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Live visuals have become a pervasive component of our contemporary lives; either as visible interfaces that re-connect citizens and buildings overlaying new contextual meaning or as invisible ubiquitous narratives that are discovered through interactive actions and mediating screens. The contemporary re-design of the environment we live in is in terms of visuals and visualizations, software interfaces and new modes of engagement and consumption. This LEA volume presents a series of seminal papers in the field, offering the reader a new perspective on the future role of Live Visuals.



LIVE VISUALS

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The Encounter, Elif Ayiter, 2010, Screenshot of Cinematic Play Session in Second Life. © Elif Ayiter. Used with Permission.

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LEONARDO ELECTRONIC ALMANAC, VOLUME 19 ISSUE 3

Live Visuals

VOLUME EDITORS

LANFRANCO ACETI, STEVE GIBSON & STEFAN MÜLLER ARISONA

EDITOR

ÖZDEN ŞAHİN

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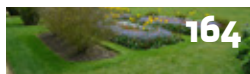
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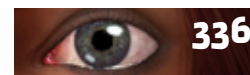
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When Moving Images Become Alive!

“Look! It's moving. It's alive. It's alive... It's alive, it's moving, it's alive, it's alive, it's alive, it's alive, IT'S ALIVE!”

Frankenstein (1931)

Those who still see – and there are many in this camp – visuals as simple ‘decorations’ are living in a late 19th century understanding of media, with no realization that an immense cultural shift has happened in the late 20th century when big data, sensors, algorithms and visuals merged in order to create 21st century constantly mediated social-visual culture.

Although the visuals are not actually alive, one cannot fail to grasp the fascination or evolution that visuals and visual data have embarked upon. It is no longer possible to see the relationship of the visual as limited to the space of the traditional screens in the film theater or at home in the living room with the TV. The mobility of contemporary visuals and contemporary screens has pushed boundaries – so much so that ‘embeddedness’ of visuals onto and into things is a daily practice. The viewers have acquired expectations that it is possible, or that it should be possible, to recall the image of an object and to be able to have that same object appear at home at will. The process of downloading should not be limited to ‘immaterial’ digital data, but should be transferred to 3D physical objects. ¹

Images are projected onto buildings – not as the traditional trompe l'oeil placed to disguise and trick the eye – but as an architectural element of the building itself; so much so that there are arguments, including mine, that we should substitute walls with projected information data, which should also have and be perceived as having material properties (see in this

volume “Architectural Projections” by Lukas Treyer, Stefan Müller Arisona & Gerhard Schmitt).

Images appear over the architecture of the buildings as another structural layer, one made of information data that relays more to the viewer either directly or through screens able to read augmented reality information. But live visuals relay more than images, they are also linked to sound and the analysis of this linkage provides us with the opportunity “to think about the different ways in which linkages between vision and audition can be established, and how audio-visual objects can be composed from the specific attributes of auditory and visual perception” (see “Back to the Cross-modal Object” by Atau Tanaka).

iPads and iPhones – followed by a generation of smarter and smarter devices – have brought a radical change in the way reality is experienced, captured, uploaded and shared. These processes allow reality to be experienced with multiple added layers, allowing viewers to re-capture, re-upload and re-share, creating yet further layers over the previous layers that were already placed upon the ‘original.’ This layering process, this thickening of meanings, adding of interpretations, references and even errors, may be considered as the physical process that leads to the manifestation of the ‘aura’ as a metaphysical concept. The materiality of the virtual, layered upon the ‘real,’ becomes an indication of the compositing of the aura, in Walter Benjamin's terms, as a metaphysical experience of the object/image but nevertheless an

experience that digital and live visuals are rendering increasingly visible.

“Everything I said on the subject [the nature of aura] was directed polemically against the theosophists, whose inexperience and ignorance I find highly repugnant. . . . First, genuine aura appears in all things, not just in certain kinds of things, as people imagine.” ²

The importance of digital media is undeniably evident. Within this media context of multiple screens and surfaces the digitized image, in a culture profoundly visual, has extended its dominion through ‘disruptive forms’ of sharing and ‘illegal’ consumption. The reproducibility of the image (or the live visuals) – pushed to its very limit – has an anarchistic and revolutionary element when considered from the neocapitalistic perspective imbued in corporative and hierarchical forms of the construction of values. On the contrary, the reproducibility of the image when analyzed from a Marxist point of view possesses a community and social component for egalitarian participation within the richness of contemporary and historical cultural forms.

The digital live visuals – with their continuous potential of integration within the blurring boundaries of public and private environments – will continue to be the conflicting territory of divergent interests and cultural assumptions that will shape the future of societal engagements. Reproducibility will increasingly become the territory of control generating conflicts between *original* and *copy*, and between the layering of *copy* and *copies*, in the attempt to contain ideal participatory models of democracy. The elitist interpretation of the aura will continue to be juxtaposed with models of Marxist participation and appropriation. ³

Live visuals projected on public buildings and private areas do not escape this conflict, but present interpretations and forms of engagements that are reflections

of social ideals. The conflict is, therefore, not solely in the elitist or participatory forms of consumption but also in the ideologies that surround the cultural behaviors of visual consumption.

Object in themselves, not just buildings, can and may soon carry live visuals. There is the expectation that one no longer has to read a label – but the object can and should project the label and its textured images to the viewer. People increasingly expect the object to engage with their needs by providing the necessary information that would convince them to look into it, play with it, engage with it, talk to it, like it and ultimately buy it.


Ultimately there will be no need to engage in this process but the environment will have objects that, by reading previous experiences of likes and dislikes, present a personalized visual texture of reality.

