



**Universidade
Europeia**

LAUREATE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITIES

2018

**TALITHA QUERIDO
PIMENTEL**

**VISUAL INSIGHTS ON THE HUMAN
CONDITION.**

Collection of Memory Excerpts



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Projeto apresentado ao IADE – Universidade Europeia, para cumprimento dos requisitos necessários à obtenção do grau de Mestre em DESIGN E CULTURA VISUAL realizado sob a orientação científica do Prof. Doutor ARMANDO VILAS-BOAS.

I dedicate this work to my family, friends and professor.

Agradecimientos

I am grateful for my parents for providing diverse experiences that have helped me accumulating a considerable cultural baggage that was used as inspiration for this project. To my supervisor for the vote of confidence, impeccable organization, attention, constant availability, among many other things. And to my colleagues who, in the midst of exchanges of ideas, often helped me solving moments of creative difficulties.

palavras-chave

cultura visual; videoarte; condição humana; psicologia visual; reflexões

resumo

Não há algo mais inspirador que a complexidade do ser humano, assim como não há arte sem a mesma. A condição humana serve, nesse projeto, como ponto de partida para a reflexão sobre vários outros temas dentro do mesmo assunto. Tratando-se de um mestrado em cultura visual, essas reflexões foram exploradas a partir de diversas linguagens visuais exercitadas ao longo da história por comunicadores visuais.

Os assuntos tratados foram transmitidos de forma rápida e simples, por curta-metragens, divididos em temas. A abrangência dos ditos assuntos permitiu ao projeto uma dinâmica e uma sondagem multi-disciplinar a uma questão familiar.

Este projeto possibilitou explorações de pontos de vista diferentes, congregando as matérias de filme, cultura visual e conhecimento do ser humano.

keywords

visual culture; moving images; human condition; visual psychology; considerations

abstract

There is nothing more inspiring than the complexity of the human being, as there is no art without it. The human condition serves, in this project, as a starting point for the reflection of several other themes within the same subject matter. Seeing that this is a MA of visual culture, these reflexions were explored from various visual languages exercised in the course of history by artists.

The subjects discussed were transmitted quickly and simply, in short films, divided into themes. The scope of these subjects allowed the project a dynamic and a multi-disciplinary analysis of a commonplace issue. This project enables explorations of different subjects inside theories of film, visual culture and knowledge of the human being.

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Distribution of the time spent on this project



Chapter One

“The Image is a function of the “sign” (Mitry, 2000, pp 38)

1. INTRODUCTION

Why do we exist? Why do we think or do what we do? What are we? When we are kids we go through a phase where we exhaust our parents trying to know the why of things until the point they tell us that things are what they are and that is it. Then we have that anxious teenage years when our hormonal angst puts us through an existentialistic and limits defying period, so we can finally understand the consequences of our actions, grow mature and wiser and start adulthood. Preferably, around that time, we change our “rebellious questions” into work or intellectual thoughts. Unless something life-changing occurs, we have a tendency to stop asking the right questions, even if it is just because we don’t have time for it.

Yet, if we think about it, everything we do or everything we are has a reason. We are consequences of our choices, our beliefs, what we learn, the films we see, the books we read, the people we share our lives with. By neglecting to reflect on the condition of being human, we neglect ourselves and the world we live in. Maybe we stop doing it because since we live it every day, we think we know all about it.

But what is the human condition? A set of values, society, just being alive? Is it a consequence of evolution, the logic of mathematics or the simple lines of rock paintings? Maybe it is the power of the imagination, the ability to create art, the discovery of fire. Or psychology, history, science, faith? Are we pre-determined to be a condition or are we conditioning ourselves to be what we are?

We could risk saying that every art movement in history is somehow connected to a need to reflect on its current happenings. In 1909, in his Futurist Foundation Manifesto, Marinetti proclaimed: “We shall sing the love of danger, the habit of energy and fearlessness.” (Malbin, 1973, p. 21). The motto represented the need futurists felt to fight against a moral, mental and physical apathy that had taken over mankind as a result of wealth — imagine what they would think now. The superficial sense of security of human existence turned the arts into an affable hobby for the privileged men with empty minds and “bad digestion”, avoiding any mental effort (Malbin, 1973, p. 21).

This project definitely draws from this idea of inciting a critical awakening. Even before there was a final product to show, just by discussing the ideas here presented there was some sort of feeling of intrigue by people of diverse backgrounds and an interest to stop and talk about these subjects.

As we will talk about it further in the text, our society's expression has drastically changed focus from written words to 'painted words' (Wolfe, 1975, p. 01). "The words were not those of history painting, poetic landscape, myth or religious allegory, but the discourse of theory, of idealist and critical philosophy" (Mitchel, 2005 p. 258).

In the same way that the languages we speak can influence the way we think, the imagery we are used to can influence the way we show our history.

Specially from a critical point of view, the subtleties of signs that are frequent motifs in random media can give us an idea of what issues are being tackled by transgressors of the status quo. "In effect, it is a matter of being able to assess what the people we see and speak to tell us about the people we do not see and speak to" (Augé, 2008, p. 13).

With so much to consider on this subject, with a passion for video and visuals, and a nature of reflection and inquiries, this project started coming to life. Jean Epstein, considered one the first film theorists, in the beginning of his career wrote extensively about the potential cinema had to "express constant shifting modes of being – truly, modes of becoming." (Keller & Paul, 2012, p.25). This idea is of extreme importance when looking at this project. The ideas and the visuals here presented are also in some sort of fluidity; there is an arch of understanding of themes, visual language or the process in itself.

So, here we are trying to get fast to the point (when there is one), so that what is left of the imagery is really just the aperture for a conversation with ourselves or others, the videos offer several types of insights into the "conditions" of being alive. Although from a critical point of view, none of them tend to judge humanity, its dos and don'ts, but it aims to instigate reflection, expose controversies and remind ourselves that we are simply humans.

"I force myself to contradict myself in order to avoid conforming to my own taste" (Duchamp, 1974 cited by Harriet & Sidney, 1951, p. 310).

1.1 METHODOLOGY

Why video? “Beginning of rules for cinema: there were no rules, no system; only discoveries and insights of the most incredible lucidity.” (Mitry, 2000, p. 01). That couldn’t be more aligned with the process and intent of this project. Film is one of the freest forms to explore and dive into subjects we aren’t so sure how to dive into. Besides there’s a closeness to a sense of reality that some types of films can offer and an ease to arrive there that sometimes other media can’t reach. A means of expression capable of organizing, of constructing and communicating thoughts, able to develop ideas which can change, form, and transform themselves.

Aside from its fluidity, there is something in the movies that allows us to tell stories with critical undertones in ‘subtle’, thoughtful ways, but nonetheless rebelliously. As Barthes (1981, p.8) beautifully states about himself he “ had always suffered from the uneasiness of being a subject torn between two languages, one expressive, the other critical; and at the heart of this critical language, between several discourse those of sociology, of semiology and of psychoanalysis but that, by ultimate dissatisfaction with all of them, I was bearing witness to the only sure thing that was in me (however naive it might be): a desperate resistance to any reductive system.”. We could state the same for film.

Like mentioned before the main subject of this project is "The Human Condition." Since the subject embraces several smaller subjects, a structure was created to help the storytelling. The movies are divided into sets of three 30 (more or less) second movies. Each set of three 30 second movies has a visual language that was inspired by a movie, director, cinema wave or an artistic attribute with a strong visual characteristic. The word ‘inspired’ is used because the goal is not to replicate a language that has already been used but instead to use these characteristics to support the subjects in question.

Each set of movies is also divided into thesis, antithesis and synthesis, following Hegel’s Dialectics which “relies on a contradictory process between opposing sides.” (Maybe, 2016), meaning two different opinions or sides of not so sophisticated definitions that result into sophisticated ones. This so called sophisticated definition is named by him the “positively rational” one. It is the addition or subtraction of both worlds.

On some occasions, certain sets of movies don't follow that exact structure, not only so that the repetition doesn't become tedious but also because some subjects require a different structure. The same happens in terms of the Dialectic structure, because some cases might ask for a series of thesis.

Some videos are staged, some are extracts shot on the streets of random people, some are collages from old footage that was found in the process. A movie is, between other things,

“a system of images whose purpose is to describe, develop, and narrate an event or series of events. However, these images—according to the chosen narrative become organized into a system of signs and symbols; in addition, they become (or have the possibility of becoming) signs. They are not uniquely signs, like words, but first and foremost objects and concrete reality, objects which take on (or are given) a predetermined meaning.” (Mitry, 2000, p. 15).

Another tool used in many of the films is a sort of apophenia called “pareidolia”, which can be roughly translated into making meaning from random stimuli. Adding various images, the project incites the connection or disconnection created by the unconscious when “confronted” with abstract narratives, playing with the idea that we project our reality onto the world around us. In other words, the tendency we have to create signs in a way of categorizing chaos, so our brains can “reinstate” order.

Although rooted on theoretical studies, the project relies often on re/interpretation and as a result the films are subjected to experiences, cultural legacy and the freedom to argument different standpoints of the same subject.

Based on Ellen Lupton (1998) methodology of the “Designer as a producer”, two diagrams were created in order to establish a few rules during the process:

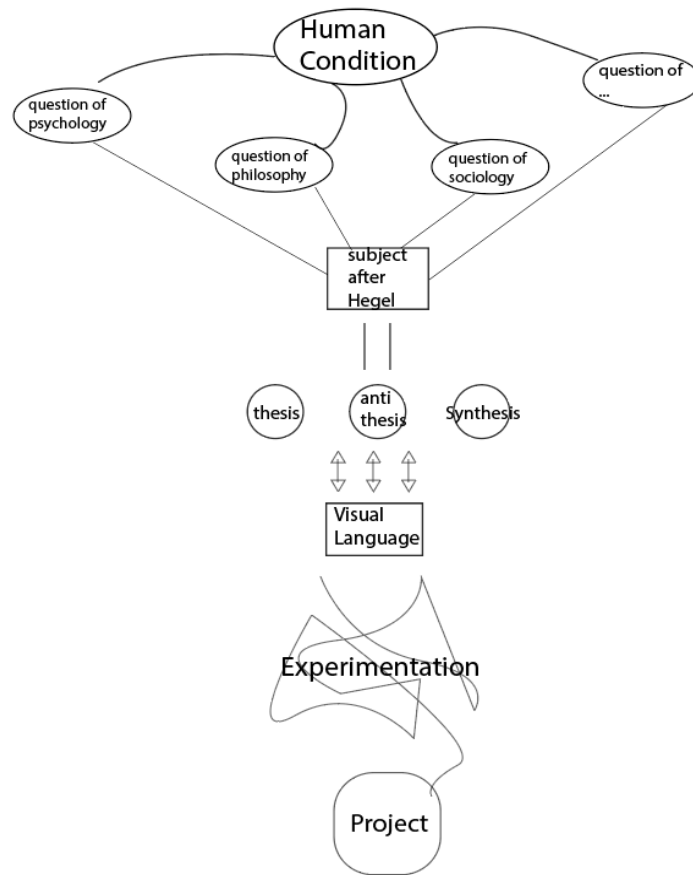


Figure 1. Process: Author's document.

The first one underlines the structure of the project where the main subject is: divided into different questions, filtered by Hegel's dialect, influenced by or having an influence on the chosen visual language. After that, there is a period of experimentation that births the final result. The second was focused on the theoretical framework involving three main areas: visual culture, moving images and visual psychology.

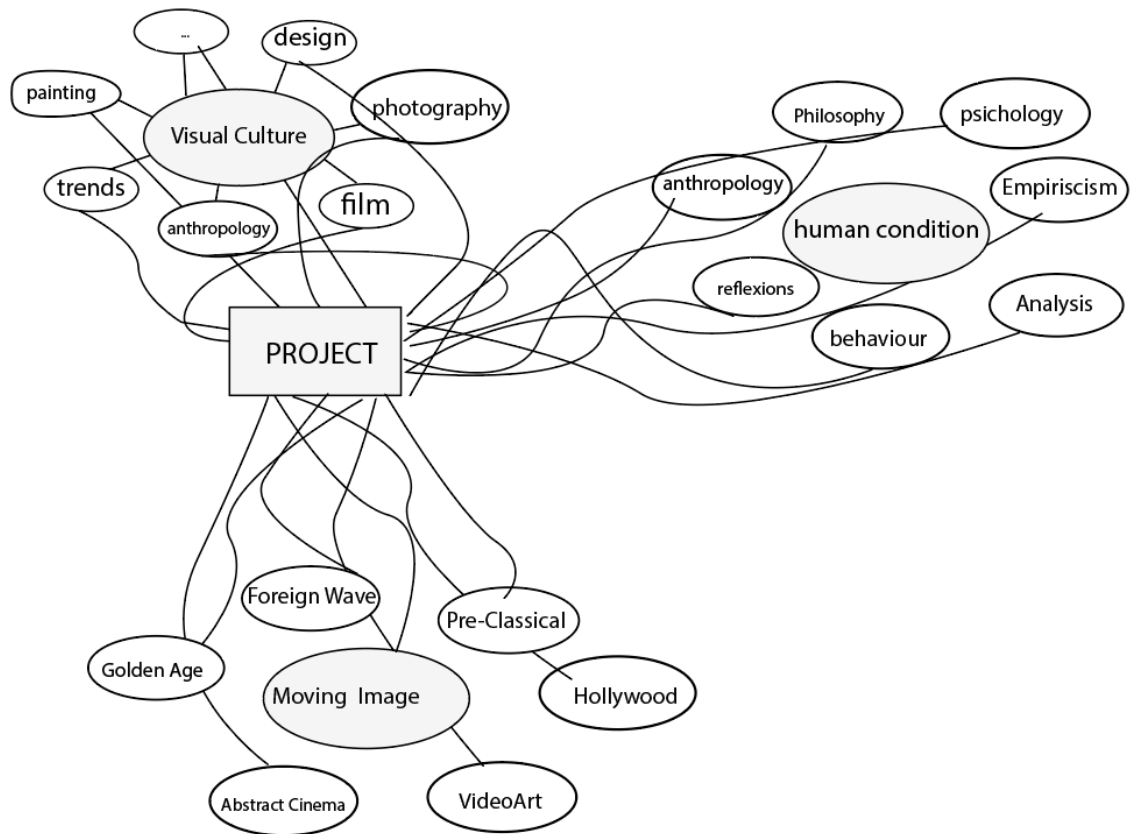


Figure 2. Methodology: Author's document.

1.2. Platform (Vimeo; Instagram)

By now, we all know some of the wonders of the web — for a project that seeks to be an aggregating experience, we cannot forget about the audience and how this is going to reach them. Of course, there are a lot of online platforms that could have been used, but the focus was on Vimeo and Instagram. Vimeo allows creatives to share their work and Instagram is a good tool to dissipate the work.

“Web space is developing into a video space with distinct aesthetics. Snapchat and Instagram stories as apparently ephemeral mobile applications are setting new temporal standards and push forward to animated, looping, moving contents, removing still image representations and doubles. Profile images can integrate cinematographic looping elements, while images on timelines will be looking back and following our gaze. Stills are paused images of intersecting timelines of temporary events or event formations, a point on a multi-dimensional map in a non-Cartesian space” (Gloerich, 2017, p. 6).

We will have a short summary on the history of cinema further ahead, but one thing we could say about the contemporary scene is that the internet has given space to artist who don't want to be involved in bureaucratic polices, resulting in a freedom to express whatever they want, producing sometimes very bad, but also excellent films that manage to stay true to the artist's vision.

