

The Moving Image in the Museum: Real-Time, Technology and the Spectator's Cut

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The art historian Boris Groys has discussed the relationship between the museum and the moving image as a relationship between old and new media. In this model, old media (paintings, sculptures) are viewed as “motionless images” and new media as basically moving images (i.e., images where movement is no longer inferred, but automatic). In the traditional museum, viewers in front of a painting have total control over the time they wish to devote to contemplation. “They can interrupt their examination of a picture at any time and return to it later on [...] the immobile picture will remain in an identical state and is thus constantly available for repeated contemplation,” Groys writes, and continues:

In our culture we have basically two fundamentally different models at our disposal that give us control over the time we spend looking at an image: the immobilization of the image in the museum or the immobilization of the viewer in the movie theatre. Yet both models founder when moving images are transferred into museum surroundings. The images continue to move – but so does the viewer (Groys 2002, p. 25).

There have been two widespread strategies to resolve the antagonism between these two forms of movement, according to Groys. On the one hand, the artist can make the individual video or film sequence as short as possible to ensure that the time the viewer spends in front of the work does not exceed the time a viewer might on average be expected to spend in front of a “good” picture in a museum. The other strategy is to create what Groys calls “motionless films” (2002, p. 25). Andy Warhol’s *Empire State Building* (1964) is exemplary of this mode.¹ The latter filmic strategy “explicitly address[es] the uncertainty caused in the viewer by transferring the moving images into the museum,” Groys contends, because “museum visitors will not be able to say definitively whether the film consists of a

1 Groys doesn’t analyze Warhol’s film any further, and that is perhaps also the reason for his somewhat imprecise description. It might be helpful to distinguish between camera movement, time frame, and the movement of objects within the frame. When Groys calls the film “motionless”, he most likely refers to the lack of camera movement and the barely visible movement of objects. The time frame of the film is eight hours, and due to “invisible” editing and the use of high-speed inception, the film produces movement of objects in the form of changes of lighting transitioning from night to day. In addition, there are many particles and scratches in the film that create all kinds of vivid movements. For the sake of argument, however, Groys’ point should be clear.

moving or a motionless image, since they will always have to admit the possibility that they might have missed certain events in the film” (Groys 2002, pp. 25-26).

My concern is not these “missed events” of “motionless films.” Rather, I am interested in exploring the way the moving image in the museum has turned this space into an experimental environment where the human confronts mediated time or “technical moments” through a specific choreography of experience. My examples to this end are taken from works by Bill Viola, Douglas Gordon, Tobias Rehberger and Olafur Eliasson. The works represent a productive environment that allows a subject to emerge and unfold in accordance with a specific distribution of time and space. They are all examples of the “cinematic turn” in the museum, and more particularly of the turning of the museum into what I will call a “slow space” conditioned by techniques of delay or barely moving light particles.² I contend that the *slow space* presents a particularly good starting point for renewed analysis of the interaction between the spectator and the image in the museum. My approach will describe a tendency present in the museum as well as a new tendency within a certain theoretical development. As the role of the spectator has gained growing significance in the art encounter, phenomenology and its corporeal subject have enjoyed a renaissance.³ Within art history, in particular, George Didi-Huberman’s phenomenology of the art encounter has been influential. Phenomenology is important in this chapter, but this framework should not be seen as final. On the contrary, some of the works analyzed here, in fact, seem to drive us beyond phenomenology.

It moved, didn’t it?

In recent decades there has been a widespread tendency in moving image practices to resort to techniques that alter or slow down the speed of motion in various

2 Many have discussed the “cinematic turn” within the art gallery; it had a great impact around the centennial anniversary of the birth of cinema in 1995 and has continued with great intensity ever since. Today, large-scale cinematic modes of projection have “quantitatively surpassed traditional mediums such as painting and sculpture,” as Tanya Leighton writes in her introduction to *Art and Moving Image* (2008). Thomas Elsaesser (2011) demonstrates this in an overview article. Curator Nicolas Bourriaud talks about the “cinematic mode” as the contemporary museum’s primary “technological mode” (2002, p. 65f). Wik (2001) presents an overview and Birnbaum (2005) talks about “post-cinematic productions” and “the other cinema.” See also the two large catalogs from ZKM (*FutureCinema* and *Iconoclash*), several catalogs from the Documenta exhibitions (especially *Documenta X*), and Giuliana Bruno (2007).

3 While phenomenology traditionally disregarded the role of technology, newer phenomenological approaches to media philosophy like Bernard Stiegler’s and Mark B. N. Hansen’s in particular have sought to renegotiate the role of technology.

ways. Bill Viola's work is exemplary in this regard. His video *The Quintet of the Astonished* (2000) shows five people undergoing intense emotional agony. The action unfolds in ultra-slow motion. It is shot on 35 mm high-speed film at the extraordinary rate of 384 frames per second. The action, which in real time takes less than 30 seconds, is stretched and extended here to last roughly 16 minutes when projected, that is, 32 times slower than normal speed. In feature films, this kind of extreme slow motion may be used for a few seconds to underscore important events; in the Viola exhibition, the slow motion is looped, never-ending and all-encompassing. The relationship to painting is not only activated through the use of ultra slow motion, but also through his use of a classical motif, a "painterly" use of shading and saturated colors, an LCD-screen size resembling that of an average classical painting and, for this particular piece, the screening room is illuminated, avoiding theatrical darkness. Thus, old and new media communicate on many levels.