Live visuals will provide an environment within which purchasing does not mean to solely acquire an object but rather to ‘buy’ into an idea, a history, an ideology or a socio-political lifestyle. It is a process of increased visualization of large data (Big Data) that defines and re-defines one's experience of the real based on previously expressed likes and dislikes.

In this context of multiple object and environmental experiences it is also possible to forge multiple individualized experiences of the real; as much as there are multiple personalized experiences of the internet and social media through multiple avatar identities (see “Avatar Actors” by Elif Ayter). The ‘real’ will become a visual timeline of what the algorithm has decided should be offered based on individualized settings of likes and dislikes. This approach raises an infinite set of possibilities but of problems as well.

The life of our representation and of our visuals is our 'real' life – disjointed and increasingly distant from what we continue to perceive as the 'real real,' delusively hanging on to outdated but comfortable modes of perception.

The cinematic visions of live visuals from the 19th century have become true and have re-designed society unexpectedly, altering dramatically the social structures and speeding up the pace of our physical existence that constantly tries to catch up and play up to the visual virtual realities that we spend time constructing.

If we still hold to this dualistic and dichotomist approach of real versus virtual (although the virtual has been real for some time and has become one of the multiple facets of the 'real' experience), then the real is increasingly slowing down while the virtual representation of visuals is accelerating the creation of a world of instantaneous connectivity, desires and aspirations. A visuality of hyper-mediated images that, as pollution, pervades and conditions our vision without giving the option of switching off increasingly 'alive' live visuals. 

The lack of 'real' in Jean Baudrillard's understanding is speeding up the disappearance of the 'real' self in favor of multiple personal existential narratives that are embedded in a series of multiple possible worlds. It is not just the map that is disappearing in the precession of simulacra – but the body as well – as the body is conceived in terms of visual representation: as a map. These multiple worlds of representations contribute to create reality as the 'fantasy' we really wish to experience, reshaping in turn the 'real' identity that continuously attempts to live up to its 'virtual and fantastic' expectations. Stephen Gibson presents the reader with a description of one of these worlds with live audio-visual simulations that create a synesthetic

experience (see "Simulating Synesthesia in Spatially-Based Real-time Audio-Visual Performance" by Stephen Gibson).

If this fantasy of the images of society is considered an illusion – or the reality of the simulacrum, which is a textual oxymoron at prima facie – it will be determined through the experience of the *live visuals becoming alive*.

Nevertheless, stating that people have illusory perceptions of themselves in relation to a 'real' self and to the 'real' perception of them that others have only reinforces the idea that Live Visuals will allow people to manifest their multiple perceptions, as simulated and/or real will no longer matter. These multiple perceptions will create multiple ever-changing personae that will be further layered through the engagements with the multiple visual environments and the people/avatars that populate those environments, both real and virtual.

In the end, these fantasies of identities and of worlds, manifested through illusory identities and worlds within virtual contexts, are part of the reality with which people engage. Although fantastic and illusory, these worlds are a reflection of a partial reality of the identity of the creators and users. It is impossible for these worlds and identities to exist outside of the 'real.' This concept of real is made of negotiated and negotiable frameworks of engagement that are in a constant process of evolution and change.

The end of post-modernity and relativism may lead to the virtuality of truism: the representation of ourselves in as many multiple versions – already we have multiple and concurrent digital lives – within the world/s – ideological or corporate – that we will decide or be forced to 'buy into.'

It is this control of the environment around us and us within that environment that will increasingly define the role that live visuals will play in negotiating real and virtual experiences. The conflict will arise from the blurred lines of the definition of self and other; whether the 'other' will be another individual or a corporation.

The potential problems of this state of the live visuals within a real/virtual conflict will be discovered as time moves on. In the end this is a giant behavioral experiment, where media and their influences are not analyzed for their social impact *ex ante facto*; this is something that happens *ex post facto*.

Nevertheless, in this *ex post facto* society there are some scholars that try to understand and eviscerate the problems related to the process of visuals becoming alive. This issue collects the analyses of some of these scholars and embeds them in a larger societal debate, hinting at future developments and problems that society and images will have to face as the live visuals become more and more alive.

The contemporary concerns and practices of live visuals are crystallized in this volume, providing an insight into current developments and practices in the field of live visuals.

This issue features a new logo on its cover, that of New York University, Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development.

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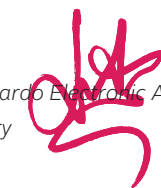
possible. I also have to thank the authors for their patience in complying with the guidelines and editorial demands that made this issue one that I am particularly proud of, both for its visuals and for its content.

My special thanks go to Deniz Cem Önduygu who has shown commitment to the LEA project beyond what could be expected.

Özden Şahin has, as always, continued to provide valuable editorial support to ensure that LEA could achieve another landmark.

Lanfranco Aceti

Editor in Chief, *Leonardo Electronic Almanac*
Director, *Kasa Gallery*



1. 3D printing the new phenomenon will soon collide with a new extreme perception of consumer culture where the object seen can be bought and automatically printed at home or in the office. Matt Ratto and Robert Ree, "Materializing Information: 3D Printing and Social Change," *First Monday* 17, no. 7 (July 2, 2012), <http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/3968/3273> (accessed October 20, 2013).
2. Walter Benjamin, "Protocols of Drug Experiments," in On Hashish, ed. Howard Eiland (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 58.
3. "The point here is not to issue a verdict in the debate between Adorno and Benjamin, but rather to understand the debate between them as representing two sides of an ongoing dialectical contradiction." Ryan Moore, "Digital Reproducibility and the Culture Industry: Popular Music and the Adorno-Benjamin Debate," *Fast Capitalism* 9, no. 1 (2012), http://www.uta.edu/huma/agger/fastcapitalism/9_1/mooreg_1.html (accessed October 30, 2013).
4. Paul Virilio, *Open Sky*, trans. Julie Rose (London: Verso, 1997), 97.