“A multitude of actors, a world of possibilities, an evolving industry pushes towards a personal cinema and the personal gesture, creating and rendering constantly the data of self as its product. The web space embeds these personal gestures and creates through video a sphere or living cell, expanding our physical space endlessly. The Web through video advances to an actor in our environment, an ecological system and a live-like being that is not just related to us, but exists with us in various forms, and shapes - shifting. Around us and with us” (Gloerich, 2017, p. 6).

Chapter Two

2. CONTEMPORARY VISUAL CULTURE

2.1 Art criticism and Visual Culture

As we mentioned, there has been a turn for the “visual” in our culture, and as a result a new field of study initiated to try and analyze patterns, meanings, visual perceptions and even pleasures experienced by viewers: Visual Culture Studies. Over the past years, the visual scene has become digital, virtual, viral, and global. The image-as-object has shattered. The theatre-as-architecture has crumpled. Visual media have been mixed and re-mixed. Conversely, a vibrant array of scholars and practitioners from Film Studies, Cultural Studies, Critical Theory, Anthropology and Art History have reacted, not only engaging in an *au courant* image production and consumption, but also digging for the groundwork of visual awareness: What is an image? What is perceiving? How do we view images? How and why do we gaze?

When countless of the imageries watchers today confront have the influence to alter people’s minds, in a project like this one we must explore the power they have to gives us an understanding of how we perceive the images around us and how we can activate interest in our brain. In part, what we see can change ideas because images are highly instructive; they work in ways that instill by representing, illustrating, and suggesting meaning.

‘Visual media’ is an informal verbalism that references mediums such television, film, photography, and others.

“It is the field of study that refuses to take vision for granted, that insists on problematizing, theorizing, critiquing and historicizing the visual process as such. It is not merely the hitching of an unexamined concept of ‘the visual’ onto an only slightly more reflective notion of culture – i.e. visual culture as the ‘spectacle’ wing of cultural studies. A more important feature of visual culture has been the sense in which this topic requires an examination of resistance to purely culturalist explanations, to inquiries into the nature of visual nature – the sciences of optics, the intricacies of visual technology, the hardware and software of seeing. It offers a way to get beyond these ‘scopic wars’ into a more productive critical space, one in which we would study the intricate braiding and nesting of the visual with the other senses, reopen art history to the expanded field of images and visual practices.”
(Mitchell, 2005, p. 264)

Through the 1990s the discipline of Visual Culture surfaced, having as its main interest the analysis of the exchange between viewer and viewed. Visual has come to be the

dominant cognitive and representational form of modernity. (Mirzoeff, 1998). The propagation of images became a key characteristic of modern social organization:

“The Victorians saw the growth of the department store, catalogue shopping, mass tourism, and entertainment as spectacle—all of which hinge on the mediation of visual experience. And, of course, this also was the period of new visual technologies such as film, animation, and photography.” (Julier, 2006, p. 66)

With the advances of technology, the need for the field of Visual Culture grew stronger, the Internet playing a huge role on how images were made, seen and transmitted.

“One cannot talk of the Internet in terms of either visual or textual culture but, perhaps, as screen culture. (...) Forms of visual presentation emerge and indeed occupy some discursive prominence at various historical junctures. An era of visual culture is where the perception of the visual becomes commonplace; something that is mentioned casually. In doing so, assumptions are automatically made about the ubiquity and role of the visual in society.” (Julier, 2006, p. 65)

It is important to realize how any type of art is studied under the microscopes of its sciences in order to abide by rules or break them. Visual culture studies more than art criticism. It is a leading subject on this project due to its characteristics of studying visual mediums under the lights of society and its signs.

Art Criticism started as the interpretation or analysis of visual art, usually criticized in the context of aesthetics or the theory of beauty. A target of art criticism is the quest for a logical basis for art appreciation, but it is debatable whether such criticism can outstrip current socio-political background:

“What strikes me is the fact that in our society, art has become something which is related only to objects and not to individuals, or to life. That art is something which is specialized, or which is done by experts who are artists. But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object, but not our life?”, says Michael Foucault. (Cited by Schulenberg, 2015, p. 01)

Conversely, Visual Culture tries to take in consideration that certain themes are imbued with visual metaphors and terminologies of looking that have become staple diet of culture and media studies (Evans & Hall, 1999), it is looking not only at the technique but also at the way it is digested.

When it comes to Film, there is usually a level of pretense to those involved in any type of artistic criticism. As Mattias Frey (2016, p. 21) said: “since its origins, film criticism has always found itself in crisis: the need to show critical authority and the anxieties over challenges to that authority have been longstanding concerns”.

Within the discipline of media and culture it is accepted that mechanically and electronically produced images are the semantic and technical unit of the modern mass media in the middle of post-war popular culture. It is also true that, conversely, visual image or photography is regarded as being only of interest as the origin, the technological dawn of a great course of evolution in which an era of mass communication and the conversion of information for messages can be transmitted in principle to a plurality of recipients. (Evans & Hall, 1999)

A culture which is infused at all levels by a host of cultural technologies designed to propagated viewing and looking practices over primarily visually mediated forms provides an obstacle for those seeking to map the way in which the image is invariably articulated within the picturing sensibilities of a vaster visual culture. The relativity of facts and the multitude of variables that can influence any kind of analysis inside visual culture is so enormous that it is embedded with more questions than answers.

Every time an image is looked at, its viewer brings within the interpretation a multitude of ideas, concepts and pre-concepts accumulated empirically or theoretically that immediately coarse the way the image is viewed. Jointly, there are certain symbols and images that become part of a culture, and more importantly become part of a globalized culture, as it was objectively agreed cross-countries of its meaning/importance. This idea was explored in one of the short films of this project. We gave people from different backgrounds the same imagery and asked them to narrate a little story. It was a simple image without any sort of narrative. People from similar backgrounds found similar motifs and signs.

Scholars have tried to understand this phenomenon exploring a vast array of theories.

John Berger (1973, p. 7), for example, wrote extensively about it. He believed that an image is a set of affectations which has been removed from the time, place and circumstances in which it first appeared: “The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled. Each evening we see the sunset. We know that the earth is turning away from it. Yet the knowledge, the explanation, never quite fits the sight.” He goes on to argue that the real meaning of many images has been obscured by academics, changed by photographic reproduction and distorted by monetary value.

Berger shows how the nude in western art consistently objectified women, and how this tradition has been continued by photography: “Every woman’s presence regulates what is and is not ‘permissible’ within her presence. Every one of her actions — whatever its direct purpose or motivation — is also read as an indication of how she would like to be treated. If a woman throws a glass on the floor, this is an example of how she treats her own emotion of anger and so of how she would wish it to be treated by others. If a man does the same, his action is only read as an expression of his anger. If a woman makes a good joke this is an example of how she treats the joker in herself and accordingly of how she as a joker-woman would like to be treated by others. Only a man can make a good joke for its own sake” (1973, p. 47). Berger argues that oil painting has, due to its realism, a powerful link to ownership and the buying power of money, and so often celebrates the power of money. Berger further develops the link between ownership and art by critically looking at modern consumerist society and publicity or advertising photography.

Martin Jay (1988, pp. 5-7) considered three different historical forms of seeing: Cartesian perspectivism, observational empiricism and the multiple and open portraying of visual phenomena conventional in baroque art that requires the viewer to connect visual objects into a logical narrative.

“In the Cartesian model the intellect inspects entities modeled on retinal images. In Descartes’ conception—the one that became the basis for ‘modern epistemology—it is representations which are in the ‘mind.’ This institute a harmonically relationship between a scientific/mathematical world and the way we think about us and our surroundings.” (Jay, 1988, pp. 5-7). Observational empiricism, embedded in Dutch 17th century art, does not make the assumption of three-dimensional space external to the viewer, but reveals in the particularity. The third, is self-explanatory.

Michel Foucault (1975), interested in the idea that bodily truth could be made visible, theorized inside a hospital-based teaching context an idea that also helps in trying to understand the way the process of seeing occurs. Foucault describes the replacement of traditional methods of diagnosis of reading the surfaces symptoms of an illness by the practice of anatomical dissection and looking for empirical evidence beyond the physical surfaces of the body. He was also interested in the identification of signs and symptoms. (Note how similar to seeing examination and interpretation of images this is.) The looking he describes is crucially linked to other activities that give meaning to what vision uncovers: experimenting, measuring, analyzing, and ordering.

This is very useful in modernized world; the activities of looking described above disassociate the concept of appearances as self-evident from the diagnostically clinical gaze. Foucault says that the ambiguity of the clinical gaze and its legacy is that vision may command, but it is nonetheless adjective to other sensory and cognitive process. This paradox becomes all the more pronounced as we move into to the twenty-first century and the age of the digital image.

2. 2 Camera Obscura

The development of the camera obscura is an important aspect to take in consideration when discussing Visual Culture, and most importantly, film. Most attempts in theorizing visual and visualization are associated with models emphasized by a continuous and global visual tradition in the westernized world. With the evolution of the camera obscura to the photographic camera, there was a huge growth of photography and film on the XIX century,

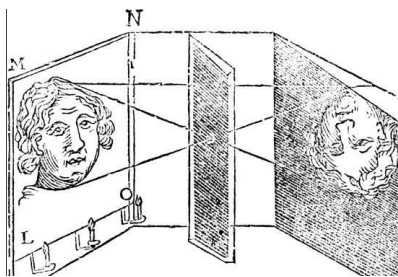


Figure 3. Illustration of the Principle of the Camera Obscura, 1671. In Wikipedia Retrieved March 22, 2018 from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camera_obscura. Public Domain.

concretizing a long way of ideological and technological developments in the western society. (Tagg, 1987, p. 244).

This implies that this evolution aligns to the same presumptions of an observer and his world. For a radical theorist, the camera obscura and the cinema are connected to one permanent machine of social and political power that disciplines the observer.

2.3. Static Images and Film

There wouldn't be film without photography. Their roles in society were constantly interchangeable, but always mutually influential.

“In the last quarter of the 19th century, the photographic industries of France, Britain and America, in common with other sectors of the capitalist economy, underwent a second technical revolution which laid the basis for a major transition towards a structure dominated by large-scale corporate monopolies. The development of faster dry plates and flexible film and mass production of simple and convenient photographic equipment opened up new consumer markets and accelerated the growth of an advanced industrial organization.” (Tagg, 1987, p, 62)

Together with this development came also a context of constant change on the production and consumption of the “Image” world. Photography was held back for a new wave of growth into advertising, journalism, and the domestic market; it was used in the medical, legal and municipal apparatus as a mean of recording and sourcing as evidence being articulated into a wide range of techniques for appraising “truth”. That split the industry of photography in two: the artistic property and the scientific-technical domain.

As a result, Photography became characterless, its utility as a way for cultural manufacture was linked to existing definite conditions. Simultaneously, the camera itself doesn’t produce completely objective images, it is nevertheless a representation of reality framed by a person. The same happens with film and cinematography: the story is often manipulated by what and how the artists want to show and that representations are their legacy of that moment in question.

“In the decades of the 1880s and the 1890s [...] photography underwent a double technical revolution, enabling, on the one hand, the mass production of cheaply printed half-tone blocks and, on the other hand, the mass production of simple and convenient photographic equipment such as the handheld Kodak camera. At the very moment when certain professional photographers were seeking, in reaction, to exhibit their status as artists in all kind of refinement of printing technique, this double revolution stripped the image of what Walter Benjamin called its ‘aura’ by flooding the market with cheap and disposable photo-mechanical reproductions and by giving untrained masses the means to picture themselves. While aesthetes and pictorial photographers sought to salvage some prestige by preserving superseded techniques and arguing for the autonomy of photography as an art, an unabating, technical development ensure the vast expansion of photography in the far from autonomous realms of advertising, of the family as a reconstructed unit of consumption, and of a whole range of scientific, technical, medical, legal and political apparatuses in which photography functioned as a mean of record and a source of ‘evidence.’ (Tagg, 1987, p. 247)

In the *Lancet*, the idea was expressed that “photography was the essence for the Art of Truth — and the representative of Truth in Art — that it would seem to be the essential means of reproducing all forms structures of which science sees for delineation” (Evans & Hall, 1999, p. 255). The worth of the camera was acclaimed because the optical and manufactured steps of photography were taken to label a scientifically exploited but natural system creating ‘natural’ images whose truth was assured. It gifted an honest and truthful record freeing from caricaturing which disfigured all the public portraits. And the medium has been continually used as a tool of “truth”, however it quickly became a relative truth. With advances in photo manipulation techniques, the scientific-technical domain can’t trust its images as much

anymore, but the artistic property group has received a world of possibilities to be creative. Film has had the same development.

As the media have advanced in recent years, artists are confronted with the challenge of finding new and innovative ways to push the boundaries of the use of the camera even further. It's not always digital manipulation or post production that holds the answer, but rather concept, which is driving the image forward. Each photographer is contributing to the wider image revolution. They are making a highly significant contribution to the medium by re-thinking the exact position of the image and re-defining its potential.

“One of the most fundamental points of agreement among the painters and writers was their awareness of the double-edged thrust of photography and the moving picture as a powerful means of visual communication. The Futurists accepted these new media as direct artistic challenge and inspiration, although, at first, they denied such dependence.” (Malbin, 1973, p. 23)



Figure 4. Laminated Structure (For Her and Him). 2009. Collection Carlo Bronzini Vender. © 2010 Elad Lassry, courtesy David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles

Lassry is an example of a photographer who takes more than just well-lit and technically perfect photos. He is very much concerned with images that, as he puts it, “have been exhausted of their meaning” (Lassry, cited by Federico, 2011): stock photography, advertising images, studio portraiture – images that we know too well and that Elad makes us revisit in a more complex or intellectual way. He questions the singularity of photographs with his playful ‘images that are either photographs made in the studio in front of monochrome backdrops, often mimicking 1970’s product photography, silkscreens on magazine covers or found C-prints or collages that fuse photographic prints with images he has taken himself.’ (Lassry, cited by Federico, 2011). Rendering the over-familiar and clichéd – a kitten, a pretty model, lipsticks, a carton of eggs – strangely peculiar, Lassry’s very diverse approach embraces and plays with the multiple histories that photography has generated. (Guy, 1967)

In some of the short films in the project, the same intent can be seen, as visual trends come and go, and as some of us feel



Figure 5 Wall. 2008. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Fund for the Twenty-First Century. © 2010 Elad Lassry, courtesy David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles

nostalgic by bygone eras, there was a lust for recuperating some of the simplicity seen in the first few movies that were made, the hard cuts made in the first montages, the (now) vintage colors of the 1960's, or the vaporwave elements of the 1980's.

Chapter Three

3. MOVING IMAGES

“The Cinemas is a language, a means of reproduction and communication, in as much as it is initially no more than a series of moving photographs of real or imaginary events.” (Mitry, 2000, p. 14)

Cinema completes the objective of new practices of poetry and portraiture, proposing a completely innovative method of creating art, which grew out of a contemporary mode of remarking the world, and possibly even providing a road to this newfangled world. (Keller & Paul, 2012, p. 28). Film’s ability to englobe various arts elevated the art form from a mere representation of reality to a way of penetrating it: investigating the kingdom of substance, the données of perception, particularly showing the laws of time amongst the inmost levels of motion and substance. Cinematic techniques flopped if they covered our interaction with truth but were successful if they exposed new levels of the world, adding to human awareness.

3.1. Brief overview

In order to develop the project, it was necessary to re-visit the story of cinema and specially the forces that drove its development. If we wanted a visual language to support and represent the narrative or non-narrative form of a subject, we also needed to understand what were the impulses that incited their styles.