Ill 1: Bill Viola, The Quintet of the Astonished, 2000; Color video rear projection on screen mounted on wall in dark room; Projected image size: 1.4 x 2.4 m; room dimensions variable. Performers: John Malpede, Weba Garretson, Tom Fitzpatrick, John Fleck, Dan Gerrity. 15:20 minutes; Photo: Kira Perov.

The piece was first presented at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles in 2003 and subsequently at the National Gallery in London.⁴ Something strange happens when these extremely slow-moving images are displayed in museums which are usually devoted to traditional paintings by the old masters. Perhaps in the excitement of seeing the new work of Viola, the spectator rushes past the classical paintings and into the Viola room. At first, the Viola piece looks like a painting; the spectator moves on, and then, suddenly, she catches a glimpse of something out of place – she senses a slight movement. She asks herself, “It moved, didn’t it?” The spectator then returns and places herself right in front of the image, to check one more time. She must “freeze” her body and, in an act of concentration, fix her gaze upon the liquid crystal display. And there it is! After a few seconds, the spectator realizes that what looked like a still image is actually moving.

This *turn* in the experience, which was literally accompanied by a turn of the spectator’s head and body to reposition the eye, is epitomized in the phrase “It moved, didn’t it?” The question addresses an aesthetic difference caused by the technically imposed difference between painting and video. At first, technology plays the role of the invisible component in the encounter. What was visible, something that looked like a painting, is suddenly undermined by the appearance of an “invisible” component, movement. While movement in paintings is inferred, the movement in these images is automatic. Paradoxically, it is the turn and the arrested body of the spectator that enables her to see the barely visible movements. The body’s activity in front of the image grounds the impression of the image, so to speak. The arrested body makes the invisible mark of technology (actual movement) part of the visual experience. Thus, a conditional interaction is occurring between the technical, the invisible, and the bodies of both the spectator and the art work.

In an unexpected manner, the late Bill Viola exposes the ways in which a technical moment can become crucial in the art encounter. This view is actually contrary to two of the most common ways of perceiving Viola’s later artworks. On the one hand, there are the critics who embrace Viola for not foregrounding the technical or constructed aspects of art, which allow it to remain open to spirituality and human emotions, and on the other, there are the critics who align his later works with kitsch, for the same reasons.⁵ I think both positions underplay

4 Bill Viola’s *The Quintet of the Astonished* (2000) is part of *The Passions* (2000-2002), a series of video works which was shown at these events. My reading of Viola here continues my investigation from two previous publications, Røssaak (2009 and 2010).

5 While John Walsh, Hans Belting and Chris Townsend tend to belong to the former group, Rosalind Krauss, Hal Foster and Benjamin Buchloh belong to the latter group. Krauss asserts that Viola “derealizes his medium” as he tends to create videos that look like paintings (see Ro-

the *finesse* of Viola's technical moment. A new phenomenological approach is needed to grasp this.⁶ In *Devant l'image* Didi-Huberman sharpens Merleau-Ponty's notion of the "invisible" as that which gives the image "power" (2005, pp. 17-18). Art historians tend to disregard this force in their positivistic desire to "explain" art. They too often give us, as Didi-Huberman argues, "the impression of an object truly grasped and reconnoitered in its every aspect, like a past elucidated without a remainder. Everything here [in the art histories] seems visible, discerned" (2005, p. 3). Rather than finding certainty in the visible, Didi-Huberman explores the ways in which "the visible and the invisible" work together and condition the gaze (2005, p. 16).⁷ In his examples, which are mostly taken from religious and historical paintings, the visible covers "elements of representation", and the invisible covers "elements of abstraction." In Fra Angelico's *The Annunciation* (1440-41), the invisible is what we first ignore, like the use of a white colored wall behind the figures, but to Didi-Huberman this "stream of luminous particles in one case, a powder of chalky particles in the other" is essential to understanding what he calls "the visual." Indeed, the invisible belongs to the world of representation, but it "intensifies it beyond its limits, it deploys something else, it reaches the spectator by other paths". The invisible doesn't have to be abstract; on the contrary, "it offers itself as an almost tangible blow, as a visual face-off." It strikes the spectator with a strong sense: "there's white" (2005, pp. 17-18). Didi-Huberman goes on to call its power "virtual" to suggest how "the regime of the visual tends to loosen our grip on the 'normal' (let's say rather: habitually adopted) conditions of knowledge". The role of the invisible exposes a "not-knowledge" crucial for understanding the phenomenology of

salind Krauss on Viola in *Art since 1900. Modernism Antimodernism Postmodernism*, ed. Foster, Hal *et al.*, 2004, p. 656).

- 6 Merleau-Ponty's insights are useful despite his at times limited views on many of the pioneers of cinema and media-based art forms that foreground the technical. He mentions Marey, Muybridge, Duchamp and the art of cinema more generally as unable to find expression for Being's relation to itself in its primordial unfolding. They petrify the living. See Merleau-Ponty: "Eye and Mind" in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader*, ed. G.A. Johnson, Evanston, IL, Northwestern U P, see also Lyotard's critique of these aspects in Merleau-Ponty's work, in Lyotard's "Philosophy and Painting in the Age of Their Experimentation" in *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader* p. 331f. That is why we need a new phenomenology concerning these questions. This kind of phenomenology is emerging in Mark B. N. Hansen's, Didi-Huberman's, Bernard Stiegler's and Daniel Birnbaum's work.
- 7 Didi-Huberman theorizes the gaze as an embodied eye, perpetually subject to projection and transference (in the technical sense of Freud's *Übertragung*). Significantly, Didi-Huberman seems to use a series of Freudian concepts, in particular "the symptom," to evoke what he calls "the process of figurability" which breaches the complacency of a unity of form. The subject and the object merge in these strange temporalities.

the gaze, “which the historian doesn’t quite know what to do with because it is graspable only through his own gaze” (2005, pp. 18-19).