Multi-projection Films, Almost-cinemas and VJ Remixes

Spatial Arrangements of Moving Image Presence

by

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A historical study of the spaces of cinematographic projection reveals their increasing normalization throughout the years, prioritizing dynamics of consumption that comply with particular business models championed by the film industry. These developments resulted in the widespread of the so-called classical viewing regime, characteristically defined by Christian Metz as a state of simultaneous superperception and submotricity. ¹ This paper departs from the premise that, contrary to what may initially appear, such architectural standardization does not create ideal conditions for the exhibition of moving images. Rather, the theatre situation restrains their modes of existence, disavowing the movie's character as a live manifestation of the projection mechanism.

Just as other spatial arrangements, the auditorium carries a strong phenomenological bias, imposing specific means of presence and public engagement. Notwithstanding the openness of its plot, a movie will begin when the lights go off and end as soon as they are on again. No matter how eccentric the shots might be, they will end up conformed by the camera's *perspectiva artificialis*. Even contemporary live cinema

ABSTRACT

In an attempt to produce critical associations between the fields of cinema, expanded cinema, contemporary art and digital live visuals, this paper investigates characteristics of VJing projection in the work of practitioners who do not engage primarily with this technique. The analysed pieces are the film Chelsea Girls (USA, 1966), by Andy Warhol; the installation series Cosmococas (Brazil, 1973), by Hélio Oiticia and Neville D'Almeida; and the multimedia project The Tulse Luper Suitcases (2003-), by Peter Greenaway. Each of them reorganizes the elements conventionally involved in the exhibition of moving images by either opening them up to contingencies or incorporating the apparatus in particular strategies of meaning and value, therefore challenging the established viewing regimes. With these analyses, I mean to emphasize the role of spatial organization in the experience of time and in the definition of the parameters for the performance of media technology, regardless of the institutional conventions that restrict each field of visual creation. By doing so, I hope to set more rigorous underpinnings to speculate over their future developments and interactions.

displays, in which the interventions of a performer are part of the spectacle, seem to emerge as staged representations of previous, annotated ideas or well-rehearsed procedures.

Anne Friedberg has summarized the elements that traditionally define cinema as a set of *principles of spectatorship*: the dark room with projected luminous images; the immobile spectator; the single viewing; the noninteractive relation between viewer and image; the framed image; the flat screen surface. ² Subjected to these conditions – a set of commercial solutions elevated to the level of universal attributes –, blockbusters and *films d'auteur* do not seem so different. The audience watches all of them in the same way that, centuries ago, it was contemplating *Madonnas* and *Last Suppers*.

As the situations for moving image exhibition continue to change and multiply, it remains to be seen how the movie's status of presence is being transformed. In order to explore that question, I will dwell into some particularities of cinema architecture, turning to different pieces that, even before the popularization of computer networks, operated by the means of reorganizing spectatorship conventions. With these analyses, I mean to emphasize the primacy of space in the performance of media technology as well as in the experience of audiovisual time.

MEDIA TECHNOLOGY AND SPATIAL CONSTRAINTS

Cinema's principles of spectatorship do not seem to be a fundamental result of its underpinning apparatus. For instance, during the early cinema of attractions,

when the material effects of projection in the image were supposedly much more prominent, screenings would nevertheless have been closer to what we would nowadays call a typical 'video situation.'³ By that, one could understand the dynamics of consumption particular to TV broadcast, outlined by Arlindo Machado as "a behaviour much more distracted and dispersed than film watching, since the spectator is no longer involved by the hypnotic fascination of the big screen and the dark room."⁴

Just like Machado, other researchers propose a stark contrast between cinema and television. To Friedberg, the TV apparatus even established another, contemporary set of principles of spectatorship, characterized by the audience's mobility, the availability of reprises and simultaneity of channels.⁵ We are left to wonder the reason why some of these elements are considered 'contemporary,' whilst they were already common in the pre-history of cinema, when "viewers were free to interact, come and go, and maintain a psychological distance from the cinematic narrative."⁶ It doesn't seem, after all, that all forms of cinema are opposed to a video situation – only a kind of moviegoing that has emerged historically, from certain socio-technical conditions.

If cinema's principles of spectatorship were first and foremost a collateral effect of moving image devices, wouldn't they be inevitably transformed by technological development, or even dissolved as the differences between film, video and computer graphics were erased by digitization? Yet, although virtually every movie nowadays incorporates digital processes at some point of its production and many theatres sport computerized projection systems, the medium still holds to its traditional dynamics of consumption. Why is that?

One could argue that the movies' status of presence is not simply defined by their technical apparatus, but rather by the *placement* of such devices. Lev Manovich already related the viewers' behaviour during primitive cinema to the fact that, at that time, "the space of film theater and the screen space were clearly separated."⁷ On a more contemporary note, Friedberg reminds us that, regardless of the image's post-medium condition, "the movie screen, the home television screen, and the computer screen retain their separate locations."⁸

Thus, one important reason why cinema seems to retain its classic dynamics of consumption, despite the transformation of projection mechanisms, is the spatial arrangement in which the medium conventionally happens: "the big screen and the dark room" mentioned by Machado. This immersive space causes the audience to forget its sense of distance and duration – it is an architecture meant to rend all the other ones impossible. In that sense, the movie theatre operates in the guise of an interface, which "[strips] different media or their original distinctions" and "imposes its own logic on them."⁹

Along with the uniformization of spatial access to the moving image, the viewers' behaviour and cognitive liabilities are homogenized. In a movie theatre, it is expected that everything will be shown, most of the times, as a narrative feature film. Even the festivals dedicated to videoart and short pieces organize their programmes according to the format of film industry's chief product, grouping as many works as possible in screening sessions that last the approximate length of a feature (70–120min). This combination makes it difficult to adapt the exhibition to the characteristics of each individual movie; presented one after another, they are as if assembled together, under the session's particular theme. The conventions of the cinema situation are so ingrained in the western visual cultures

that they even spread outside of the theatre, from video websites that allow the viewer to "turn off the lights" (darkening everything in the page apart from the video frame) to itinerant screenings committed to higienizing the public spaces where, otherwise, images could assume a different kind of presence.