For thousands of years people have been toying with visual tricks may it be with “magic lanterns”, magic show, shadow shows or optical toys. The persistence of vision is a concept that exists thanks to many scientists and inventors that analyzed the visual experience that many individuals got when still photos that were projected in quick sequence gave the impression of movement.

3.2. Pre-classical

The first 20 years of film, a period called “Pre-Classical” (1898-1915), correspond to the films that were not made in the “classical” narrative of the feature films that were created after this time (Ministry of Cinema, 2014). The Lumiere Brothers made world history by the end of 1895, in Paris, when they premiered 10 films that were about 50 seconds long. Their

short films showed from comedies to simple everyday scenes like people leaving their work day in the factories and they were a success. The brothers, however, stated that cinema was “an invention without any future” (Lumiere Brothers, 1895, cited by Naremor, 2004, p. 01)) and failed to see the power of narrative film.

The film scene shifted from France to the USA. Soon American companies started to produce films, hiring directors and crew, and expecting films to be made in one week, so that they could be sold. That way mass production began and a lot of the roles we see in movie making today started: movie producers, distributors, theaters, etc. At the time, short films were more interesting for producers because they allowed them to have a bigger turn-over at the theaters thus making more money. In 1913, Italian Cinema changed everything with the feature film *Quo Vadis*?. The movie was so successful that American producers allowed D.W. Griffith to finally produce his long-awaited feature *The Birth of Nation*, received with an extreme hype and establishing most of the classical cinema’s convention like parallel editing.

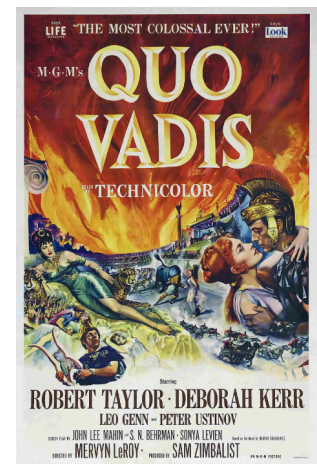


Figure 6. Poster from the Film "Quo Vadis". In Wikipedia, u.d. Retrieved March 22, 2018 from: [https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quo_Vadis_\(1951\)](https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quo_Vadis_(1951)). Public Domain.

3.3 The Studio System



Figure 7. Pathé Brothers by Adrien Barrère. InWikipedia, u.d. retrieved April 22, 2018 from: <https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pathé>.

The Studio System (1915-1930) began as a result of the French mega studio Société Pathé Frères having control over the international market, displeasing Thomas Edison. Thomas Edison founded The Trust, aiming total complete control over the industry (patents, scheduled releases, prices and so on). That forced the foreign studios to “roadshow” across the nation, giving “independent” producers interest in exhibiting their own works. One independent producer, Adolf Zuckor, created Paramount, and managed to achieve exactly what The Trust aimed to do.

Not only he took complete control on the film industry, but he also manipulated the public into loving the stars that featured in his movies, turning him into one of the most defining figures in the history of film. A lot of actors and

foreign studios began to oppose the American power over the film world and started creating their own companies. The soviets, for example, would release soviet films with the same name or premises of an American film's release, weeks after so to detract audiences from American films. In this process they created their own style, formulating acting theories like Stanislavski's method, and the theory of montage.

3.4 The Golden Age of Cinema

The Golden Age of Cinema (1930-1945) was marked by the development of sound. When the movie *Jazz singer* was released the world was shocked with the first spoken film. From then on, silent movies were abandoned and a new era of film making began. Due to the Great Depression and the financial issue that arouse, the big Hollywood Studios had to find ways of surviving having as consequence at the time the spread of B movies: low cost, low risk features. However, the big budget movies were still leading the market. Movies like *The Wizard of Oz* and *Gone with the Wind* had huge success. One thing that all movies of the period set out to do was to be extremely exciting and entertaining, because the audience needed that. The Great Depression was — like the name says — a great depressive era: the audience wanted to use movies as a form of escapism, resulting in movies that were often pushing the boundaries of American society. The government created then something called Hay's code, a set of rules by which the movies were to be constrained in their making: no more cursing, long kissing scenes, robbery or any other type of "bad influence" scenes. Naturally, the studios found ways of maneuvering this code, leading to the "screwball Comedy."

When the 1940's came, and WWII began, the American government began mandating that most of the movies to be released should be war or combat films. At the same time TV started challenging Hollywood's forcing film producers to adapt to the audiences' new taste.



Figure 8. Poster from the Movie "Wizard of Oz". In Wikipedia, u.d. retrieved January 18, 2018 from: https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mágico_de_Oz. Public Domain.

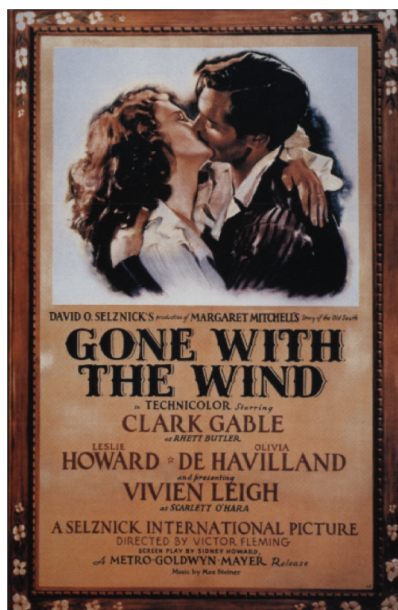


Figure 9. Poster from "Gone with the Wind". In Wikipedia, u.d. retrieved March 17, 2018 from: https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gone_with_the_Wind. Public Domain.

One of the biggest changes of that time was the switch to widescreen format, a format that pretty much stuck with the business until nowadays. If for this historical time, technological changes weren't enough, the studios also came under fire with accusations of being communists in the Pre-Cold war time and the American government decided that some of the studios were guilty of violating anti-trust laws, forcing the studios to lose their Theater holdings and losing control over distribution.

Internationally speaking Hollywood was also lacking success with audiences, the audience changed once again, and their interest started shifting to new waves of Italian and French films.

3.5 Foreign Wave



Figure 10. Poster from the film "Bicycle Thieves". In Wikipedia, u.d. retrieved March 22, 2018 from: https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ladri_di_biciclette. Public Domain.

The foreign wave has a special place in this project because that's when the world really began seeing cinema as art. Contrary to what happened in America, TV hadn't yet become a big competitor to film studios. Cinema absorbed culture and cinema magazines were well read. In Italy, the magazine *Cinema* began publishing articles about the post-fascism movement that would kick off the foreign importance of cinema in its history: Italian Neorealism. *Rome Open City* soon won the Cannes Award, and Italian Neo-realism was taken very serious by the international community. In 1948, *Bicycle Thieves* was released and marked as the true symbol of the movement, although it also marked the end of it.

For economic reasons, the Italian director, as many others, had to partner with other studios and the scene shifted from Italy to France. The French New Wave holds well-known names such as Jean-Luc Goddard and François Truffaut, but the most important name is André Bazin. In his essay for "Cashiers" he wrote about what he called "objective reality" (Bazin, 1951) that meant he was against the manipulation of the language used in cinema, he preferred a more realistic language which implied the use of mise-en-

scène, deep focus and wide angled shots. His most important theory was the Auteur theory, where he argued that the director was the primary author of the film, who so far didn't really have the role as defined. There were naturally other highlights in other countries as well. Orson Wells and Nicholas Ray were considered some of the best filmmakers of their time and in Japan names like Akira Kurosawa, together with his cinematographer Kazuo Miyagawa and Yasujiro Ozu got international attention due to their very innovative filmmaking ways.

3.6 The New Hollywood

Hollywood suffered from this international wave but as always found a way of getting back to be a strong competitor with a period defined by the Film School generation: The New Hollywood. The repercussions of the foreign wave were a big change in the audience's taste, for now the audience was open to characters that were confused, existentialistic, and movies that were a bit more open ended. Hollywood began to accept this new reality and adapted its movies. In addition, most studios had to use TV as a new way for controlling distribution. With the influence of television, a whole new type of filmmakers appeared. The first of this type was Steven Spielberg, coming from television productions, who started with *Jaws* the tradition of high budget films that relied heavily on marketing and worldwide opening.

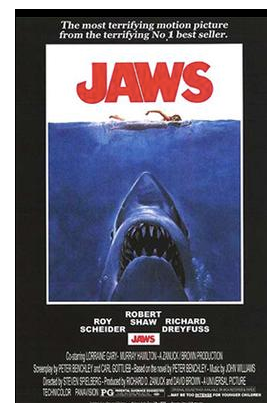


Figure 11. Poster from "Jaws". In Wikipedia, n.d. retrieved February 20, 2018 from: [https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tubarão_\(filme\)](https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tubarão_(filme)). Universal Studios.

3.7 Post-Cinema/New Media

It is impossible to talk about anything contemporary without analyzing it under the rise of technological influence. Technology has changed everything. In the field of Film Studies, the same thing happens. Some scholars believe that Film as we know it is dead: "The disappearance of the supposedly specific qualities of film as a medium, the realism of the image and the mechanical reproduction of the camera, has led to widespread pronouncements about the 'death of cinema' "(Geuens 2002, p.16). If film was the dominant cultural form of the twentieth century, the twenty first will belong to the 'new media' (Spicer, 2012).

This new era called by Richard Grusin (2006) "cinema of interactions", is an era marked by films that are traveling across various layers of several medias. Aside from that,

the rituals of going to the cinema are being switched with viewers watching material in digital devices and in different places. As a result of the mutation, recombination and migration of imagery in diverse backgrounds, the contemporary film scene is necessarily an interdisciplinary matter. (Beckman & Ma, 2008, p. 4)

3.8 Abstract cinema

Abstract cinema is a definite section of cinematography and experimental art in liaison to cinema art itself (which is figurative art in its basis). It is inferred as component of cinema art, such designation is due to their focus in technical equipment instead of common art subjects, language and purposes. However, experimental cinema utilizes this equipment (camera, film strip, projector, screen) in a distinct way. In abstract/experimental cinema, the "productive" technology is used (the author births abstract images first in the realm of creativity, subsequently transferring them to the film strip by aid of animation and the multiplication technique). Historically, the attempts at finding truer features of the cinema was the main inspiration for conceiving abstract movies.



Figure 12. *Abstract Patterns* by Sol Fallon, 1969. In *Amateur Cinema*, u.d. Retrieved February 12 from: <http://www.amateurcinema.org/index.php/films/term/abstract-films>

In the deficiency of respectable knowledge, artists and theorists were ceding quite diverse glimpses on the essence of film art. Many saw cinema (mainly acted films) as a kind of automated, magnetic expansion of theatre, as a "filmed" pièce du Théâtre.

Some directed thought on the evident proximity between cinema and literature. There was even a group that accentuated adjacent links between cinema and figurative art moving pictures. And, at last, a dynamic action and expressiveness of cinema images, an important role of rhythm, plasticity and light, naturally led to one more extreme definition of cinema as "visual music", reflecting its closeness to music and dance — even in the first silent period.

Since then, film's ancestry in twain scientific and mass culture reverberates the amalgamation of information and demonstration found in museum displays. By removal of the responses of film curators and anthropologists to contextualize every-day groups and environmental groups, one is able to add en masse an intensely

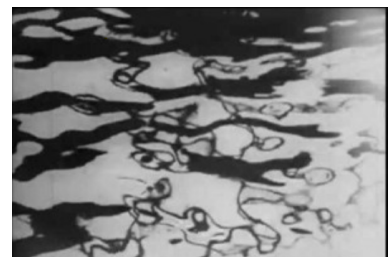


Figure 13. *H2O* by Ralph Steiner, 1930. In *Amateur Cinema*, u.d. Retrieved February 12 from: <http://www.amateurcinema.org/index.php/films/term/abstract-films>

complex characterization of the way in which ethnographic cinema started happening at the end of the 19th century, inasmuch as these depicted forms not only kindled professional arguments akin to those that would follow the consecutive initiation of film inside a theater though also foreshadowed some of the features of the phenomenological Cinema.

“Conventional symbols of the latter are replaced, in the cinema, with fleeting symbolic values depending less on the objects or scenes represented than on the visual context in which they are placed. And this context-through the associations and relationships which it determines/lends to these objects or scenes a temporary meaning.” (Miltry, 2000, p. 14)

Symptomatic perhaps of how the visual rhetoric of advertising-eye-catching displays and easily assimilable visual messages crept quietly into screen design, the demand offered compelling evidence of how new modes of visual consumption associated with social media, huge cinema screens, and popular Hollywood culture left their mark on film exhibition.

Maybe one of the main reasons why our generation is so visually inclined is the fact that there is pleasure in seeing (as much as in being seen — think celebrity phenomenon) and there is no other medium that can give the pleasure whilst enabling a change of reality like the Cinema. In one of his “Three Essays on Sexuality” Freud (1949) isolated Scopophilia as one of the component instincts of sexuality which existence drives quite independently of the erotogenic zones.

Scopophilia is the pleasure of looking. It is known that much of the pleasure we experience while watching movies resides in the scape it provides. Reflecting life, but not being life in itself, cinema has the ability of giving the audience the pleasure of living their pains, their fantasies, their secrets without the risk of getting hurt. At least if we consider huge Hollywood blockbusters: the type of movies that will almost certainly reach the masses, their main purpose is to entertain, hence give pleasure. What about that smaller field of abstract/experimental/non-narrative movies? Where do they fit in a westernized culture?

Taking in consideration that the latest generation tends to have the attention span of a goldfish, the need for medias that ‘say it fast, but say it well’ is absolute. Think about the trend between millennials: Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Boomerang. These media tell a long story (mostly who is having the best time or the worst), in seconds.

Instagram, when it began uploading video, wouldn't allow anything longer than 10 seconds. Snapchat won't let you make a video of more than 15 seconds. Twitter makes one express oneself in 140 characters (how are millennials going to write academic papers)? And

Boomerang (which became popular in a matter of a few months), is a 3/4 second moving image that, as the name implies, goes back and forth.

Abstraction would seem to be an intelligent change of scenery for filmmaking. In general, an abstract movie will give little information, usually symbolic images without providing a beginning, middle, and end. Giving the spectator the chance to fill in with their opinions, or just feel whatever they feel when seeing. However, the masses have never been critical, or interested in being so. That leaves art into a realm of little reach.

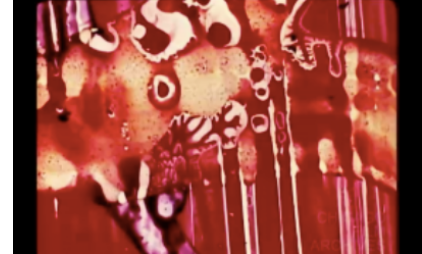


Figure 14. Still from *Dancing Color* by Sol Falon, 1968. In *Amateur Cinema*, u.d. Retrieved February 12 from: <http://www.amateurcinema.org/index.php/films/term/abstract-films>

3.9 Video Art

In the 1960's, a generation tired of the political scene rose and created a strong counterculture that desired a more 'open and egalitarian society' (Horsfield, 2006, p. 01). They aimed to turn "art making" into more accessible types of production, those being often based in culture creativity and low-cost methodologies.

This counterculture envisioned a betterment of the world through means of one's change of personal consciousness. That wouldn't be possible with the films and TV shows of the time that were intended to distract the viewers from critical thoughts.

McLuhan delineated a new utopian concept for media that highlighted a new connection concerning the image channels and how humans perceived it. This utopia conceived "that electronic communications were an extension of the human nervous system and operated in a binary kind of progression—as technology advances, so does the human sensory perception needed to receive it." (Horsfield, 2006, p. 02). This caught the attention of entertainers, media thinkers, and those in the counterculture that were already actively testing with distorted states of awareness.