When I address the invisible as a technical moment in this phenomenology, I am pushing Didi-Huberman’s notion into new terrain. But I believe Viola’s use of motion, which is literally barely visible, has many parallels to Fra Angelico’s use of white. The barely visible motion in Viola’s work intensifies the representation beyond its limits and reaches the “spectator by other paths” – and to a certain degree, depends on the *path* taken by the spectator. And the discovery of this slow motion appears as a sudden, intermittent and returning event, because it is “there” and the next moment it is “not there”. It is perhaps just the figure’s blink of an eye. The barely moving figures in the video lead the spectator to be aware of her own motions in front of the screen. To see the image adequately, the spectator must work with her own body’s orientation. Each step, each wavering of the body’s position, gives the spectator a different aspect of the Violian universe, and these aspects are again dependent on the exact moment of entering the orbit of the piece.

In the beginning of the loop, the (moving) image looks completely still, like a photograph or a painting. It takes almost two minutes before a tiny movement becomes visible – a fearful grimace appears on the face of one of the five figures in the image. A few seconds later, a character blinks, but in this extreme slow motion, the blink is transformed to appear as the contemplative gesture of closing the eyes to think. The movements are so small that the spectator has to remain completely immobile to be able to see them. If the spectator moves too much, the movements caused by the spectator’s body will make it impossible to observe the tiny increments of motion taking place in the image. Summarily, movement is pulled out of the spectator in two ways: first literally, because she has to pause completely to see the movements; it is as if the piece were saying: “If you move, you won’t be able to see me!”; and second, psychologically or rather thermodynamically, because it is as if the energies from the spectator’s own bodily movements as they come to a standstill are taken up elsewhere, up on the screen in front of her. It is as if the energies or the thrust of the spectator’s own movements as they are slowed down and halted reappear in the movements on the screen, as a molecular continuation of the spectator’s own bodily forces and energies. Right at the moment she is about to freeze completely, the spectator is imbued with a feeling of sharing, of coexistence, or perhaps of a communion with the other, with the figures on the screen. The exterior becomes interior. As the spectator halts, the inner energy that caused her to move is sucked up by the screen and is appropriated by what now seems to be the barely visible movements of the figures on the screen. But this is as much a technical transduction as an emotional transduc-

tion, because the “communion” between the spectator and image is instigated by a technically-induced motion that strengthens all the other “transportations”.

Thus, the zone between the spectator and the screen becomes a *situation* and not simply an optical field to be discerned once and for all. It is an existential situation where energies circulate and are exchanged. The haptic force of the situation stems from the fact that the arrested body *realizes*, so to speak, what is going on, on a level beyond the reach of the eye alone. Energies that were felt or perhaps not felt, because they were unfolding on a level unattainable by conscious apprehension, appear in front of the spectator, as if they were embodied elsewhere, on a screen in a museum. The way the image is temporally stretched, enhanced and expanded on the screen through a radical act of slow motion takes care of and caresses these energies with a rhythm more graspable by the spectator’s body than her eye. It is as if they engage in a *pas des deux*, but gradually only the image moves, not the body of the spectator.

The Spectator’s Cut

In the Scottish video artist Douglas Gordon’s most famous work, *24 H Psycho* (1993), the technical moment reveals itself differently than in Viola’s piece. The “invisible” is still related to manipulated movements, but we are instead now dealing with spaces and spacings – between frames and between screens. In *24 H Psycho*, Gordon “stretches” Hitchcock’s 110 minute classic *Psycho* (1960) to monstrous proportions, now lasting 24 hours. Originally, Gordon used a prepared Panasonic Video Cassette Recorder. Its pause button was fixed by adhesive tape so as to replay *Psycho* at only 2 frames per second; and each of the film’s 150,400 frames appears as in a slide motion show.⁸ This explicit use of the VCR also reflects upon a new media culture’s altered access to the moving image.⁹ His reprogramming of found footage navigates through the contemporary technosphere in an archaeological way. How can we access the image today? Gordon’s technical constraint confronts the old film culture of the movie theatre with the possibilities for time/space manipulation found in new media and installational practices on a technical (from film to VHS), aesthetic (from narrative cinema to art object), analytical (from normal speed to slow speed) and emotional level (from the memory of a specific film to a feeling of what film is or can do). His piece re-

8 The original installation of *24 H Psycho* has in all subsequent gallery installations been based on a DVD-version of this slowed down VHS instantiation of the film.

9 The curator Nicolas Bourriaud’s term “post VCR art” is used to convey the fact that, like films (played on a VCR), exhibitions are also becoming “disparate, zappable little programmes” (Bourriaud, Nicolas [1998] 2002a. *Relational Aesthetics*).

flects a new film culture. Gordon said in an interview: “[We live in a] different film culture, a replay culture, and a slow-motion take on things” (Gordon quoted in Dodd 1996). This assertion refers to a media landscape in transition. Gordon’s remediation of Hitchcock partakes of a reflection on a new image processing culture, where, to a large degree, access to the pause and freeze-frame buttons refashions our relations to time and the moving image.