This massive propagation of the classical viewing regime is especially problematic if we consider exhibition not as a merely 'reproductive' instance of moving image circulation, but as a fundamentally 'productive' one – in other words, as a creative procedure. Acknowledging how the dynamics of consumption interfere with a work's meaning and value, an artist might find violating the imposition of standard principles of spectatorship. A case in point is videoartist Bob Wilson. According to Machado, Wilson has once refused to show his *Video 50* vignettes in a screening room open to the public because "his work was made for television, meaning that its reception had to be necessarily interrupted, discontinuous and distracted, as the small screen requires."¹⁰

In the long run, Wilson's resistance hasn't prevented his work to be conformed within the norms of moving image exhibition. Nowadays, all of *Video 50* pieces can be found in a 50min compilation available for rental from the *Electronic Arts Intermix* collection, ready to be shown in any way the customer wants. For many filmmakers and curators, this sort of convenience is most welcomed, though. These professionals are interested in spatial arrangements that allow the unobstructed access of as many viewers as possible. They expect transparent channels of distribution and architectures where the image can appear in all its magnitude: the biggest screens, the most potent sound systems, and the darkest rooms. This is not out of sheer neglect for the semiotic implications of exhibition. On the contrary, it implies a specific understanding about which status of presence movies should have: not as

a phenomenon that happens *hic-et-nunc*, but as the representation of a process of production that has happened before.

An opposite case of this intimacy between architectural organization and the image's status of presence can be experienced in VJ gigs. Here, the 'real-timeness' of audiovisual flows is not simply predicated in the performer's apparent activity, as she combines scenes extracted from other movies or generated on the fly. It results from unprecedented exchanges triggered, among other things, by the audience's assortment of behaviours. In places such as dancefloors, music concerts and catwalks, where the screening is but a secondary stimulus among many others, images can be simultaneously watched, danced to and even completely ignored. There is a constant risk of being forever lost. Thus, both multiplied and at stake, the movie becomes alive.

As a reorganization of the elements traditionally involved in cinematographic exhibition, VJing demonstrates that spatial arrangements clearly affect principles of spectatorship, allowing the image different status of presence. In order to explore this relationship more carefully, I proceed to analyse three moving image pieces that overtly incorporate the projection apparatus in their poetic operations: the film *Chelsea Girls* (USA, 1966), by Andy Warhol; the installation series *Cosmococas* (Brazil, 1973), by Hélio Oiticia and Neville D'Almeida; and the multimedia project *The Tulse Luper Suitcases* (2003–2011), by Peter Greenaway.

Chelsea Girls, which was made for conventional theatres, employs a 16mm double projection and comes with very specific instructions for the synchronization of the twelve reels that constitute the movie, compelling the projectionist to engage in an activity reminiscent of the creative job she had during the

CHELSEA GIRLS (ANDY WARHOL, 1966)

early cinema of attractions. The *Cosmococas*, also dubbed 'almost-cinemas,' decompose the film projector and supplement it with objects such as hammocks, swimming pools and helium balloons. This creates exotic set-ups that invite the spectators themselves to perform within the work, whether by dancing, sleeping or polishing their nails. *The Tulse Luper Suitcases*, on the other hand, comprises a range of pieces made with the most diverse media, from feature films to exhibitions and VJ presentations. I'll focus on the first feature of the project's core trilogy, highlighting the metalinguistic strategies it uses to bring both its process of production and moment of consumption to the fore.

It is worth calling attention to the fact that these examples inhabit the intersection between cinema and contemporary arts. Andy Warhol's filmmaker career is immediately obfuscated by his title of 'father of Pop Art.' Oiticica, one of the founders of the Brazilian Neo-Concrete group, figured among the most important artists of his time. Greenaway, with his hybrid cinema, has always been in contact with the artworld, having even realized large-scale installations such as *100 Objects to Represent the World* (1992) and *The Stairs, Munich, Projection* (1995). Although this factor is not on purpose, it is not a coincidence either; it reflects historical differences between the two fields. While cinema's intelligentsia was aiming at promoting the recognition of its 'métier,' thus collaborating for the crystallization of principles of spectatorship and criticism,¹¹ the modernist avant-gardes challenged art institutions, opposing their protocols and systems of authentication. Whether by importing urinals into the gallery space or sculpting gigantic spirals in a New Jersey lake, visual artists got used to questioning the circuit in which they are immersed. Filmmakers, in turn, still seem more interested in consolidating their own.