Soon the first portable camera was created by Sony, and this counterculture was able to create videos that expressed their individuality, their response to the world and their process of fluctuating.

3.10 Cinema and Visual Culture

A survey of the key introductory texts for the discipline reveals the preponderance of static visual forms such as photography and advertising. Why is that? The cinema has much to do with embedded visual culture. It has for years now dictated trends, ways of seeing, objectifying and manipulating people. Whoever watches it knows that it is fiction but chooses to plunge into the stories told (of course one may argue that at the first showing of *L'Arrivée d'un Train en Gare de La Ciotat*, the audience didn't realize the character of the cinema and ran, but after a few decades, people got used to it.)

Cinema has had a different development. Documentaries aside, cinema has always had a creative principle. Coetaneous, film itself has also been used as "truth", as a means of surveillance. (Friedberg, 1998, pp. 15-32)

There lingers a historiographical discussion about whether the domination of the visible produced a crisis of assurance in the eye itself, or if it was this coinciding increase in optical research which produced this frenzy of visual cultures.

The same historiographic discussion pervades the history of the arts; either the invention of photography produced a crisis that led to continued optical research, or 19th century's obsession with optical research produced a crisis that led to photography. This discussion was crucial to organize the vast historical process that led to the emergence of the cinema.

Anne Friedberg (1998, pp. 15-32) lays out interesting remarks on the subject. She wrote about important concepts that dissect this process, like the panoptique regime, panorama, modernity, 'the gaze' and the diorama: "The flaneur will serve as a model for an observer who follows a style of visibility different from the model of power and vision so frequently linked with modernity — what Michael Foucault (1975, p. 204) dramatically described as 'un régime panoptique'.

The 'panoptic régime'/gaze was conjured by feminist theorists who, much like Berger, accentuated the one-way power of gendered looking, where woman have embodied the voyeuristic gaze and are always subjectively 'objects of the look'. The panoptic gaze proposes a model for the heightened preference of the visual register, but there were equivalent gazes that, while still tracking the importance of the visual, created different — more fluid — forms of subjectivity.



Figure 15. "L'Arrivée d'un Train en Gare de La Ciotat. In Wikipedia, retrieved March 18, 2018 from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%27Arrivée_d%27un_train_en_gare_de_La_Ciotat. Public Domain.

Foucault's model for the characterization of panoptic power and the 'disciplines' of imaginary scrutiny was provided by Jeremy Bentham's. The panopticon produces a subjective effect for both who sees with a sense of omnipotence and for who is being seen under surveillance. It is a form of 'architectural mechanism' (Friedberg, 1998, pp. 15-32); a 'pure' architectural and optical system' that did need not use force because the 'real subjection is born mechanically from a factious relation.' (Foucault, 1975, p. 202) This machine was then an easily implemented safety/manipulation tool. He utilizes the model to show how, when the moment power penetrates a visual register, it will likely be 'non-corporal.'

This has been offered as a primary root for the inventions that cinema brought afterwards, the apparatus that creates a more intensely 'mechanically/ fictitious' relation and whose subjection is fairly incorporated. (Baudry, 1986, p. 136). The viewer/spectator is completely invisible, absent from both self-exploration and surveillance, they are a subject with a narrow scope. The position of the audience gives an imaginary feeling of omnipotence.

As Jean-Louis Baudry (1986, p. 20) puts it: "It is the condition of invisibility which is the premise, for the spectator-subject's confusion of representation and self-generated perception, an over-cathexis with representation, a position that guarantees the dependence of the constructed view provided by representation".

If one re-examines the evolution of the cinema, one can link the background of an instrumentalization of visual culture which is at times equal and at times diverse from the panoptic visualization.

First patented by Robert Barker, the panorama was "'not the subtlest crafts' for presenting the absolute presence of reality.' But its 'spectacles/within doors' of every nature from all climes used 'circumambient scenery' to create an artificial elsewhere for the panoramic spectator. "(Wordsworth, 1805, Prelude)

The panoramic, as we know it now, started with a 360-degree cylindrical painting that placed the viewer in the middle, giving an illusion birthed by a mixture of realistic techniques — perspective, scale, etc.

Film and video art have developed an autonomous style that has, as Ian MacMillan's 'fan letter' to Harmony Korine illustrates, affected the way filmmakers properly approach their craft to those practitioners who, by using new media, have made art relevant to the technological age in which we live. It is now time to put behind us the antagonisms of the past, and instead appreciate not just the merits of the technological media, but also what they can bring to older, more established means of expression.

It is hardly news that since the invention of photography, and before that the camera obscura, painting has incorporated new techniques into its practice. Yet walk around that perennial barometer of the art market, New York's gallery scene, and you will find that many of the spaces not showing photography or video or film are exhibiting work that, in one way or another, is now more deeply inflected than ever by these media.

Chapter Four

4. PROJECT

“There are no more simple images. The whole world is too much for an image, you need several of them; a chain of images.” (Godard, cited by Treske, Önen, Buyum, & Degim, 2011, p. 06).

4.1 Women and the world

The first experience was a first look on what being a woman is like. In times like today, it is almost impossible to talk about the human condition without touching the most controversial subjects we are constantly fighting for: feminism, racism, LGBT's rights. Feminism was the first choice because all women deal with the “condition” of being a woman every day. More than that, we deal with the pre-existing conditions that were determined way before we were born and have been constantly brought up in modern society.

Film Noir and the Femme Fatale is a very strong female archetype, she a stereotypical female, threatening because men often consider femininity to be hazardous as well as appealing, exploiting what she's been given biologically to enjoy what power she can.

The question that the Femme Fatale proposed was as a matter of fact the loneliness that this “role” unconsciously lingered on these characters. “Other imagery in these films suggests that a routinised boredom and a sense of stifling entrapment are characteristic of marriage. (...) The husband does not merely notice his wife, he ignores her sexually” (Harvey, 1978, p. 29).

Some of them were plain evil, but some were just sad and disconnected by the world created from men to men. This series tried experiencing the inner workings of this characters and the inner working of any woman growing up in a Westernized Culture. The first deals mainly with vanity, boredom and longing for something else, whatever that might be. The second is the relationship between a young girl's body with herself and what she is taught. The third is the result of the first two.

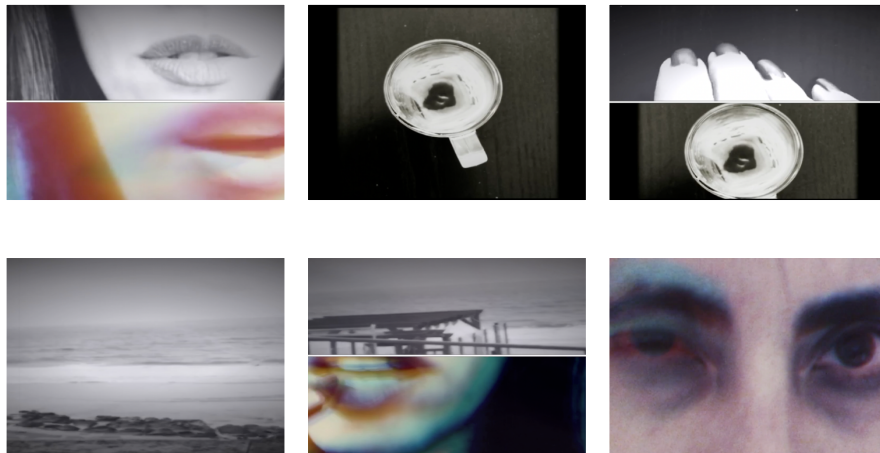


Figure 16. Women and the world: Author's film stills.

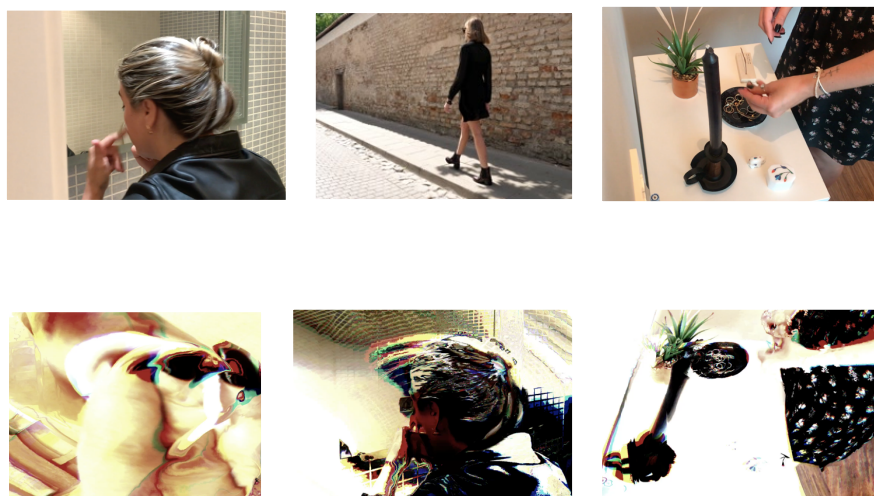


Figure 17. Women and the world: Author's film stills.



Figure 18. *Women and the world: Author's film stills.*

4.2 Alice In Wonderland

Alice sat quietly in her room with a piece of paper in her hands while reflecting. She reflected so much, that she really didn't reflect at all, poor Alice. She thought about the world, and the only thing that made her feel safe was the certainty that she knew... nothing. And she dreamt, oh how Alice dreamt of a world of her own. 'If I had a world of my own, it would be nonsense', she wrote in a piece of paper as somebody who tried to convince herself that, as a matter of a fact, the world she wanted was the world she had, after all the real world made no sense, and this world Alice already had. But Alice, as an insatiable young woman, wanted to *exist* a lot more. She wanted to exist in a world with thirst. A thirst to exist everywhere, in every corner, in every second, and with all intensity with which was possible. Alice then moved.

That is the starting point to the cycle represented in this film that narrates and visualizes the process that a girl goes through during a period of maturing, discovery and cutting strings with her past in order to move forward and finding liminality.

In the original story, Alice is a well-mannered child, "who is happy to keep her opinions to herself and finds the need to curtsy even as she is falling down, which can be attributed to the strict adherence to politeness, imposed by Victorian Society." (Vembar, u.d.). In this piece, Alice is a modern young woman who is also living by the impositions of her

own society — our modern society, her habit hole is the critic questioning of the contradictions that she is leaving in her everyday life. And the desire to see more.

As she falls down the rabbit hole, “She transforms into a balanced young woman who can destabilize an entire land by merely rising forth and swatting away at the creatures there with her bare hands. Indeed, towards the end, Alice reduces them to mere playing cards. By rejecting Wonderland, Alice solves her identity crisis.” (Vembar, u.d.). In this piece, the process is transmitted by the period of transgression that we, as young adults, go through when trying to understand ourselves.

After coming back from “down the rabbit hole”, Alice has a new personality. “The contrast in her personality is easily observed when we examine her former self. In the beginning her character is rather complicated as she is at once, polite and rude; gentle and cruel; intelligent and stupid. Her subconscious mind brings out a volley of characters who are individually equipped with a distinctive quality at various times.” (Vembar, u.d.). So, does the character: in the last part of this piece we can see that she still has her original essence, however she is more in touch in herself and see the world around her in a very ‘it is what it is’ manner.

Another important point in this set of films is the way it was edited. Although in a more experimental way, Godard’s theory of the ‘chain of images’ was highly used as the visual language behind this specific part of the project:

“Godard’s ‘chains of images’ still seem to be a very linear approach. It is a single layer of images. Cinema suggests that images are organized in a linear chain, one image juxtaposed to the other and so on. We might call this cinematic chain a horizontal chain oriented or directed on an x-axis in the graphical representation system. Movement in cinema means moving along this chain horizontally, to advance forward in time on one horizontal level. At the same time as we are moving we would experience a vertical extraction or extension at every point of the chain as well as a depth extension. Multilayering of chains over, below, and in each other creates at every point in time a multitude of crossing shiny things.” (Gloerich, 2017)

We can see in the piece that his idea of ‘chain of image’, goes even further and defies the limits of the frame size: often an image will come out of another pre-existing image and just linger there in the middle of the frame, with a smaller size just to connect what has been said, what is real and what is imaginary.