While most narrative fiction films arrange the relationship between story time and narrative time according to long-standing rules and (Hollywood-style narrative) codes of time-control which most effectively convey the plot, Gordon shows how small changes in the tempo can totally displace an entire regime of time-control. Gordon himself calls the film “a time readymade”. “In appropriating extracts from films and music, we could say, actually, that we are creating time readymades, no longer out of daily objects but out of objects that are part of our culture.”¹⁰

Gordon’s found footage material is given over to other modes of sensation not as easily available in a movie theatre setting. A cultural iconography is *differently* possessed. Indeed, his delayed cinema is a perverse cinephilia, but it is also an analysis of the mind in a new film culture. If the unconscious, as Jacques Lacan asserts, exists somewhere in between the personal and the collective, Gordon’s spectator wanders in a high-tension zone between the *psyche* and society. Gordon turns the film, or rather the image, into a “rend”, as Didi-Huberman would say. This untimely and perhaps painful rupture of the original’s continuity edit installs an uncanny element of discontinuity in its midst, and renders the visible (normal motion and storyline) illegible. The technically constrained delay between images puts the spectator in immediate contact with something “invisible”. The piece’s slow pace doesn’t simply reveal the film’s invisible or hidden principle (24 “invisible” fps), but also an “invisible” aspect or the other side of the image – perhaps dream images, or remembered images.

Gordon evokes a slow coming-to-mind of an archive of emotions and lost traces. Here, the helplessly frustrated face of the fictional character Marion Crane is turned into a scopophilic slide-motion study revealing heretofore unseen dimensions of the already hyper-iconic apparition of a female superstar. The real (but now deceased) actress Janet Leigh tends to replace the character she plays in the film. It is as if the remembered version of the image is turned into an unfamiliar *return* of the repressed through a new aspect of the viewed image, which is now bereft of the safety of a narrative horizon. The image has taken on a new

10 Douglas Gordon, “A New Generation of Readymades,” interview by Christine van Assche, *Art Press*, No. 255, March 2000.

intensity and a new visibility that escapes scripting.¹¹ Janet Leigh's white female face is now accessible beyond the regulatory technique of a normal and thus narrative speed. Each arrest of the image foregrounds the film's photographic and indexical quality but, on the other hand, the machinic sliding of ever new frozen moments, has a hypnotic or regressive quality. The new tangibility of the evasive moments of Hitchcock's original is now emblemized into a rather dreamlike state. In a telling passage on how to regain a naïve and open encounter with the classical arts, Didi-Huberman writes something that is equally viable when confronting *24 H Psycho*:

we must try, before the image, to think the negative force within it [...] There is a work of the negative in the image, a "dark" efficacy that, so to speak, eats away at the visible (the order of represented appearances) and murders the legible (the order of signifying configurations). From a certain point of view, moreover, this work or constraint can be envisioned as a regression, since it brings us, with ever-startling force, toward a this-side-of, toward something that the symbolic elaboration of artworks has covered over or remodeled (pp. 142-143).

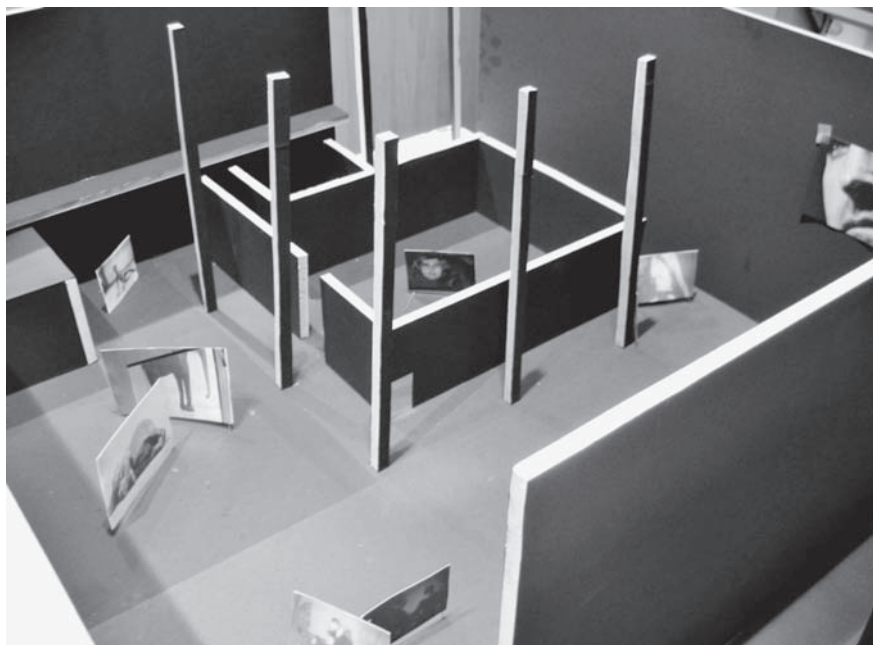
Gordon's technically produced regression opens up the image toward a new geography. Each tends to be split into an image seen and an image remembered, and the remembered image doesn't only refer to the memory of Hitchcock's *Psycho*, but as much to the picture puzzle Freud talks about in *Die Traumdeutung* (1900). The images remembered swell and conflate with the intense or evanescent visuality of dream images. The dream is, as Freud asserts, "differently centered."¹² This otherness breaches elements of meaning, objects and figures, and produces altered intensities and values. When this paralogic takes charge of the impression, the paradoxical law of "the insistent exception" or the "sovereignty of that which excepts itself in the visible as well as in the legible" invests everything, to quote Didi-Huberman (p. 147).