Between 1968 and 1972, the main product of Andy Warhol's *Factory* were 16mm works.¹² At this time, the artist was a central figure of the New Yorker underground film scene. Although his role as a filmmaker is frequently taken as secondary, his experiments with the medium cannot be overlooked. Robert Sklar even considers Warhol's first movies as precursors of structural cinema, a genre that abdicates of one of the most essential attributes of commercial features: the narrative.¹³ Manovich goes further, stating that they are "perhaps the only real attempt to create cinema without language."¹⁴

Warhol made films that did not mean to convey any message, but rather operated somewhere between expressions of his own imagination and stimulants to that of a viewer's.¹⁵ *Sleep* (1963), his first cinematographic incursion, is a five-plus-hours long shot of the poet John Giorno sleeping – and nothing else. Other works, such as *Eat* (1963), *Haircut* (1963) and *Kiss* (1963), do not require further explanation either. Their synopses coincide with their titles: someone eating, another person having a haircut, a couple kissing each other.

The artist himself underscores the predominance of the pure image in his films, with their almost photographic character. For Warhol, the person who really makes a movie is the 'camera guy.' In an interview, he once admitted to be "just photographing what happens."¹⁶ His mode of production was indeed singular: each subject was recorded for its whole duration, from a fixed viewpoint, by a stationary camera. Afterwards, the reels were screened one after another, in the order of filming, without going through any editing or treatment. Thus, it is not perchance that Warhol found filmmaking "easier than signing Campbell Soup cans."¹⁷ His role as a director was almost passive.

Just as the production of these films was grounded on the camera's basic recording capabilities, their screening takes on exhibitionistic aspects of the early cinema of attractions. Therefore, it did not aim at reiterating previous 'meanings' produced by montage. Meanings emerged – whenever they did – from the very con-

sumption, out of the open engagement between the audience and the movie.

For that reason, Warhol's first films might seem to be more adequate to a distracted viewing, such as the one proportioned by television, than to the focused attention enforced by the theatre. VJ Paul Spinrad even jokes around this fact, suggesting using the eight hours of *Empire* (1964) as an electronic wallpaper for high-definition monitors.¹⁸ Nonetheless, the conflict with traditional principles of spectatorship is fundamental for the works' particular cognitive effect. "The very length of the single image," which the audience could easily avoid in a more casual environment, is precisely what "would impel the viewer to a new awareness of perceptual experience."¹⁹

In *Chelsea Girls*, Warhol transformed his filmmaking strategies, replacing the almost mechanical recording of banal events with a voyeuristic gaze over New Yorker bohemians. Completely made between June and September 1966, the movie opens a new chapter in the artist's filmography, marked by an interest in narrative and characters. Instead of showing one single action, it comprises twelve fictional episodes that last a whole film reel each. Thus, it is not the movie's subject that defines its length anymore, as in Warhol's previous pieces. On the contrary, it is the availability of photographic material that limits the duration of its scenes. Metaphorically, the increased diversity of stories is manifested in the splitting of the screen between two projections. Originally thought as a solution to cut the length of the film in half (from 6h30 to 3h15), it ended up becoming its most striking characteristic.²⁰

Box office profited enormously from this paradigm change. *Chelsea Girls* was Warhol's first commercial success, and still is his most famous film. Having cost around US\$ 2,000, it grossed US\$ 130,000 during the

nineteen weeks it was in New York theatres. Rosalyn Regelson, in a *New York Times* review published one year after its release, stated it was "the first Underground film to surface up to an art house showing."²¹ The very positive outcome led the Film-Maker's Distribution Center (FMDC) to expand its screenings to the cities of Los Angeles, Dallas, Washington, San Diego and Kansas.

Narrative-wise, *Chelsea Girls'* popularity should not be unexpected. The movie depicts melodramas involving sex, drugs and a dose of hysteria, which added to the controversy due to its semi-documentary medium. As put by filmmaker Jonas Mekas, director of the FMDC at the time of the movie's distribution, "the people in it are not really actors; or if they are acting, their acting becomes unimportant. It becomes part of their personalities."²² In that sense, he mentions a cast member, probably under the effect of hallucinogens, "who isn't even aware, or only half aware, that she is being filmed."²³

The episodes were open to improvisation, making it hard to distinguish between amateur acting and a real lack of control over the scenes. The basic recording of what happened got mixed up with poorly rehearsed situation – like in the episode *Hanoi Hanna*, in which a petty fight between two actresses superposes the interaction of their characters. The movie's effect of truth was further increased by Warhol's peculiar promotional strategies. The programme distributed during the première, for example, included the numbers of the hotel rooms in which each of its episodes would have taken place. Most probably, these numbers were all fake, since some of the scenes were not even filmed on location.

The main element of *Chelsea Girls* to stimulate voyeurism, though, was the multiplicity of projections. This technology was not a novelty per se. Forty years

before Warhol, Abel Gance had done something similar with his *Napoleon* (1927), using three simultaneous projections “in order to create sensational effects in the editing of space.”²⁴ In the 1950s, this technique would become an industrial standard with the Cinerama, a system that synchronizes three 35mm projections in order to create a unique widescreen image.

Nevertheless, there still is a fundamental difference. Both *Napoleon* and the Cinerama movies required the viewer to apprehend all projections at once, as a whole, in order to understand the image. *Chelsea Girls*, on the other hand, did not. In Warhol's film, each episode is self-sufficient. The pairing of scenes is almost fortuitous, and does not tie their meanings together, but rather multiplies them. The dual projection creates numerous hubs of attention, forcing the spectators to actively trigger their perception. Without knowing which screen to look at, the audience can focus either one or another or both – or do like a reviewer from *Arts Magazine* and examine the “constantly changing inside edge” between them.²⁵

Thus, *Chelsea Girls* created unexpected situations of consumption which the medium did not anticipate, including principles of spectatorship or standards of exhibition. Even though Warhol distributed the film with very specific instructions, detailing the order of the reels and their cues, no projectionist was actually forced to keep up with those extraordinary tasks. For that reason, until it was finally recorded on video, *Chelsea Girls* led a largely mutant existence. Its exhibitions could last between 190 and 210 minutes, depending on when the reels were loaded on the projector. The movie was made alive not only for the audience who kept searching attentively for its focal point, but also for the projectionists who made decisions about its exhibition, engaging in a creative activity reminiscent of the times when their work was not yet standardized.