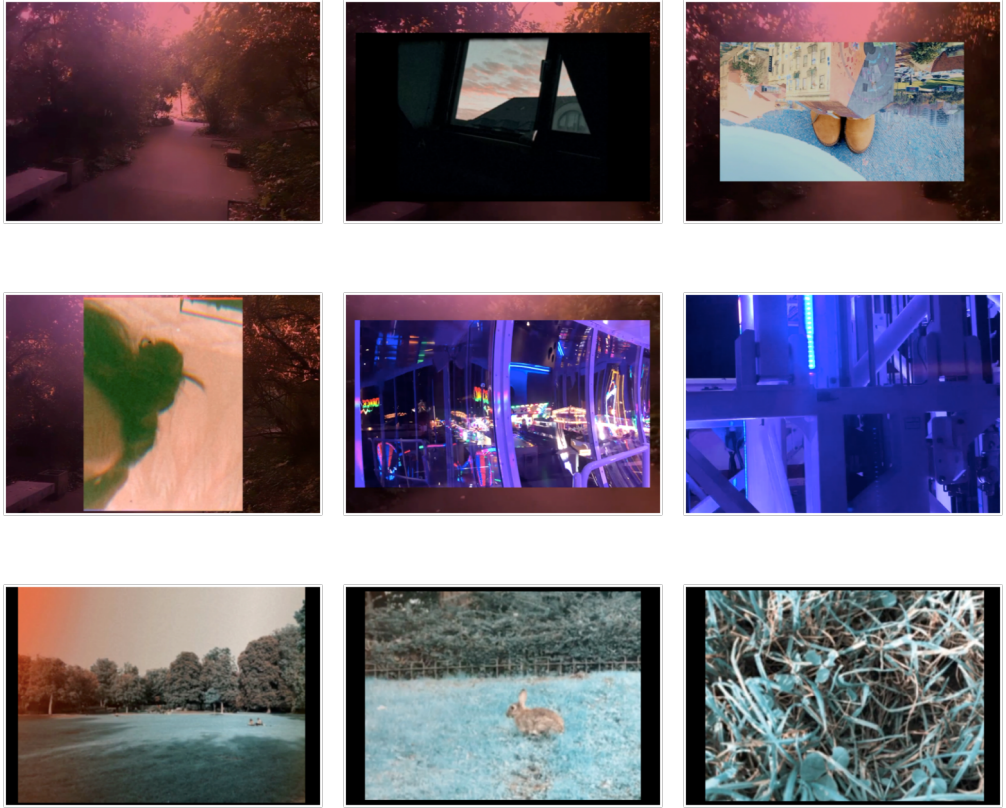


Figure 19. Alice In Wonderland: Author's film stills

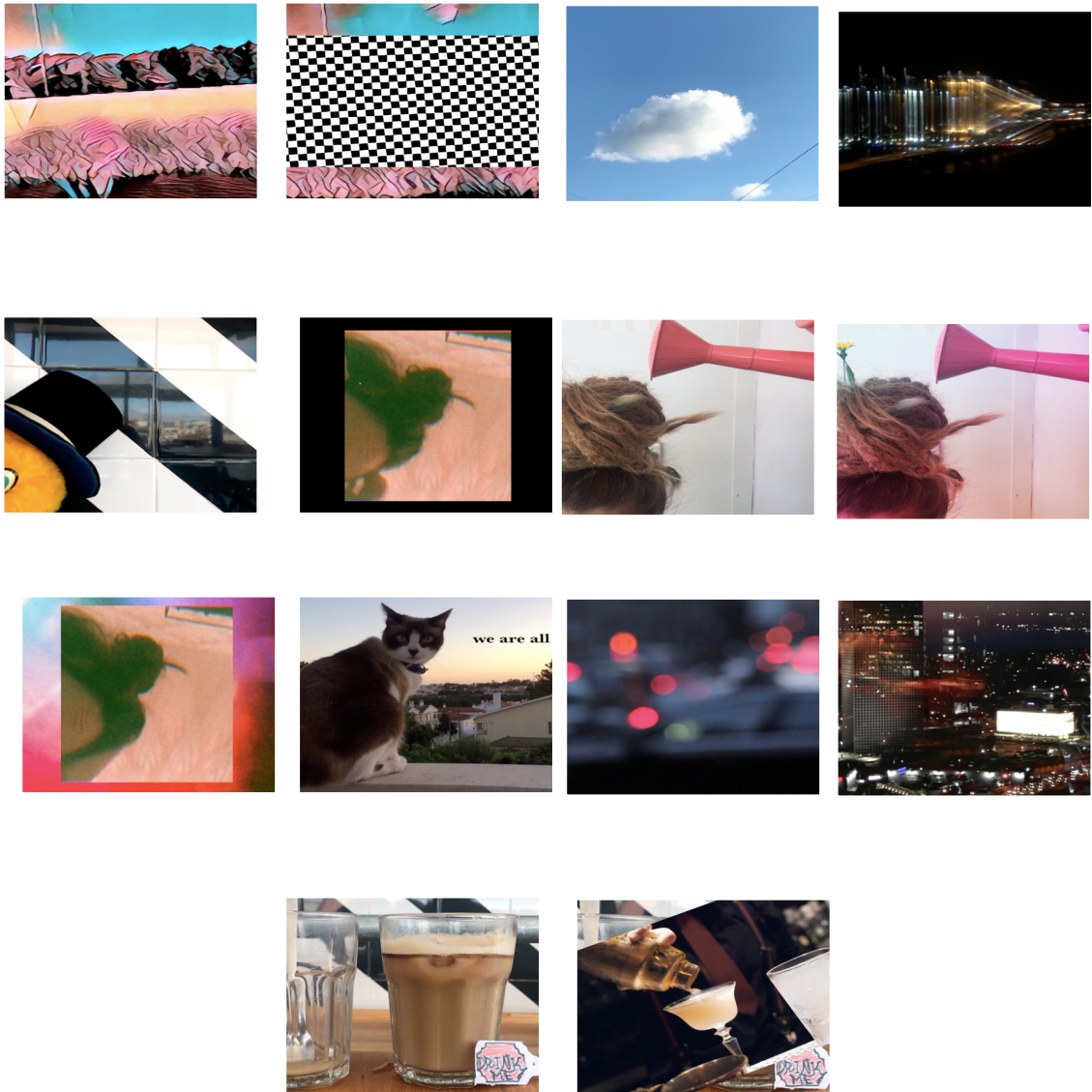


Figure 20. *Alice In Wonderland - Liminality*: Author's film stills.

4.3 Tautology

In magniloquence, a tautology is a rational case made in such a way, usually by echoing the same idea or statement by means of dissimilar wording or lingo, that the proposition *as stated* is logically irrefutable, while obscuring the lack of evidence or valid reasoning supporting the stated conclusion, concluded philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein

(1922) — going to work every day, seeming busy, seeming powerful etc... apperceived laws of our society.

As thought and image are attached to one another, they are both predestined to daily triteness and clichés, which replicates repetitive result. The thought is disturbed by this continuous replica of the dogmatic, monetary, and societal clichés in a manner that it is not capable of remarking or creating something new. This results in the constant repression of the thought, the body and the mind. These movies are relating everyday routines to tautologies, a reflection of how everyday actions are repetitive and therefore seem true and logical to do. Emphasis on the word: Seems.

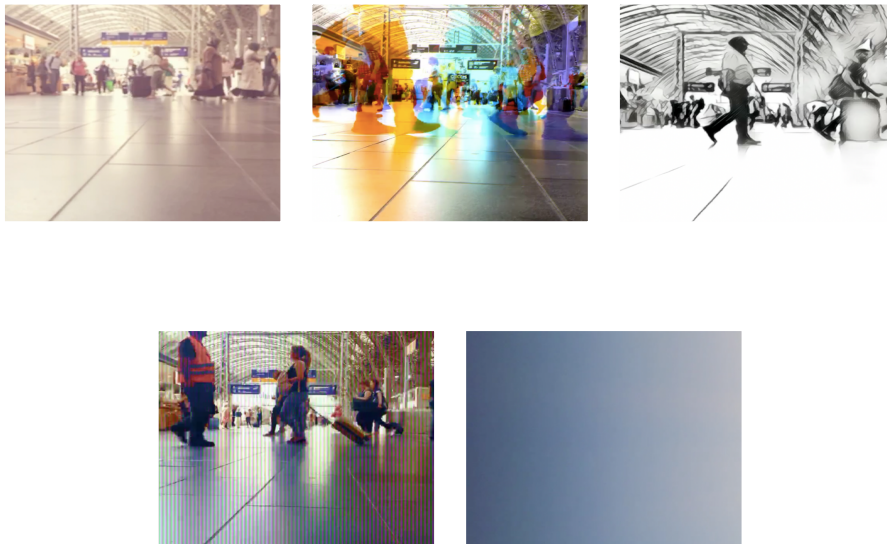


Figure 21. Almost Tautologies? Author's film stills.

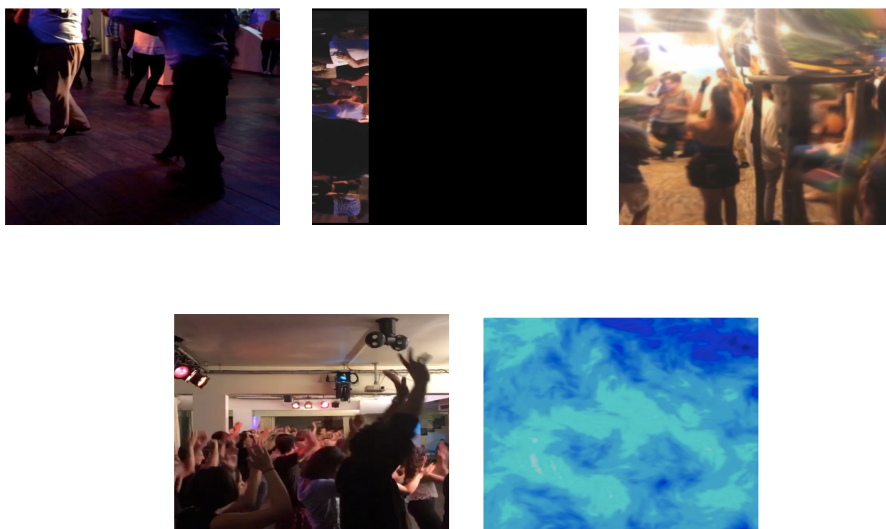


Figure 22. Almost Tautologies? Author's film stills.

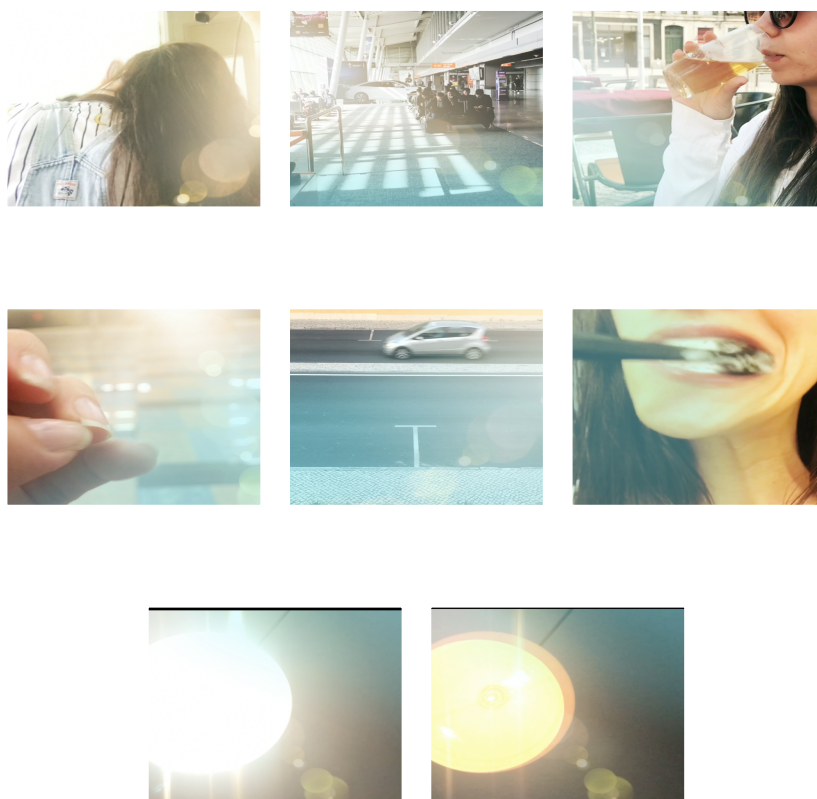


Figure 23. Almost Tautologies?: Author's film stills

4.4 Technology

The relationship between screens and people has been discussed with ferocity since the advances of smartphones and social media accounts. The majority of people tend to argue that this generation has problems with being social, being present in the moment and deepening their knowledge.

The first movie reflects on how we can sit in front of a screen and lose notion of time, place and for some: 'self'. The movie was shot in black and white since it has the ability to change thematically, "providing atmosphere, tone, and visually providing stark contrasts and a dreamlike view of the world. It can at once make a film feel more real (like time period accurate film and photographs) while making it feel unreal (real life is in color)." (Miller, 2017), which perfectly illustrates the disassociation with time and place.

The second is entirely about losing that sense of self and becoming one with what is conditioned by the interconnections in the technological world. It is not an antithesis from the first, in the sense that it still supports the idea of being lost and trapped in this virtual world. The main difference between the first and the second movies is that in the first one you still see some distance between the character and the technology. In the second, we see people and the technology as one: the characters are trapped inside the screen and not just trapped by it.

Finally, the last is a positive outlook on how we can create beautiful things inside these worlds and, for some or many, these worlds have allowed them to voice their perspectives and space to show their true self. "Results showed that Internet activities, such as using the Internet for sociability, fun seeking and information seeking, and new media use, correlate positively with various dimensions of social support" (Leung & Lee, 2005, pp. 161–180).

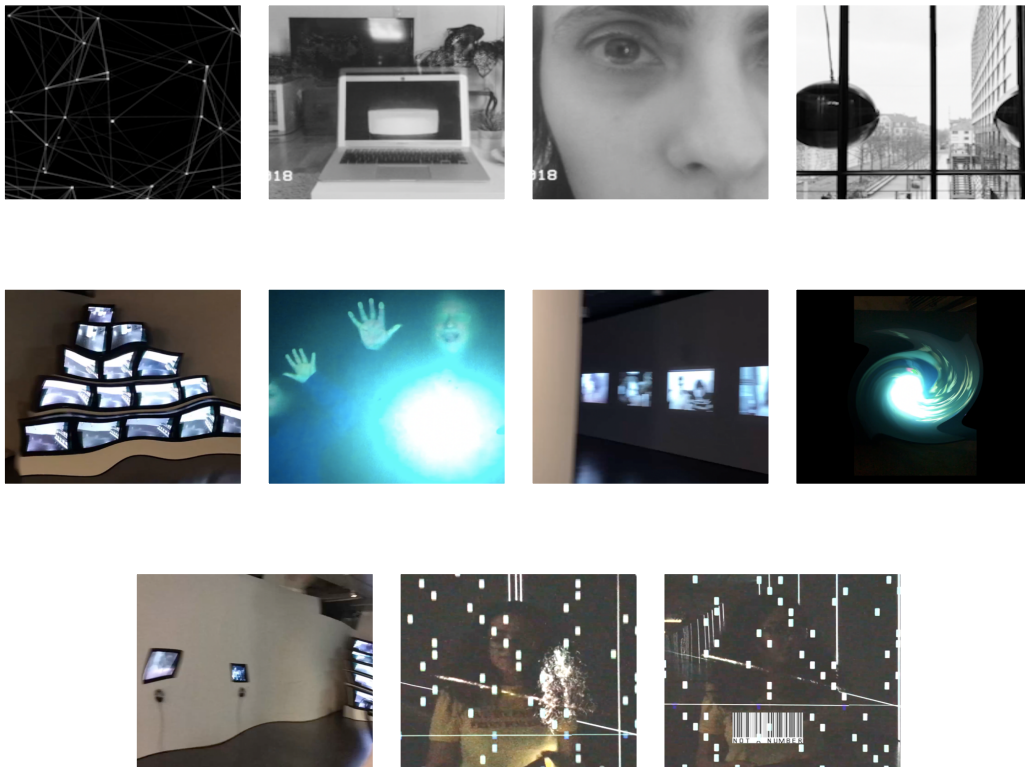


Figure 24. Technologies: Author's film stills.

4.5 Museums

This piece considers the visitor that goes to a museum and his experience which can offer a critical insight into how museums can mark people's lives and vice-versa. Taking from a career in examining museum visitors, researcher John Falk (Falk, 2009) attempted to generate an analytical characteristic of museum goers. He recognizes five main types of people who frequents museums and then outlines the inner reasons why they visit these institutions over and over again. These five types are: explorer, facilitator, experience seeker, professional/hobbyist, and recharger. The first movie identifies these types with an analytical and external point of view. Watching people watch art, can in itself be a form of art.

The second one is an intuitive interpretation of an excerpt from Sylvia Plath's (1992) poem "Tulips". The poem goes:

"Nobody watched me before, now I am watched.
The tulips turn to me, and the window behind me
Where once a day the light slowly widens and slowly thins,

And I see myself, flat, ridiculous, a cut-paper shadow
 Between the eye of the sun and the eyes of the tulips,
 And I have no face, I have wanted to efface myself.
 The vivid tulips eat my oxygen.”

The visuals are from an exposition at the German museum LWL (Museum für Kunst und Kultur) by artist Michael Dean, called “Tender, Tender”, set in 2017. The installation is about love and a finished relationship that is surrounded by a tarpaulin round the center of the installation, which supposedly guards its privacy, however it is diffusely transparent with holes that give voyeurs a peek into the interior of the art. The perspective of the film comes from the museum goer and its ‘power’ to receive insights and an intimate outlook of what the artist needed to express.

The third is a direct symptom of the condition of analyzing the art of viewing art as also art. The same way shows are popularized and commercialized by advertising posters, in this piece a ‘film’ where what you watch is people viewing art is advertised.