In the large Gordon retrospective entitled *Between Darkness and Light* at Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg outside Berlin in 2007, the dream-work dimension is taken even further. Here sixteen of his moving image works were shown simultaneously in what has been called Germany's largest black box.¹³

11 Laura Mulvey writes about a similar transformation happening to Ingrid Bergman as she revisits Bergman's performance in *Viaggio in Italia* after her death (Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second: Stillness and the Moving Image*, 2006). Raymond Bellour's *Entre l'images* (1990) and Victor Burgin's *The Film Remembered* could also be conferred in this connection. Roland Barthes' discussion of the relationship between film and photography in *La Chambre Claire* (1980) is formative to these discussions.

12 Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 305f.

13 For details, see the catalog, *Douglas Gordon: Between Darkness and Light*, ed. / curator: Holger Broecker, 2007. These large black box installations can also be analyzed in Viola's multiple screen installations, like *Angels for the New Millennium* or *Going Forth by Day*. While Viola's



Ill 2: *The Douglas Gordon Retrospective, Between Darkness and Light, 2007. Exhibition design overview of Wolfsburg Kunstmuseum. Photo: Wolfsburg Kunstmuseum.*

The first thing that strikes the visitor is the stark darkness and one's subsequent confusion and loss of orientation. The walls, the floor and the ceiling are totally black, and all sense of ground is temporarily lost. The fact that the looped found footage video *10ms-1* (1994) of a shell-shocked man unable to rise up from the ground is the first image confronting the spectator only adds to this feeling of unease. As the spectator regains a sense of orientation, he is able to take in some of the large screens hanging from the ceiling, like *24 H Psycho*. The retrospective, which always implies a repetition, exhibits all the major works of Gordon, and they all relate somehow to the history of cinema (science, peep shows, and the silver screen). The technical moment, the constrained delay between images in *24 H Psycho*, is here repeated on a larger scale, as the spectator's contingent navigation between several films. As the spectator turns his head and moves in between the suspended screens, he edits an *oeuvre* of images into an expanded film of the "unknown," uncanny and fragmented, the never-seen-before – even if

installations (their mnemonic effects) relate to an early modern culture, Gordon's installations refer to modern or a postmodern popular culture.

each sequence taken separately is in itself “known.” The “spectator’s cut” in this situation resembles not only the technicity of the film edit, but also the technical constraint imposed on *Psycho* in Gordon’s prepared version of the film. The spectator’s cut between the screens instantiates, and thus embodies, the technical moment of *24 H Psycho*. This displaced technicity, the spectator as an editing machine, produces a crucial part of the aesthetic experience.

Gordon’s use of the exhibition space is important, as well. He uses multiple screens, and every image comes in at least two versions. Bodily – physically and emotionally – the spectator works his way through a multiplicity of interconnected images. *24 H Psycho* is projected on large screens hanging from the ceiling. The rear-side of the screen presents a reversed version of the film, like a return or a remembered version of the film. Thus, every screen can be accessed from both sides: a correct and a reverse side – a real side and a dream side, so to speak.

This doubling occurs in many of the installations at the Wolfsburg Museum: both *Hysterical*, 1994, and *Between Darkness and Light (after William Blake)*, 1997, are projected on screens accessible from both sides. *Black and White (Babylon)*, 1996, and *Play Dead: Real Time*, 2003, are projected onto two tilted screens using two projectors. The two projections are desynchronized according to different schemes: speed and focus may be slightly altered. The special use of the screens with all their effects of distortions, doublings and desynchronized multiplications of the image turn them into what Joanna Lowry calls “three-dimensional hallucinatory objects” (Lowry, 274). They become objects *and* time machines.

Editing in Space

The activities of the viewer produce a choreography that interacts with the multiplication of images and screens. The passage in between the extremely slow moving images follows a choreography that is spontaneous and personal, *as well as* associative and collective. The way the viewer walks in between the screens creates an additional montage dependent on the inclinations and the twists and turns of the body of the spectator. As far as editing is concerned, this is not simply a montage of discontinuity, but a new screen-body interaction which installs another rhythm aligned with the body of the spectator rather than the flow of a predetermined narrative.

The way the screen-body interaction simulates editing enhances the uncanny dimension of conflating the viewer organism with a machine. Each new view in the influential environment of the gallery creates a new emotional passage. You look away, you look forward, you move back, or continue in another direction,

and these actions are like cuts in the cinema. Literally, the viewer walks in between the images, and this motion becomes like an emotional passage into a time/space that is inaccessible in a movie theatre. Bourriaud has talked about a new “director’s art,” turning the contemporary exhibition/exposition into “a filmless camera, or a ‘still short-movie’.” He writes:

The [installation] work does not (offer) itself as a spatial whole that can be scanned by the eye, but as a time span to be crossed, sequence by sequence, similar to a still short-movie in which the viewer has to evolve by himself (Bourriaud 2002a, p. 73).

It is as if the cinematic turn in the art gallery has foregrounded the cinematic technique of the cut *in space*. The artist Doug Aitken is even more explicit on this “technical turn.” He interviewed 26 artists from Carsten Höller to Pierre Huygh and Olafur Eliasson on how they use the exhibition space to construct an “influential environment.” Aitken’s key question to the artists is: “Do you conceive of the exhibition space as a way of editing the viewer’s experience?” (Aitken and Noel 2006, p. 23). Basically, the interviews demonstrate how “editing” and the cinematic have replaced a fatigued modernistic art discourse concerned with “objecthood” (Michael Fried) and “medium specificity” (Clement Greenberg).¹⁴

The turn toward editing and the cinematic, both in theory and in art practice, has precursors among architects such as Le Corbusier and Siegfried Giedion and the great theorist of cinematic montage, Sergei Eisenstein, whom they read. In a significant passage, Eisenstein talks about how the montage principle of cinema was prefigured by the way the Greeks constructed their sacred places such as Acropolis as a physical passage through an architectural landscape.