COSMOCOCAS: PROGRAMA IN PROGRESS (HÉLIO OITICICA AND NEVILLE D'ALMEIDA, 1973)

Anticipating contemporary video installations, this series of works by Hélio Oiticica and Neville D'Almeida aimed at creating a sort of experimental redesign of the moving image apparatus, producing what could be termed “a fresh orientation of the body in space and a reformulation of visual and kinesthetic experience.”²⁶ In that sense, although the *Cosmococas* have been originally planned for the gallery space, their field of inquiry seems to be above all cinematographic.

D'Almeida reveals that, “when we thought about the *Cosmococas*, the word ‘installation’ was not yet part of the [artworld] vocabulary.”²⁷ Victims of such ‘pioneerism,’ the artists chose to frame their work as a form of cinema – or rather, ‘almost-cinema.’ Hence, the pieces could be seen as a series of alternative proposals to the standard principles of spectatorship (or what Oiticica would call “the hypnotizing submission of the spectator to the absolute screen of visual super-definition”²⁸). They result from a flagrant dissatisfaction with the inability of cinema to keep up with technological developments of that time, namely television. In his notebook, Oiticica would have asked: “to what kind of gratuity and boredom is the cinema-language reduced when we have the TV?”²⁹

According to the artist, the TV disintegrates the “spectator-spectacle” relationship, revealing the artificial constraints behind cinema. To finally overcome the [standard] “cinema-language,” it would be necessary to “get rid of the NUMBNESS that alienates the increasingly impatient spectator in the jail-chair.”³⁰ Such an impatient spectator would be the one who “frees the BODY to ROCK,” whose sensibility is more compatible with television's principles of spectatorship. No longer a passive audience, but rather a restless one. To get in touch with this public, cinema needed JOY: to “dance above ground.”³¹ In sum, this is what the *Cosmococas* had to offer: the joy of rock and cocaine against the numbness of cinema-language.

The project encompassed nine experiments, individually identified by the acronym CC followed by a number. All of them have the same fundamental elements: slide projectors, soundtrack, and instructions for performance. The slides are projected intermittently on the walls and ceiling of the exhibition space, in an endless loop. They show photographs of drawings made with cocaine over the image of pop culture icons. Each CC has a visual theme over which it executes variations. In *CC1-Trashiscapes* (1973), the basic image is a portrait of Luis Buñuel taken from the cover of *New York Times Magazine*. Other CCs use the cover of Yoko Ono's book *Grapefruit* (1964); of Marilyn Monroe's biography written by Norman Mailer; or of Jimi Hendrix's record *War Heroes* (1972). The soundtracks, also specific to each piece, are always executed in the same accidental way: from a vinyl or tape player, very loosely adjusted to the projections.

Thus, if the *Cosmococas* seem to challenge what Oiticica has called “the unilaterality of the cinema-spectacle,” it is because they do not even get to the stage of organization that this unilaterality requires. It is telling that the series originated from one of D'Almeida's aborted film projects, which he decided to turn into an ‘open program.’ Put differently, they are a form of cinematographic production that has been degraded into pure process. The strategy they employ to break the kinetic effect is a double decomposition: of the movie into individual photograms and of the apparatus into discrete mechanisms. It is as if the frames had not become a coherent scene yet, revealing the arbitrary nature of cinematographic movement and narrative. Likewise, the axis that defines the architecture of projection is not aligned. Dispersed all over the room, projectors, speakers and walls operate as if they were still not able to draw traditional principles of spectatorship together.

Such a precarious situation demands an active viewing. As a form of low-definition media, the *Cosmococas* “sharpen the audience's imagination and require a greater degree of their participation.”³² Paralysed, the images induce the spectator's mobility. Therefore, they can no longer be “the paramount conductor or unifying end of the work,” becoming a mere “part-play of a fragmented game that originates from the experimental positions taken to their limits.”³³

The final piece of this game are the instructions for performance included in each CC – sometimes not explicitly, but as architectural possibilities. There are mattresses, pillows and nail files scattered on the ground (CC1); geometric sculptures made of sponge, amidst which the spectator is invited to dance (CC2); a sand floor lined with plastic and covered by colored balloons (CC3); hammocks hanging from the same walls where the slides are projected (CC5). Freely engaging with those objects, it is the audience that give rise to new principles of spectatorship: their own, uncrystallized modes of viewing, whatever form these interactions might take. As critic Lisette Lagnado has suggested, “to fall sleep during a *Cosmococa* projection would not cause any problem.”³⁴ In that sense, Oiticica and D'Almeida's work propose a kind of cinema that does not follow previous agreements. Within the *Cosmococas*, the movie can only come into being during its consumption, and does so in accordance to the investment of the public's attention and affect.