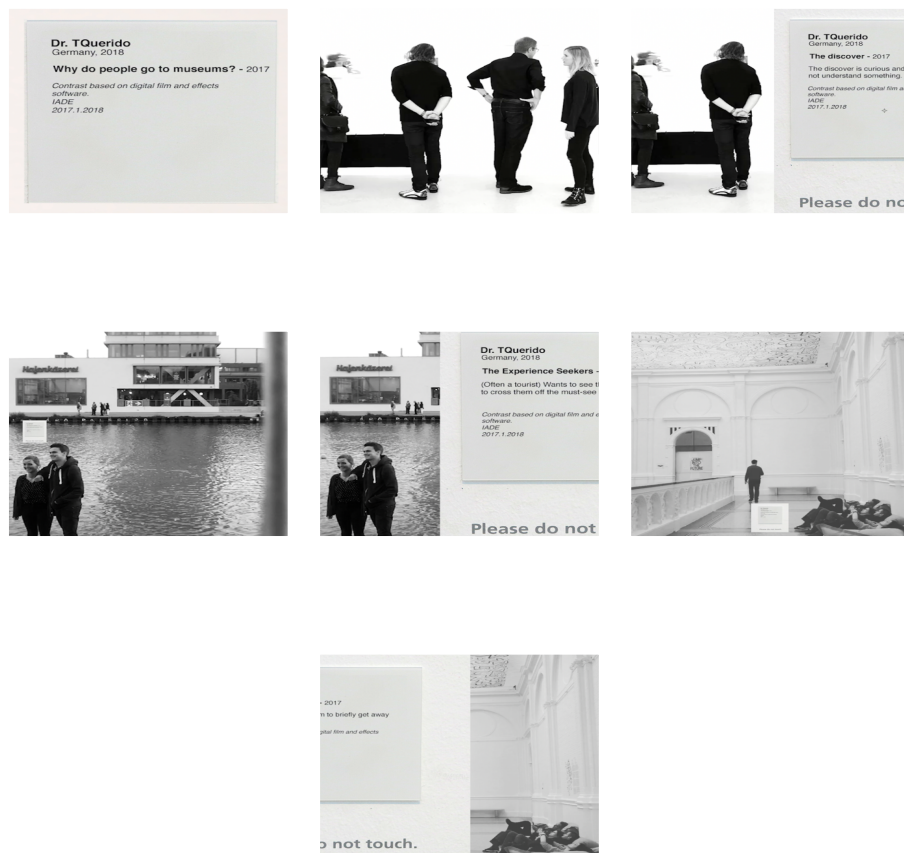


Figure 25. A day at the Museum: Author's film stills.

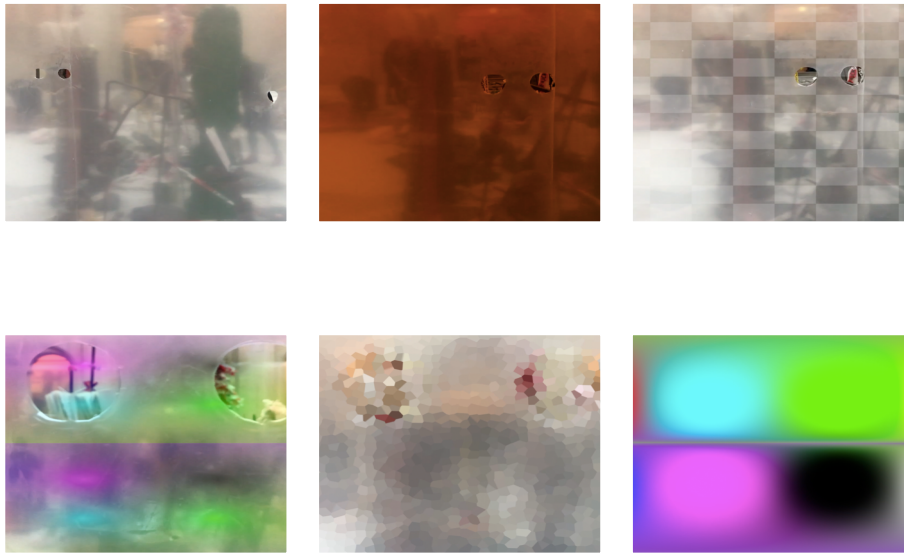


Figure 26. A day at the museum: Author's film stills.



Figure 27. A day at the museum: Author's film stills.

4.6 Stillness

“I can’t tell anybody how to listen or how to look. I certainly can’t tell them what to remember, particularly when I don’t want to remember anything myself.”
(Cage, 1991)

We can all relate to a moment in our lives when quiet, rest and isolation is a good thing. This film is maybe the hardest one to explain since it is an idea of extreme abstractness

and personal sensibility. It is, in many ways, an introverted and introspective need of recharging the self, amplified in a large and outside world.

It is about peace, stillness, whiteness and white noises. It is also about a detached view of what is outside and a form of encouragement from nature for us to detach ourselves from everyday life.

It has also a very chimerical characteristic inasmuch that at a moment we find ourselves on ‘solid grounds’ to jump to the next scene set in the sky. This happens in a state of trance, when we feel as if we are right at that moment between awakeness and sleepiness.

When we are dreaming and, as often happens, have a dim consciousness of the fact and try to wake, do we not say and do things which in waking life would be insane? May we not then sometimes define insanity as an inability to distinguish which is the waking and which the sleeping life? We often dream without the least suspicion of unreality: “sleep has its own world,” and it is often as lifelike as the other. (Carroll, 1960 p. 62)

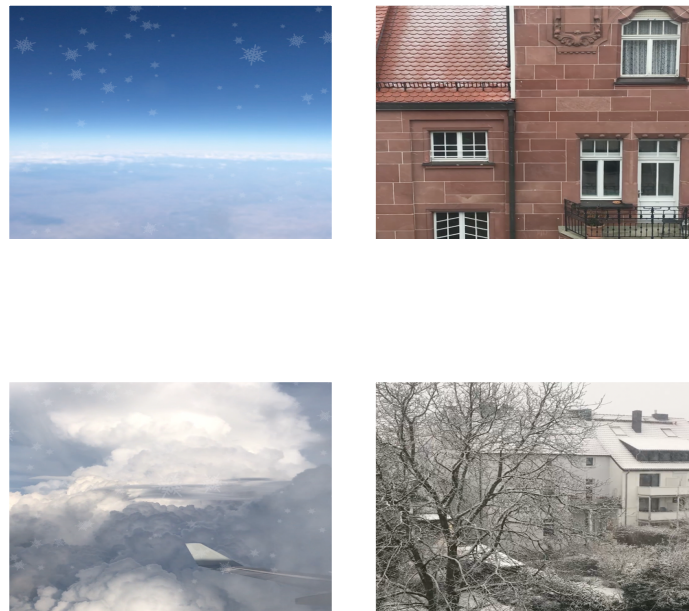


Figure 28. Stillness: Author's film stills.

4.7 The Pure Supremacy of the Feeling

In 1915, Malevich revolutionized the art world with his paintings focused on forms and colors. "It's obvious now that the forms and colors in the paintings that Malevich began painting in 1915, 'are the first instances of form and color.'" (Drutt, 2003, p. 23)

His main goal was to find the pure supremacy of feeling through his work of art. This piece, unlike the others, is completely soundless and illustrates Malevich's idea of the "pure" sentiment. It has no soundtrack so what is left is just the impressions of the viewer in a complete non-objective manner.

"However, in spite of all of the wonderful aspects of Malevich's creative work, the foundation of his artistic activity is foreign to proletarian culture. His entire work conveys the notion that he, as a bourgeois artist, needs art not for serving society but only for the sake of form." (Drutt, 2003, p. 21)

Although based of Malevich's work, this set of films is in no way bourgeois, *au contraire*, it has a quality of motion graphics, a very popular language in our contemporary world. The use of motion graphics meant to explore the supremacy of feeling also in simple and rapid movements, as if one more layer was added to his primacies. At that time the main medium was the still image, in our time it's moving images. So, if we added movement to his use of color and shape, what kind of non-objective reactions would we have?

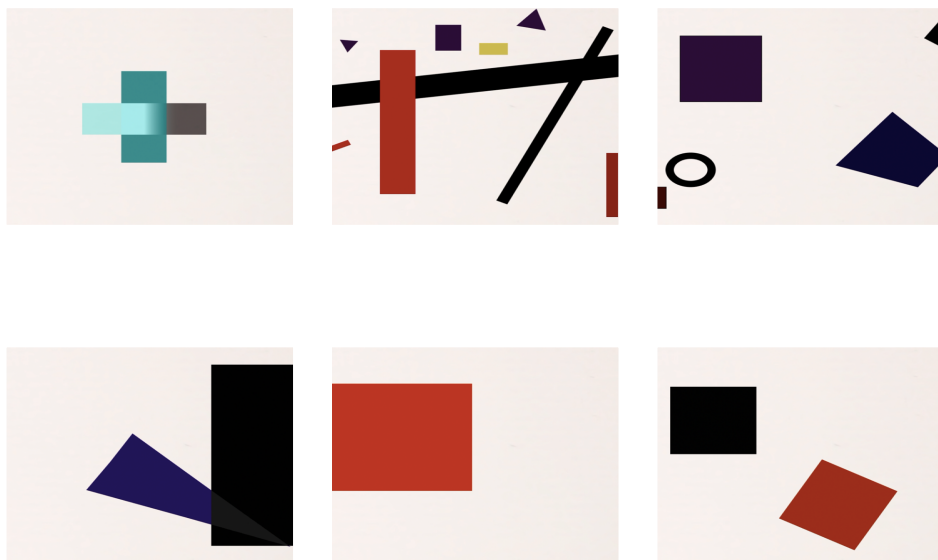


Figure 29. *The Pure Supremacy of the feeling - Color: Author's film stills.*

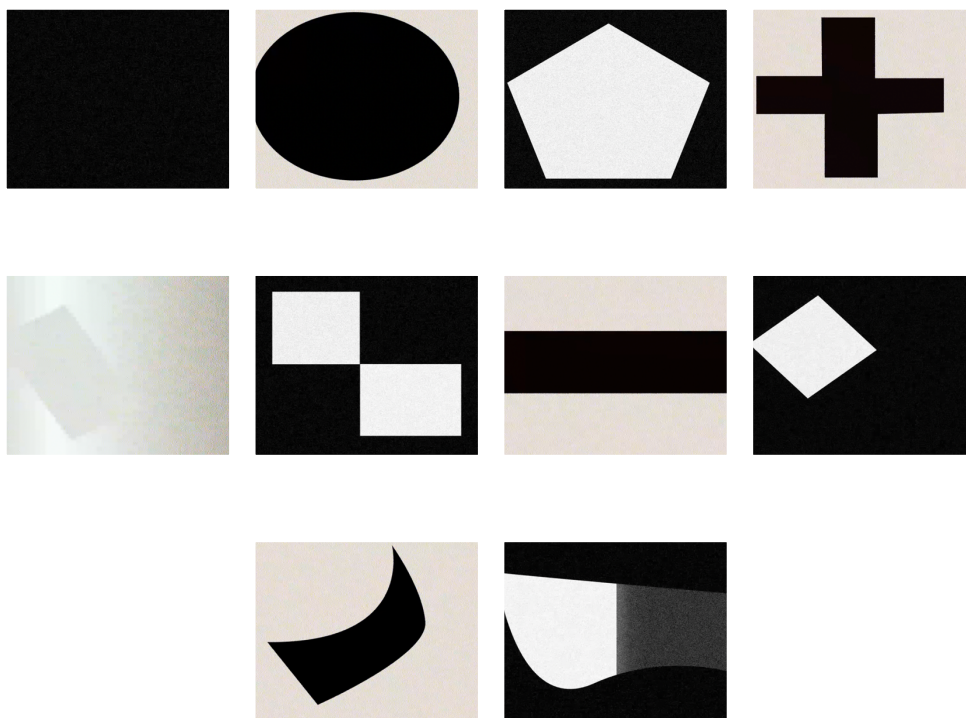


Figure 30. The Pure Supremacy of the Feeling – B&W: Author's film stills.

4.8 End of the World

"The other was always, always, always around the rooms or the patio, along the corridors, looking for the end of the world."¹ (Assis, 1970, p. 26)

Sometimes as we read certain phrases we are inspired by the images that can be created in our minds. This piece was a result of that. The quote above holds such a rich mix of

¹ . The original text read: "O outro andava sempre, sempre, sempre à roda das salas ou do pátio, ao longo dos corredores, à procura do fim do mundo." (author's translation).

imagery and an ironic touch to it that in a way it could represent our constant pursuit of something that we often don't know what is.

Out of boredom, anxiety, anger or ambition we can go looking for things in every corner of the world until we arrive to the end of it. What does this "end" represent? Everything. It could go from death to finding the object of our pursuit.

In the book where the quote was taken from, *O Alienista* (The Alienist), this passage is very short and not so important to the main story. It is only mentioned that the character that was always walking around was a 'crazy' person, who after killing his wife and her lover was admitted into an asylum and was walking around looking for the end of the world.

That might have been his way of dealing with a traumatic episode in his life, or maybe he was looking to gain back control of his emotions or, he could even be searching for his lucidity. As it might be that that is our way of dealing with everyday challenges: looking for our afflictions in every corner of the world until we find the end of it. As mentioned before this project is extremely subjective and relies on impressions.

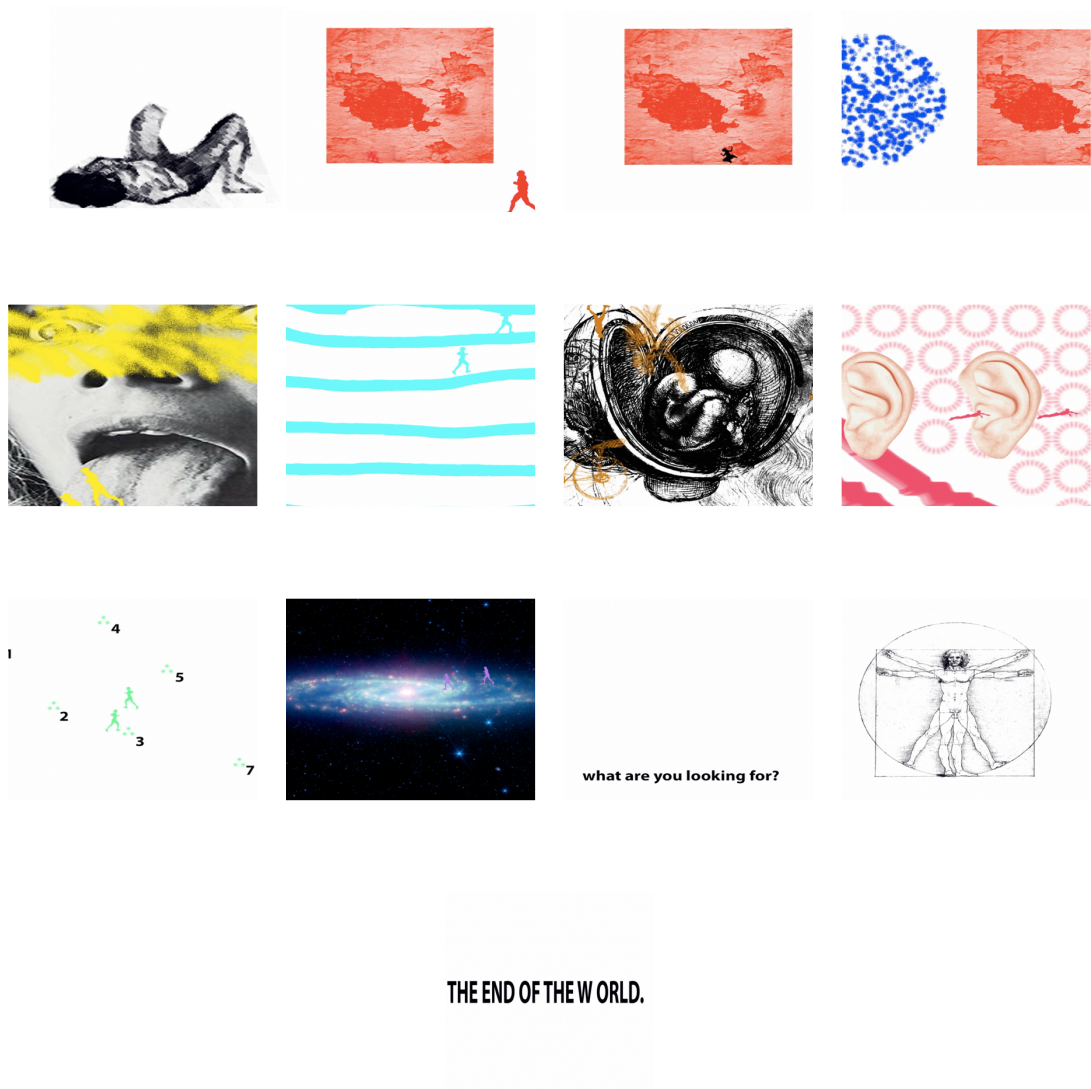


Figure 31. *The end of the world: Author's film stills.*

4.9 ID, Ego, Superego

Freud articulated the general philosophy of the arrangement of the mind in the early 1920's and placed the basics for the three-way partition into ID, Ego and Superego. (Rennison, 2002, p. 29). It ought to be noticed that he originally created a division of the mind into two parts: the conscious and the unconscious. Conversely, he started to comprehend the faults behind so meek a partition and thus protracted this to a tripartite division. (Rennison, 2002, p. 38)