[When talking about cinema], the word path is not used by chance. Nowadays it is the imaginary path followed by the eye and the varying perceptions of an object that depend on how it appears to the eye. Nowadays it may also be the path followed by the mind across a multiplicity of phenomena, far apart in time and space, gathered in a certain sequence into a single meaningful concept; and these diverse impressions pass in front of an immobile spectator.

In the past, however, the opposite was the case: the spectator moved between [a series of] carefully disposed phenomena that he absorbed sequentially with his visual sense.¹⁵

14 To paraphrase Hal Foster: the cinematic turn has threatened the disciplinary order of modern aesthetics in which visual art is held to be strictly spatial. See Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde and the End of the Century*, p. 40. To Foster, the attack on objecthood and the spatial order of modernism begins with minimalist art.

15 S. Eisenstein, *Montage and Architecture*, 1989 [1937], p. 111. To Eisenstein, montage was actually considered a trans-artistic language that investigated ways of leading a viewer through a series of juxtapositions of images (or shots) to construct a new synthetic sensation or “concept,” as he sometimes called it. The montage principle is malleable. It can use a spatial configuration to create a temporal sensation, or a temporal dimension to create a spatial dimension. The point is made

Architecture and cinema meet in Eisenstein's "imaginary path" and Le Corbusier's idea of the *promenade architecture*. Indeed, Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye at Poissy has been likened to "an optical instrument that turned the mobile experience of space into an editing process" (Deriu 2007, p. 38), and Beatriz Colomina writes "[his] house is no more than a series of views choreographed by the visitor, the way the filmmaker effects the montage of a film" (1991, p. 114). Giedion's classic work *Bauen in Frankreich* uses a conscious juxtaposition of photographs of views and elements of buildings to reveal "the potential of architecture as a mobile viewing platform" (Deriu 2007, p. 51). To him, "Neither space nor plastic form counts, only RELATION and INTERPENETRATION!" (Giedion in Deriu 2007, p. 44). Significantly, David Deriu points to a crucial difference between Eisenstein's "Montage and Architecture" and Giedion's book in this respect:

[W]hile Eisenstein's walker/spectator was bound to follow a set route and recombine visual fragments into a predetermined whole, Giedion's ideal subject was free to roam through space and edit the resulting impressions according to his/her own subjective responses (Deriu 2007, p. 51).

In view of these considerations, Gordon's installational practices become very complex. Here, what is at stake is not only architecture as a "mobile viewing platform", but an architectural landscape where each object in itself constitutes a moving image projection. The landscape becomes a delirious formation. The viewer gets more or less lost in a very disorienting experience of cinematic objects. Additionally, this space does not, as Deriu contends, follow a set route, like in Eisenstein's example. There is no predetermined whole here. Each new impression, each step in the exhibition, alters the whole in a more or less arbitrary way, construing an open-ended *interactive* montage experience.

Giuliano Bruno thinks that the contemporary museum visitor traverses a haptic path:

She who wanders through an art installation acts precisely like a film spectator absorbing and connecting visual spaces. The installation makes manifest the imaginative paths comprising the language of filmic montage and the course of the spectatorial journey. If, in the movie theatre, the filmic-architectural promenade is a kinaesthetic-process, in the art gallery one literally walks into the space of the art of memory and into architecturally produced narrative. One's body traverses sites that are places of the imagination, collected as fragments of a light space and recollected by a spectatorial motion led by emotion. Ultimately then, the form of the art installation reproduced the haptic path that makes up the very museographic genealogy of cinema (Bruno 2007, p. 28).

very clearly in Eisenstein's fairly unknown sketch for the article "Montage and Architecture" from 1937.

Bruno's argument covers elegantly the experience at play in works by artists such as Douglas Gordon, but her strong reliance on a cinema centered discourse may be limiting when it comes to understanding works that use a cinematographic setup to address other concerns, such as the real-time experience of television and the internet.

The Real-Time Experiment

Both the German artist Tobias Rehberger and the Danish artist Olafur Eliasson rely on a cinematic-architectural promenade, but they seem to address other concerns than those of Gordon and Viola. The cinematic iconography, even the image itself in any ordinary sense, is eradicated, but their use of immersion through the use of changing light sources places them in relation to the cinematic and, perhaps even more so, in relation to the televisual and the internet.

Tobias Rehberger's piece *81 Years* (2002) looks at first like a light sculpture, a screen showing a color. Why is it called *81 Years*? This is a computer-generated "film," where the colors projected onto the screen are the result of a computer program that scans all the nuances of the color spectrum from one end to the other, 2.6 million different colors, with unprecedented slowness. It takes eighty-one years for the work to process all its computer-generated changes. A curious paradox in this experiment is the fact that the computer-generated color nuances are too fine to be perceived by the human eye, and the time span is too long, indeed, it is inhuman, even if it pretends to encompass an average Western human life of eighty-one years. As Margrit Brehm reminds us, *81 Years* couldn't be exposed on celluloid. It would weigh thousands of tons. "Its long duration alone clearly places the work in the realm of electronic media," she writes (Brehm 2002, p. 43). Each image is created in the very instant of its appearance, the result of a feat of algorithmic calculation.