THE TULSE LUPER SUITCASES (PETER GREENAWAY, 2003-2011)

At first glance, *The Moab Story* (2003) looks like an eventual chapter of Peter Greenaway's filmography. The feature resumes strategies thoroughly employed by the director before, such as the use of collections as a narrative topography (e.g. *The Pillow Book*, 1996)

and the superposition of frames as a form of montage (for instance, in *Prospero's Books*, 1991). In that sense, the movie exploits precisely the techniques that make Greenaway an exponent of what Lev Manovich calls *database cinema* – the promise of a new cinematic language that computer-based media would be fated to accomplish.³⁵

The main difference seems to be that, in *The Moab Story*, this 'new language' is no longer latent. The movie engages with databases as the powerful cultural forms they indeed are, although in a counter-intuitive way: by the means of their 'denial.' This fact becomes clearer once we consider it not in relation to Greenaway's other features, but as part of a system that spreads beyond the cinematographic circuit, encompassing elements from the most diverse media. Through this perspective, *The Moab Story* is but a small piece of *The Tulse Luper Suitcases*, a project that includes three feature films, an exhibition, a TV series, 92 DVDs, books, CD-ROMs, websites, and even VJ presentations.

This ensemble would be an attempt to reconstitute the history of a certain Tulse Luper, who is sometimes

typified as a "writer, patriot and professional prisoner." All of the parts of the project are based on a set of 92 suitcases Luper would have owned. In the guise of Duchamp's portable museums, these suitcases contained all of the collections the character had accumulated throughout his life. However, just as life itself would not fit in any of these narrow vessels, the project's entire plot is never completely offered to the public. One must track Luper's lifestory by gathering the scattered fragments that become available in the different artworks.

Constraining the spectator's access to the plot according to their particular technical affordances, these works act as if they were interfaces of navigation to a central database. This medial condition is stressed, for example, by the ways in which *The Moab Story* ap-

propriates operational conventions of other systems of information. In different scenes, the movie mimics behaviours typical of computer networks. One of the most revealing is when Luper and his friend Martino Knockavelli find themselves locked in a charcoal deposit. Upon the mention of the word 'fat' by one of the characters, a series of pictures of fat people appears on the screen, as if they resulted of an online image query. Nonetheless, there is no actual search, only its semblance: a procedure crystallized from cause to effect by the film-interface.

I would argue that the movie does not simply simulate the interactivity typical of computer-based media. Rather, it demonstrates in a very crude way how this interactivity works when subjected to cinema's standards of exhibition – in other words, that it doesn't. That is the reason why the label of 'database cinema' cannot be fully applied to film. According to Manovich, databases are "collections of items on which the user can perform various operations."³⁶ Although the collection is a model not completely strange to the cinematographic medium, the possibility of operating the image has always been out of the spectator's reach. Throughout the years, cinema has increasingly limited the public control over movie circulation and principles of spectatorship. The movie theatre, its chief exhibition space, is an architecture that sublimates the relationship between body and image, neutralizing their contact.

For Greenaway, this lack of 'user control' is one of the medium's defining characteristics. During a conference at the *zemosg8* festival, he proclaimed that cinema has died when the remote control entered American homes. According to him, the remote control implies "certain notions of interactivity, and cinema cannot be interactive." The format that the filmmaker considers to be cinema's standard – "the linear pursuit – one story at a time told chronologically"³⁷ – is not

compatible with the visual perambulation allowed by channel zapping, and even less with the versatility of digital computers.

Greenaway's traditional understanding of film is emphasised not only by the way in which *The Moab Story* appropriates the conventions of new media, but also in the contradictory diegetic universe it constructs. The movie's main setting is a desert in Midwestern USA, a landscape that could refer to "the classical American mythology in which the individual discovers his identity and builds character by moving through space."³⁸ Nevertheless, Luper does not seem fit for such epics. The movie describes him not as an explorer, but as someone who "graduated archeologist, must be seen as a collector, considered himself an archivist, had a special admiration for collectors, lexicographers, encyclopedists, and everyone that try to order the world under a system." While the explorer surrenders himself to the world (resulting in a process of self-discovery), a collector such as Luper seeks to capture it completely (becoming a hostage of his own methods) – an apparent paradox that is another recurring topic in Greenaway's *oeuvre*.³⁹

Not casually, one of the fake specialists who testify about Luper in *The Moab Story* classifies his life as a history of prisons. Throughout the movie, the protagonist is always incarcerated somewhere – in a charcoal deposit, in a hotel room, in a bathtub. His moments of freedom are so unusual that they become turning points in the story. Soon after arriving at the desert, Luper becomes a prisoner of the Mormon family with which he planned to stay. The immensity of the territory around him underscores his helplessness: there is a vast array of possibilities that cannot be explored because he is stuck in one place.

Luper's immobility seems to evoke that of two other characters: the spectator and the filmmaker. In that



The movie theatre, its chief exhibition space, is an architecture that sublimates the relationship between body and image, neutralizing their contact.



sense, one should remind that there is always a huge collection of footage behind a work such as *The Moab Story*, and almost infinite ways of editing this material. However, after the movie is done, it is no longer possible to navigate this database, as it becomes restricted within cinema's traditional dynamics of consumption. Inscribed in film, screened in a theatre, the movie is not open to variations. To watch it is to give up on one's freedom of both physical and virtual movement – in other words, to yield simultaneously to an auditorium seat and to the montage planned by the director. Ironically, as they do so, the spectators are led to identify with Luper, being subtly informed about their own condition of prisoners.

The imperative of exhibition is likewise the filmmaker's demise, as it interrupts his creative process, extinguishing numerous stories contained in the raw material. According to Manovich, this is the moment when cinema becomes separated from databases: "during editing, the editor constructs a film narrative out of this database [of shots], creating a unique trajectory through the conceptual space of all possible films that could have been constructed."⁴⁰ In that sense, Luper could also be seen as an ambassador Greenaway uses to communicate his anxieties to the audience, to the point of attributing to the character the authorship of two of his least known movies: *Vertical Features Remake* (1976) and *Water Wrackets* (1975). The role Luper is playing is that of the quintessential director, who is obliged to handle the world by the means of sampling and quantization, making it fit small containers.