He outlines the ID as: the obscure, unreachable portion of our nature, the little we identify of it we have absorbed from our analysis of the dreamwork and naturally the building of neurotic symptoms and the biggest part of that is of an adverse personality and can be portrayed merely as an opposition to the ego. We approach the ID with analogies:

“we call it a chaos, a cauldron full of seething excitations. [...] It is filled with energy reaching it from the instincts, but it has no organization, produces no collective will, but only a striving to bring about the satisfaction of the instinctual needs subject to the observance of the pleasure principles.”
(Freud, 1961, pp. 105–106)

The ID is chaos and the dark side of our psyche, we are born with the ID while the ego develops consciousness, and the super ego develops in childhood. The implication of the psyche our nature which is government by culture, what we normally think of human nature is not essentially natural at all. Human nature is changeable and historically produced due to the culture it develops with. The psych is a sight of perceptual conflict between the ID and the ego, where the ego meets the claims and conventions of society. The ID demands it wants it now while the ego understands that we can't always have what we want or that what we want is not always what we need. (Freud, 1961, pp. 34–37)

In each of the movies, the tripartite division is reflected in dream-like imagery. From the bees agonizing in a glass, the sensuality of the dancer or the dark background scenes full of turmoil, in each image we can find elements of the impulsive and persuasive nature of the ID. The same happens with the other two movies, where we can see in the images an abstract understanding of how the mind works inside these different levels of consciousness.



Figure 32. ID, Ego, Superego - ID: Author's film stills.

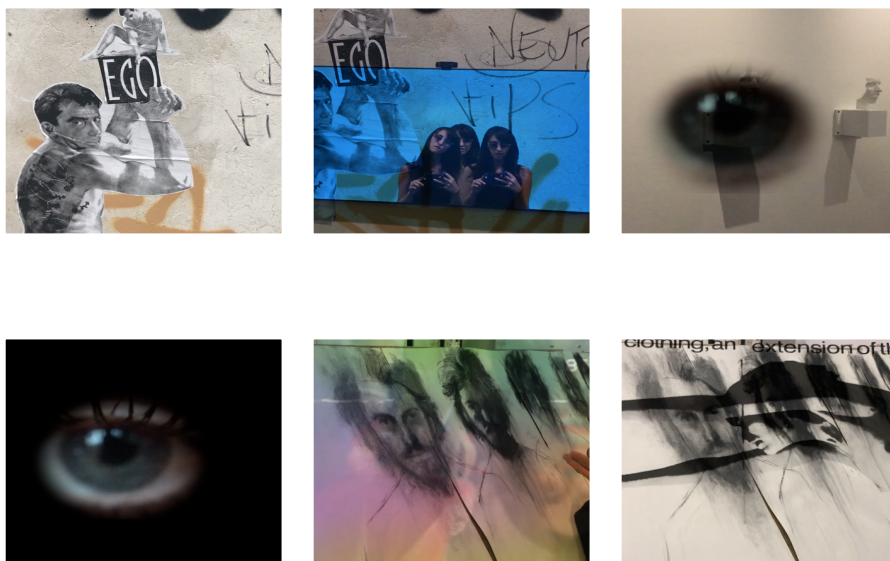


Figure 33. ID, Ego, Superego - Ego: Author's film stills.

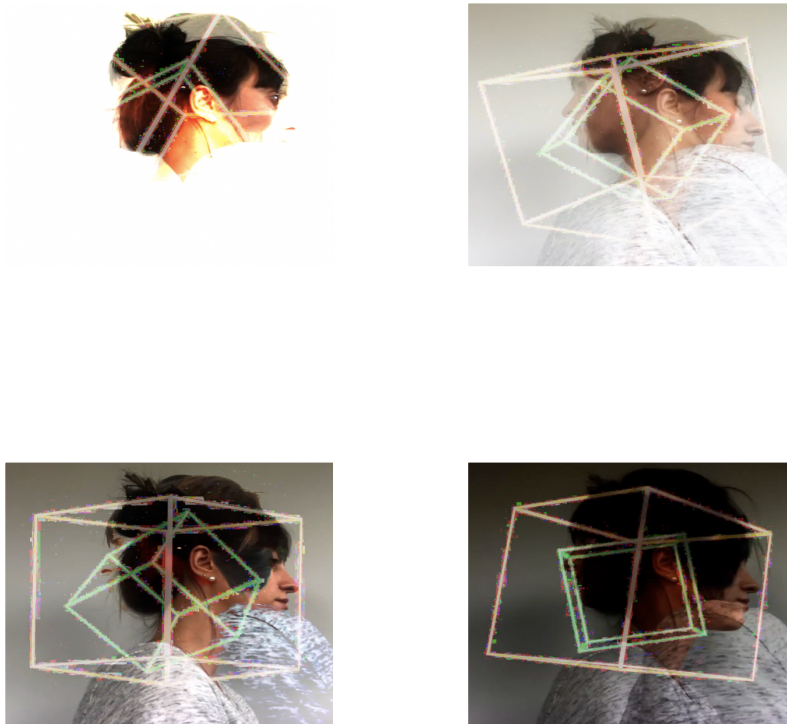


Figure 34. *ID, Ego, Superego - Superego: Author's film stills.*

4.10 Relationships

These movies were a special topic for several reasons. The first was the challenge to treat the subject of love outside of a cliché elm. The second was the fact that using Hegel's dialect, the first obvious choice to opposites in a relationship would be a 'good' and a 'bad' relationship. How do we get out of the obvious? The third was the question of what represents a balance (synthesis) in such a topic as relationships.

The starting inspiration for these films was the movie *Tie Me Up, Tie Me Down* by Spanish director Pedro Almodóvar (1989), for its playfulness and color schemes. The movie is about a victim of kidnapping who eventually falls in love with her kidnapper ('bad relationship'), however the way the director treats the subject is with extreme lightness, and

the bright colors in the frame give it a detachment from how serious the subject actually is in reality — it is not cliché at all.

Characteristics from it like playfulness and bright colors, were taken as inspiration and some were added like the image distortion, the soft background sound of someone singing a relaxed melody, and the intimate perspective of details and close ups to depict a relationship that is not that healthy.

The second movie or the antithesis had still some of the characteristics of the prior: the background noise, intimate perspective of details, and it set out to, as mentioned before, depict a 'good' relationship. However, a simply positive relationship didn't entice any sort of critical thinking. It was decided to use a gay relationship since it appears that in the middle of the 21st century people are still more uncomfortable with seeing gay couples than with a man being aggressive to a woman.

The synthesis was a homage to an idea discussed about relationships, where people could be divided in the style of shapes: some are the basic forms (square, triangles, etc.) and some are nameless forms with pointed ends. The first represents people that live their lives jumping from relationship to relationship and easily 'fit' with most human beings. The other represents those people that have a greater difficulty to enter relationships and always feel like they don't just 'fit' with anyone.

As a matter of fact, all movies slightly display this idea of geometric forms inside the frames.

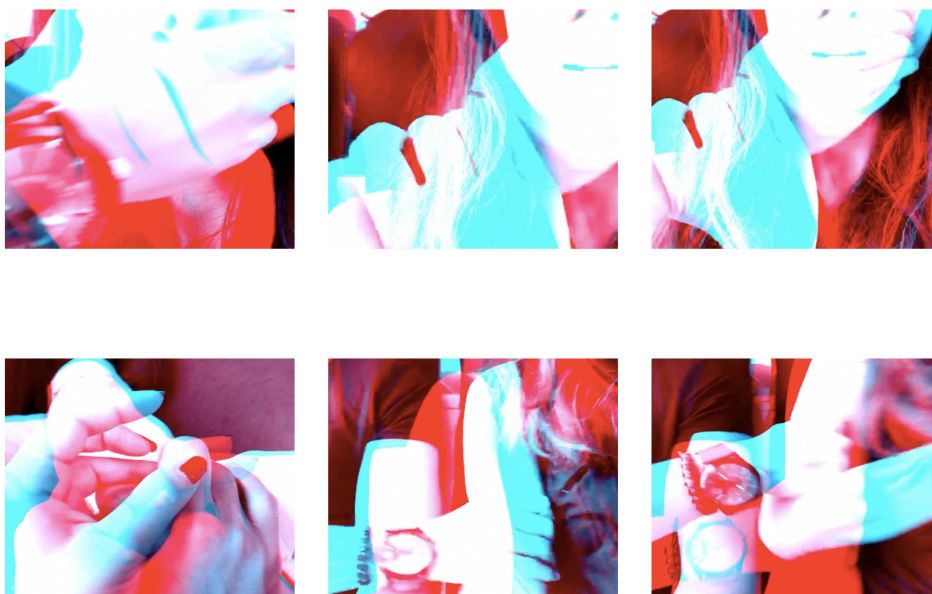


Figure 35. Relationships - Antithesis: Author's film stills



Figure 36. Relationships - Antithesis: Author's film stills.

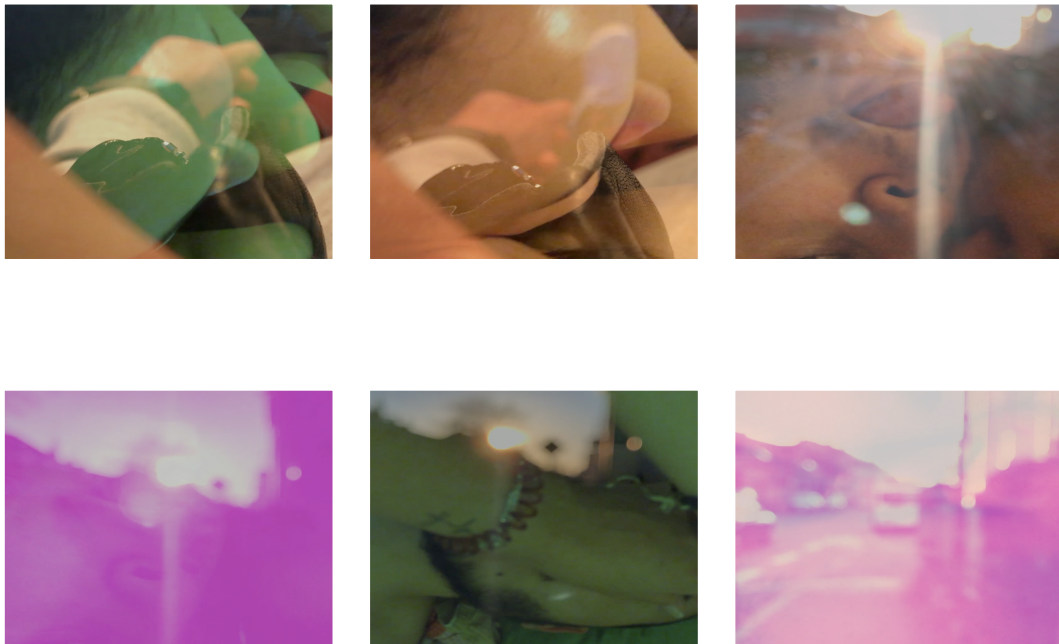


Figure 37. Relationships - Synthesis: Author's film stills.

4.11 Girl by the Window

This is one of the cases mentioned in the Methodology topic, where the dialects of Hegel were not applied. The main idea here was to create different atmospheres with the same movie, e.g. change the color scheme and soundtrack and ask people of different cultures to describe what they thought it was happening in the film as if they were the character. In the last piece we hear the character's voice narrating what she was in fact thinking about on that moment.

Through this experience it was interesting to see how we are easily influenced by music, color mood and specially by what we bring from our own emotional being and reflect onto the images we see. What the girl was thinking about was very simple and what people narrated varied from casual worries like if it was going to rain that day to describing feelings of misplacement and longing.

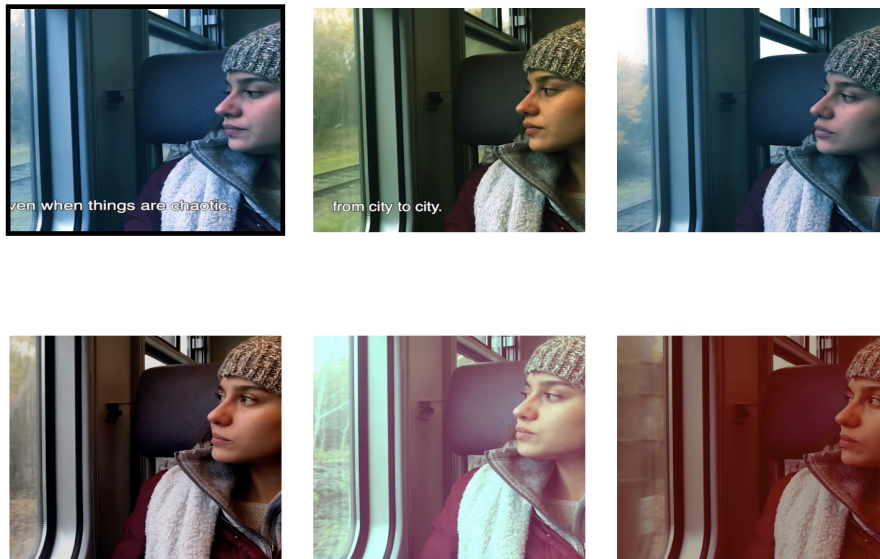


Figure 38. Girl by the Window: Author's film stills.

4.12 Light

“When I hear what we call music, it seems to me that someone is talking, and talking about his feelings, or about his ideas of relationships. But when I hear traffic, the sound of traffic, here on 6th avenue for instance, I don’t have the feeling that anyone is talking. I have the feeling that sound is acting. And I love the activity of sound. What it does is it gets louder and quieter, and it gets higher and lower, and it gets longer and shorter. It does all those things.” (Cage, 1991)

This set of movies offers a parallel between light and the sound described by John Cage in his famous interview quoted throughout this subtitle. Movie, images and everything we see is simply the reflection of light or the lack of it. Starting from this idea, we can see in the movie simply reflections of light as John Cage narrates his experience with sound, so we let light “act”.

“I am completely satisfied with that. I don’t need sound to talk to me. We don’t see much difference between time and space. We don’t know where one begins and the other stops. So that most of the arts we think of as being in time, and most of the arts we think of being in space.” (Cage, 1991)

This idea also helped exploring in the film how light can “talk to us” by itself. Rhythm, frequency, and change of color were explored, giving the film a dynamic movement

between this idea of art being thought of “in space.” instead of “in time”. Cage (1991) goes on to say that:

“Marcel Duchamp, for instance, began thinking of music as being not a time art, but a space art. And he made a piece called *Sculpture Musicale*, which means: different sounds coming from different places and lasting, producing a sculpture which is sonorous, and which remains. People expect listening to be more than listening. And so, they sometimes speak of inner listening, or the meaning of sound.”