Ill 3: Tobias Rehberger, 81 years, 2002. Projector, Speakers, Computer. Photo: Marc Domage, Paris. Courtesy: neugerriemschneider, Berlin.

The viewer is put in front of a universe created entirely by a machine, and the finest nuances are in the emissions of light perceivable only by a non-human eye. To be able to actually see the color changes, the spectator must leave the work and come back some time later. This strange and unusual appeal to a release, to an engaged non-commitment or non-looking, or simply to leaving the work, has to do with the work's experiment on the theme of "real-time" and the televisual. *81 Years* utilizes the technical possibilities of new real-time media to create a film the length of which is a function of logic, a mathematically precise calculation. Indirectly, it addresses the information order of culture and turns its most crucial characteristic, the logic of "real-time", into an absurdity, or more significantly, into an intolerable challenge. In an almost tyrannical way, the work confronts the viewer with a "real time" that is incompatible with her relational reference to an experienceable lifetime.¹⁶ "A challenge is issued to refuse to allow the real time of one's own viewing (which is simultaneously one's lifetime) to be subordinated to the inalienable, frustrating real time of electronics," Brehm writes (2002, p. 44). Implicitly, the all-encompassing real-time, *lifetime*, span of this experiment puts the actual viewing time of the piece into a curious perspective. Here, the real time of the film and the real time of viewing will finally have to part. Sooner or later, the viewer will have to make a "cut" so to speak, and leave. The technicity of the work, which in this case is not simply a technical "moment", but rather a *lifetime*, ultimately forces the viewer to leave. When she leaves, her time will appear as a different *time*, and indeed, Brehm calls this "new" time, "a free time" (2002, p. 45).

In her book, *On the Style Site*, Ina Blom writes similarly on the proliferation of lamps and projections in the contemporary art museum as a critique of a certain real-time order she calls "televisual 'life'" (2007, p. 70). Lamps and light projections in art galleries may function as real-time machines of a different kind, with an odd and uncanny parallel to environments for living, such as one's own living room. Blom also discusses *81 Years* in relation to the televisual. She writes: "The immediate experience that there is 'nothing to see' in this work is key: it is the event that upturns all expectations about media visuality" (2007, p. 106). Rather than attracting attention to media visuality, it attracts attention to the *time* of media as empty, as potential. The experiment *takes time*, but not the way television takes time. This experiment seems rather to create an undetermined time/space allowing one to create one's own images and concepts. Rather than presenting images, this work

16 I consciously play out the difference between the vernacular notion of a real time as the time something takes, and real-time (with a hyphen) as a media time signifying the televisual logic of a live transmission of events. Rehberger seems to intentionally confuse and converge these two times in his installation in question.

redefines the art space as a “mood lamp” addressing human perception and being (in time) in the most general way. Here, the visitors tend to sit down on the floor to “simply bask in the colored light rather than looking for visual action” (ibid). The installation transforms real-time from being the calculable time-slot of the attention economy to become an empty presence or an atmosphere for creativity where the viewer becomes a user or a producer. “The work could therefore – in principle – *generate any kind of image*,” Blom writes (ibid, pp. 106-107).

Take Your Time

This transformation of real-time is also highlighted in Olafur Eliasson’s light installations. In his now famous installation at the Tate Modern in 2003, *The Weather Project*, Eliasson turns the grey and unfriendly entrance hall of the museum into the liveliest of atmospheres by installing a large lamp-driven projection of what looks like a blazing sun. A fine mist, large mirrors and a giant semi-circular form made up of hundreds of mono-frequency lamps colonize the entirety of the environment. The popularity of this work even surprised the curators at the Tate Modern. Suddenly, people just came to be in the gallery, in front of the large projection. They hung out, played, even danced or did yoga, some even seemed to sunbathe.

Several visitors have shared their experience of Eliasson’s “sun” on YouTube. Some explicitly seem to interact playfully with the installation. Many visitors use their digital camera to make short YouTube videos, panning slowly in a large vertical circle to somehow convey the immersive expansiveness of the gallery space. Others seem to use the space as a suitable atmosphere for a get-together. In this connection the work may be seen as part of the international art trend the curator Nicolas Bourriaud has called “relational aesthetics,” a new art form that takes “being-together as a central form” (2002a, p. 15). Eliasson turns the temporality of light into a medium which gathers people together through its temporalized atmosphere. The “audience” is somehow transformed with the time of the work. The audience is no longer simply a group of spectators, but rather, they have become a collectivity, “a people” or a new “minority” sharing and experiencing a “free” time. A screen + lights + mist + duration; this “expanded cinema” has transformed real-time into a new environment for creative living.



Ill 4: The Unilever Series: Olafur Eliasson, The Weather Project, 16 October 2003 – 21 March 2004, Turbine Hall, Tate Modern. ©Tate, London 2013.

Many of the structural filmmakers of the 1960s like Anthony McCall and Hollis Frampton tried to come up with a minimal definition of what film is. Frampton defined film as a “confined space, only a rectangle of white light” (Frampton

1983, cf. “A Lecture”). The introduction of film footage into this light was considered an obstruction. Rehberger and Eliasson take the concept of the expanded cinema toward the horizon of real-time media. The issue is no longer the essence of cinema, but the conditions of the social. How can real-time media be used to conjure forth a different real-time experience? This was also the theme in Eliasson’s retrospective, *Take Your Time*, at the MoMA in New York, 2008.