Taking these burdens into account, it is easier to understand Greenaway's interest in doing VJ performances to remix the whole *Tulse Luper* trilogy – not only *The Moab Story*, but also *Vaux to the Sea* (2004) and *From Sark to the Finish* (2004). Such presentations entail a dynamic of consumption that allows the

filmmaker to browse his database in front of the audience, turning this navigation into a form of spectacle. While Greenaway takes care of reworking the series' visuals, a DJ does the same with its soundtrack. Thus, Luper's suitcases are metaphorically thrown wide open; its contents liberated from the oppression of the cinematographic apparatus.

Greenaway's VJ rig is formed by a number of screens and a control interface installed on a pedestal next to them. Apart from that, it is not much different from the digital projection used in commercial movie theatres. This computer-based set-up allows the image to react to the projectionist's direct intervention in many sophisticated ways, compressing all the stages of movie circulation into one single event. However, more than the device's technical constitution, what causes the performance's particular interactivity is a rearrangement of the elements involved in movie screening, bringing part of what is traditionally considered its process of production into the space of consumption.

As mentioned before, VJing accomplishes this rearrangement largely by avoiding the traditional context of the movie theatre – a place that, following the lineage of department stores and shopping arcades, represents "a sanctuary for consumption kept separate from the domain of production."⁴¹ Likewise, the theatre hides the movie's fundamental materiality and processes of constitution. Far from being innocuous, such disguise upholds a certain principle of mediatic efficiency, committed to erasing marks of enunciation and presenting the image as pure phenomena (thus overshadowing its presence with that of the diegetic universe it represents). Central to this illusion of 'unmediated referentiality' is the concealment of the apparatus, which by its turn depends on the relative immobility of the spectator.⁴² Attentive to that, Manovich draws a connection between the passive

perception promoted by cinema's conventional principles of spectatorship and the transparency of the medium.⁴³

Spectacles like the *Tulse Luper VJ performances* challenge the purported neutrality of movie screening by bringing it into dispersive spaces. Greenaway's VJ debut (2005), for instance, occurred in *Club 11*, then one of the most famous alternative nightclubs in Amsterdam. His presentation during the *16th Videobrasil Festival*, in São Paulo (2007), was in similarly bustling location: the middle of a street perpendicular to Paulista Avenue's heavy traffic. Such places do not simply leave the audience free to move around and peek under the images' constitutive processes (whether by looking into the VJ's control interface or back to the projection mechanism). By putting the spectators into innately unstable positions, they produce a situation in which bodies bump against one another and the very structures of the apparatus often become obstacles to the confluence between image and the gaze. This "periodic reappearance of the machinery" creates an aesthetics that Manovich finds in both new media and in the leftist avant-gardes: one that "prevent[s] the subject from falling into the dream world of illusion for very long."⁴⁴

Turned into a part of the spectacle, Greenaway should be counted among those obstacles that make mediation explicit. By presenting himself as an actor on a stage, the filmmaker reconstitutes the volume of projection, relegating the movie to the condition of a backdrop. As he employs a form of visual scratching to free Luper's lifestory from the "classic cinematographic linearity"⁴⁵, he also overshadows the character. Spectators are led to identify not with Luper, but with his creator, who takes on the role of a conductor in front of the screen. Thus, they are brought out of the diegetic reality, gaining a new perception of the actual space they presently inhabit and share with

the image. In turn, through the eyes of the filmmaker, the image watches them back. The audience's loose behaviour gives Greenaway cues for remix. Attentive to their reactions, he is able to affect the course and the rhythm of the audiovisual flow in meaningful ways, making it doubly alive.

CONCLUSION

The plurality of interfaces mobilized in *The Tulse Luper Suitcases* calls attention to the fact that any coherent diegesis exists within a field of possibilities, its narrative primacy relying upon the continuing affidavit of the public's engagement. Similarly, the shortcomings of *Cosmococas'* rough apparatus rend the audience conscious of the many ways in which they must contribute to the ongoing processes of visual mediation. This is not so different from how *Chelsea Girls* forces spectators to scrutinize their own gaze by confronting them with an unexpected multiplication of projections.

Thus, while promoting a rearrangement of the elements involved in cinematographic exhibition, the pieces analysed in this paper affect how the medium is traditionally made present. Moving images appear less as absolute forms than as an effect of contingent assemblages – traces of systems in which the public is 'hic-et-nunc' participating. Their existence no longer leans towards that of a detached author and her means of production; instead, it remains intertwined with the present audience and its particular 'locus' of consumption.

By bringing such works together despite pre-existing categories, I hope to have underscored the overarching role of architecture in the establishment of phenomenological economies. In that picture, spatial dynamics are shown to be as decisive for the constitution of media apparatus as are their much-debated

technical basis. A corresponding awareness would be crucial for understanding the novelties behind audiovisual forms that draw from computer technology.

For instance, spatial thinking inspires us to see greater singularity not in the VJs' use of software systems for real time video editing, but rather in the way their performances flirt with ambient lighting and deploy cheap digital projectors in order to occupy irregular screening venues. Likewise, it leads us to interrogate the quality of 'liveness' fostered by the so-called live cinema that, in the process of bringing VJing techniques into a theatre setting, enforce traditional principles of spectatorship over the audience.

The persistent examination of those and other similar contradictions might give us a clearer grasp over the rationales driving the developments of audiovisual media. Whatever those developments might be, it is indispensable to keep up with them by 'sophisticating' our own methods of research and analysis. In the light of such a self-actualizing epistemology, no matter how standardized they become, emerging practices will remain nevertheless vital, always able to be born again. ■

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