There are two specific parts of the film where we see more than just light: we see a sculpture and after a few beats we see an ear. He is talking about sounds and we are discussing the presence of light, the images mentioned before representing the moment where we actually see the shapes of what it is that we are looking at, and yet they represent the external materialism of seeing — the sculpture and the process of hearing and visualizing — like the “inner listening”, we experience “inner seeing”.

“When I talk about music, it finally comes to people’s minds that I’m talking about sound that doesn’t mean anything, that is not inner, but is just outer. And they, these people who understand that, finally say: “you mean it’s just sounds?” — thinking for something to be just being a sound is to be useless. Whereas I love sounds, just as they are. And I have no need for them to be anything more than what they are. I don’t want them to be psychological, I don’t want sound to pretend it’s a bucket or that it is president or that it is in love with another sound. I just want it to be a sound.

There is a remark by Marcel Duchamp which I love very much. He states it as a goal. ‘To reach the impossibility of transferring from one like image to another, the memory imprint.’ (Cage, 1991)

Mainly, the simplicity to which he understands the power and importance of sound was attempted to be reached in this set by changing the main medium. Although the challenge was great, the result is an interesting and transcendental collection of calming imagery.

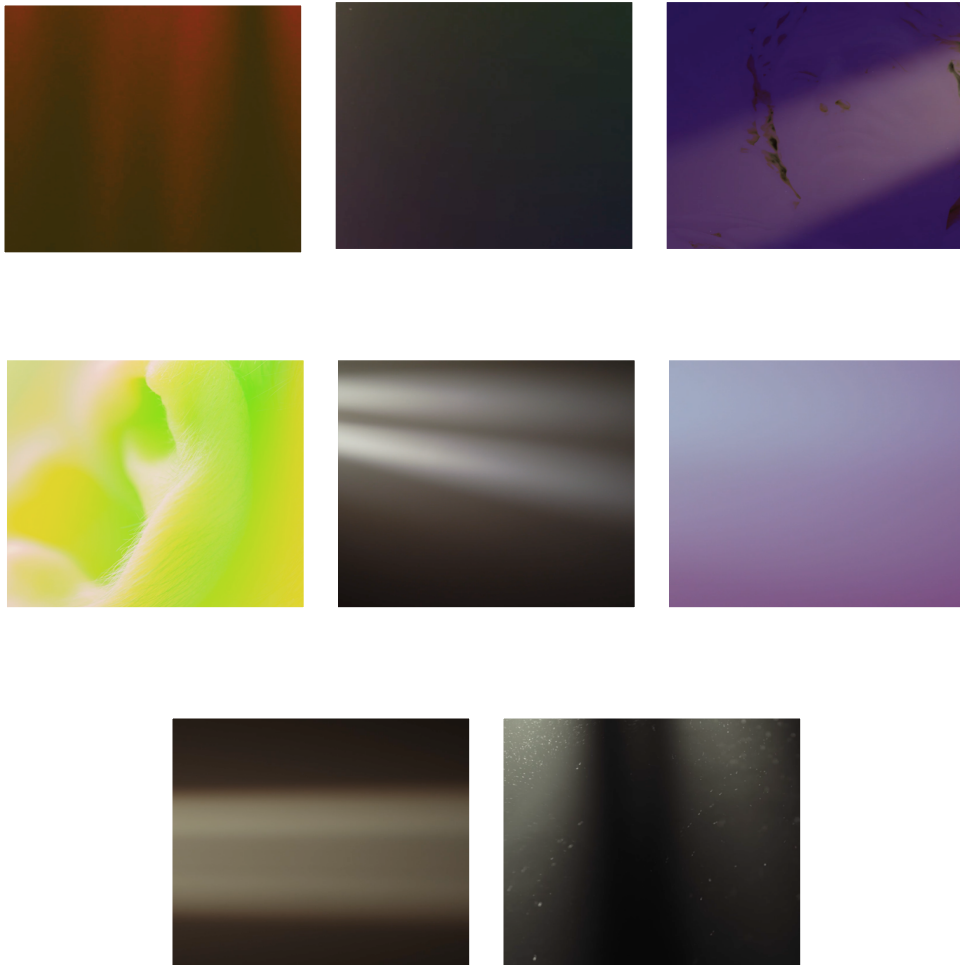


Figure 39. Communication. Authors still

4.13 Crazy

The premise for this movie was quite simple: to question our concept of what it is to be ‘crazy’. In this movie, the focus was towards people that are considered different because their brains function outside of everyday normative. Several studies research the correlation between certain mental illnesses and the genius of creativity: “certain biologically conceived cognitive styles that are peculiar to extraordinary creativity possess common biological

ancestry with certain cognitive styles that are associated with a predisposition to major mental illness.” (Prentky, 2010, p. 95-104).

The movies are contrasts of the way someone sees a images and between someone that has a mind that is ‘a bit different’ might see the same visual.

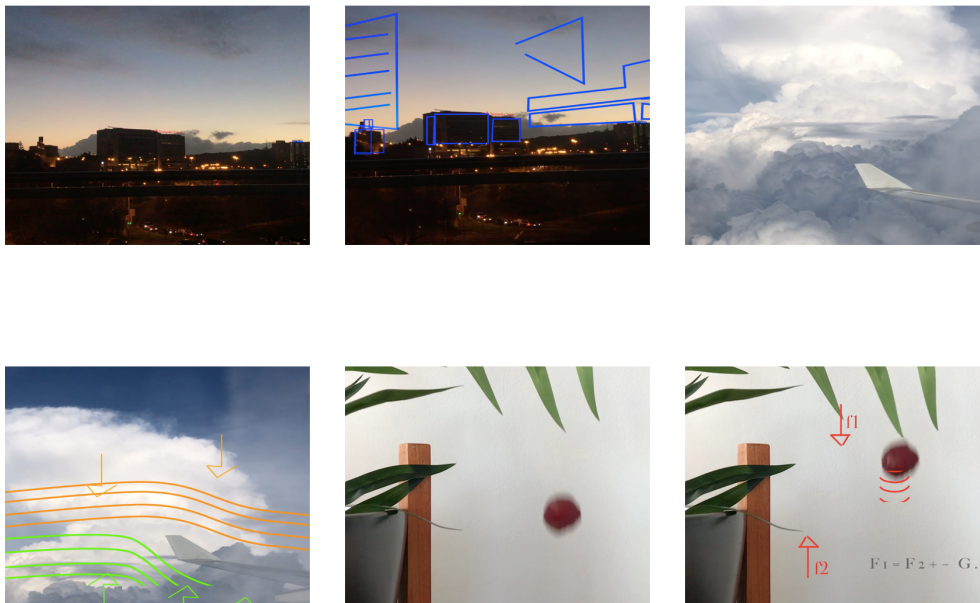


Figure 40. Crazy: Author's film stills.

4.14 Gender Liquidity

The notion of self is constructed by social ideas. This construction begins early, both cognitively and socially, from preschool years and it lasts through late adolescence. (Harter, 1999, p. 02) The idea in this movie is to represent the deconstruction of what it means to be man or woman, here as the gender is the piece of ice and as the ice melts, the gender is deconstructed.

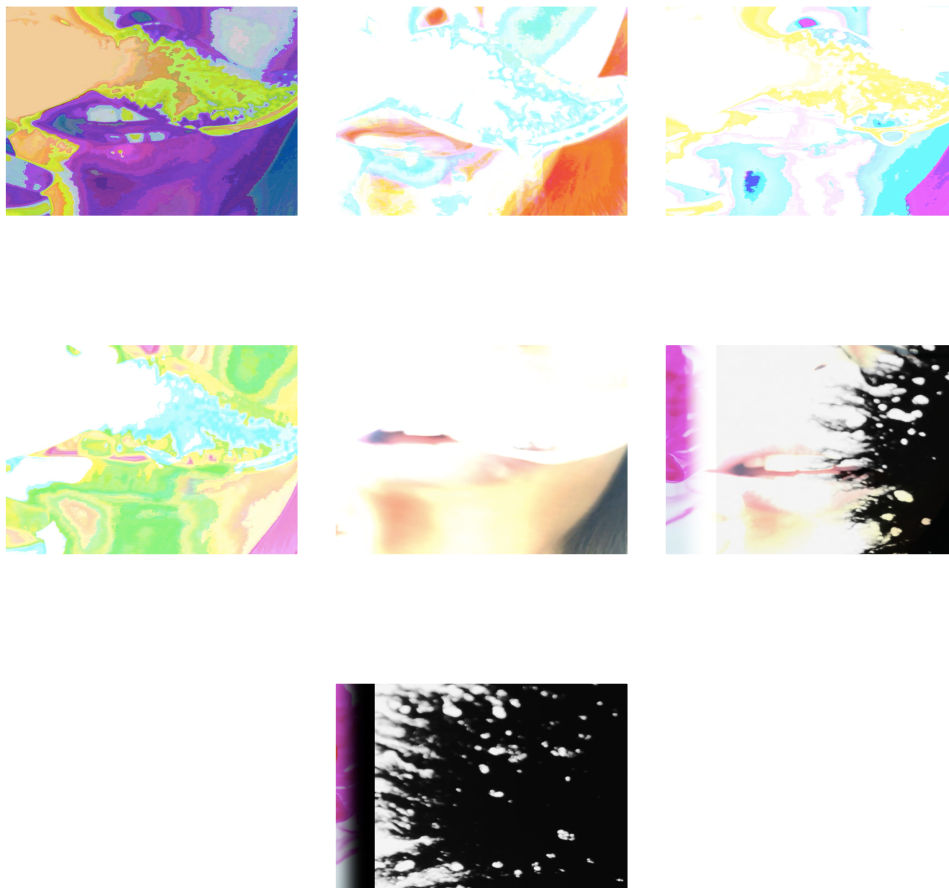


Figure 41. Crazy: Author's film stills.

4.15 Interview

As the project was being developed an interview was made, questioning the artist as a form of explaining its goals. The interview however was made in such way that represents the many different personalities that we have, according to different situations.



Figure 42. Interview: Author's film stills.

Chapter Five

5. Conclusions

“Cinematic techniques flopped if they covered our interaction with truth but were successful if they exposed new levels of the world, adding to human awareness.” (Ministry of Cinema, 2004)

That one phrase could conclude the intention which was followed throughout the process and the (maybe) unconscious utopia in the artist's purpose in wanting to discuss the mentioned topics. By linking distinct areas of knowledge, we create the possibility of reaching new fields and topics that can be very interesting. In a society saturated with stimuli of all kinds it is always important to think about what kind of signals we are used to and whether they are positively influencing our daily actions and thoughts.

In a project as experimental as this one, strong stamp of our own experiences and world comprehension is expected. Often artistic work is by its very designation hypothetical, as it is shaped on a core of partial information, implicates intuition, and investigates new areas. The relation between comprehending and creating gave birth to an ontological study in that it was a dialogue about possibilities. The intentions of the project were already fulfilling from the begging of the project to its completion: different tools acquired through life and experiences were put to use by means of expression, imprinting a personal style and the challenges of defying pre-concepts not only for the self but also for those around us.

Along the process, several conversations were had trying to explain or share what the work was about. These conversations were often with people that came from several backgrounds: doctors, engineers, stay-home 'adults', teenagers, etc. The response was often one of interest, and above all the realization that they hadn't thought about these topics for a long time, if ever.

All the movies have a theoretical footing, but it's also remarkable to experience what someone would feel without having an implied idea of how they should feel. Before they got the rest of the information, what was the emotional response they got to the visuals? Sometimes they were exactly what the artist had in mind, sometimes they were exactly what the artist feared.

The countless variety of styles, images and intensities allowed for a vast and diversified investigation. If considered that each 'someone', with his individual and cultural

"baggage", relates to a picture differently, even if there are common characteristics, the results are infinite.

“Just as you grow into the world, the world grows into you. Not only do you occupy a certain place, but that place in turn occupies you. Its culture shapes the way you see the world, its language informs the way you think, its customs structure you as a social being” (Bradatan, 2014).

Not only did the project toy with the individuals’ “baggage”, or the ‘self’, but it also attempted to incite an exchange between the view and the viewing, resulting in a subjective work for each side of the exchange. Bergson (2004, pp. 4–5) says: “my body is just as the other images, since it is one among others, acts and reacts like other images, receives movement from external images and gives movement back to them.”

Is it conceivable to recognize particular repetition in the visual understandings of diverse persons, notwithstanding cultural and temporal variances? Does each being, despite living in similar societies, age and social classes, have a sole approach, diverse from all others?

The project confirmed the idea that anybody witnessing a message will be predisposed, in a split instant of glancing at the image, both by the organization of several components and also the singular look of each. That implicates that a general impression is shaped in our brains before we even start noticing the first detail. It's alike to how we react to someone’s presence before we know something about them, and later discover it challenging to change our first impression.

The considerations that have been pursued here are as much philosophical, psychological, ontological as they are practical. This project explores the theory and practice at the same time. The capacity of the image, and fresh tactics to perceive this image, is nothing but a boost of the value of thought and existence. Art has the capacity to create better living, just as philosophy and science do.

“Art does not have opinions, art undoes the triple organization of perceptions, affections, and opinions in order to substitute a monument composed of percepts, affects and blocs of sensations that take the place of language” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 176).

Inside the field of visual culture, we conclude that our society and its individuals have their own rhetoric and we see what surrounds us as a reflection of how we are taught to see and what we are taught to see.

“If I look at a Coca-Cola bottle and then look at another Coca-Cola bottle, I want to forget the first one, in order to see the second Coca bottle as being original. And it is original, because it’s in a different position in space and time and light is shining on it differently, so that no two Coca bottles are the same.” (Cage, 1991)

The project has an integrative characteristic that creates connections between many types of interaction, expression, statements, and cognition. It explored meaning and how the creation of meaning is invented. It created a meeting point between science and literature. It expressed itself through the relation between form and interaction.

“It is time that theoretical issues be expressed and debated to provide a forum of intellectual tension out of which meanings spring to life. It is time to debate, to probe the values, to examine the theories that are part of our heritage and to verify their validity to express our times. It is time for the word to be heard. It is time for Words and Vision.” (Vignelli, 1983 cited by Fuller 2004)

As often as not, all of us assess more overall notions of the boundary of our own area, occasionally rejecting to cogitate what is external to our particular range of interest. Frequently theorists suffer for not being artists and the same goes on the contrary.

An image by itself may not have a definite single meaning, however when accompanied of a song and/or style, it might remind the viewer of certain signs – gathering of images that alludes to an unconscious meaning.

"As we have said, it (a sign) shows but doesn't signify anything. It is charged with a particular meaning, with a potential for signifying only through its association with a series of effects in which it is involved. This is how it achieves its particular meaning and, in return, invests with new meaning the context in which it appears." (Mitry, 2000, p. 21)

Finally, this work became the discovery of whether video was capable of creating the sudden sensory motor schema jam — “unity of the viewed and the eye that views in dynamic movement” (Deleuze, 1994, p. 57). People know how to approach motion pictures, until an artist attempts to create a stylized jam in specific works. As Deleuze & Guattari (1994) discussed, the disturbance is shaped by subjective style, the unique procedure of material

quality, and system that permit the disturbance, intrusion in the sensory motor schema and discloses blocs of senses.

“We don’t have to have tradition if we somehow free ourselves from our memories. Then each thing that we see is new. It is so as though as if we have become tourists and that we were living in countries that were very exciting, because we don’t know them.” (Cage, 1991)

Chapter Six

6. References

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