.

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