The imperative in the title, *Take Your Time*, was meant to function both as a critique of the way a museum creates a distance between its objects and its audience, and as a demonstration of the fact that an art museum is no longer a temple of beautiful objects or pure forms; instead, it has become a place where conditions of perception, emotion and interactivity in a contemporary world are tested. The MoMA also accompanied its exhibition with a rich and informative website containing, among other things, many interviews with Eliasson where he explains his views on art and the exhibition. Eliasson talks about the “paradox” of the contemporary art museum. Rather than looking at the museum as a place for “collecting objects from reality [and] preserving them in a container somewhat outside of reality,” Eliasson wants the museum to be “part of the world, part of the times in which we live.” He continues:

The very basic belief that is behind my work is that objecthood, or objects as such, don’t have a place in the world if there is not an individual person making some use of that object ... if the object becomes prescriptive of the individual, of this subject, then we don’t integrate time, as time passes along ... I want a title [*Take Your Time*] that actually takes the museum out of its own stigma of being timeless somehow, [and] in a way to add time to it, as a dimension which is productive of the quality of the work. So, it is not about the museum, but about the spectator ... [in] this exhibition the museum gives the time back to the spectator, to be users of the museum.¹⁷

Eliasson doesn’t talk about real-time, instead he addresses a more complex time, the way a spectator “add[s] time to ... [the work].” This time is activated through a turn toward the role of the spectator in the exhibition. In a conversation with Eliasson, Doug Aitken comments: “You [Eliasson] often set up experiential systems that encourage the viewer to move through the sensory environment in a subjective way” (2006, p. 114). Indeed, Eliasson states that “I certainly like the idea of the viewer being the exhibited subject” (ibid, p. 116). This turn is radical. He somehow turns the equation viewer-object all the way around; the viewer becomes the center-piece, a *relational* body. The museum or gallery space becomes an experiential system for other times, where the viewer edits his environment through cuts and pauses that add another time to the space. The exhibition becomes a

17 Eliasson, Olafur (2008) “Presentation.” Video clip on the MoMA website: <http://www.moma.org/> [accessed 2008].

real-time laboratory where the spectator/user produces models for living and sketches for being.

Conclusion: Technogenesis

All the works discussed in this chapter transform the traditional museum from a “container” to an “experiential system”. They set up an environment, an architectural space of light and colors, which invites the viewer to somehow co-edit the work through his or her (e)motions through “the system”. This is not editing in any classical film sense, but an interactive montage in a dynamized space. Space is transformed into an atmosphere for potential “paths” for emerging subjects. These spaces are built around technologies that store time as modes of sensation, as changing atmospheres and images to interact with. Television and its character of “liveness” and real-time emerges most exemplarily in Rehberger’s and Eliasson’s] works. They use technology to foreground the technicity of time as a contested area. The capitalistic attention economy tends to turn the times of life into sellable slots within competing regimes of real-time media. Rehberger and Eliasson use technology to address our habitual notions and sensations of time, free time and aesthetic pleasure. They invite us to confront a sensation of time that is more open.¹⁸ The viewer is uncertain with regards to the *time* of the work. Should I leave or should I stay? At the moment the spectator leaves the work, the confrontation isn’t simply over, but is extended to embrace, not living duration, but life in an internet- and TV-mediated world, where mediated real-time and free time are blurred and often contested.

Both Gordon and Viola seek other times of the image. While Gordon uses a new media culture (the VCR) to conjure forth other sensations and dimensions of a given image, Viola uses new media to conjure forth “technologies of the self” that were available in pre-modern civilizations. He grafts traces from one set of practices – such as devotional (*Andachtsbilder*) and visionary painting in the late Middle Ages – onto a film and video art practice, which is concurrently altered. Viola consciously evokes what Hans Belting calls “image traditions from before the era of art,” when the image was considered a living or sacred agent literally

18 I don’t believe art will always produce the critical other of the capitalistic attention economy; the cinematic turn often implies borrowing elements from spectacular media (fascinating images, cultural iconography, dramatic editing, extreme speeds, etc.), but the cinematic turn in the gallery tends to conjure forth a more paradoxical situation which is often more difficult to translate into homogeneous, quantifiable and sellable experiences.

doing things to its spectator or owner.¹⁹ Motif, framing and format often recall the devotional images that travelers once carried around with them that allowed them to contemplate a different time and a different place *anywhere*. A paradox arises in Viola's art. The sudden awareness of movement in the image, which we analyzed above as "the technical moment," as the moment we become aware of a certain machinic temporality, evokes at the same time a pre-machinic temporality and rhythm of life.

The (e)motions of the spectator, the way she edits her experience, each arrest, each turn, lays out paths in relation to technology and history (Viola), images seen and images remembered (Gordon) and collectivities and alternative times (Rehberger and Eliasson]). In this way, these four artists not only instantiate different forms of lived duration, but use a "slow space" to construct different possibilities and models of living in the contemporary technosphere. These works urge us to ask: how can artworks help us explore the way human beings co-evolve with modern technology? More than ever, modern technology saturates every aspect of modern living. Some aspects are fairly obvious (commercialism and the stimuli-response mechanism of the web and screen based cultural industries), but other aspects are less available for experience, reflection and awareness. How are our memories and our notions of time, self, history and living affected by this co-evolution? Artworks can ask questions in this difficult field, and the way artworks address the issue of the interdependence between life and technology is an important area of research for the emerging field of media aesthetics. In the works by Viola and Gordon, we saw how memory, notions of time and the rhythms of life are affected by motion and the "cuts" of the spectator. These aspects are dramatized even further in the cases of Rehberger and Eliasson], as they breach our habitual notions of free time and contemporary everyday life in new ways.

If editing was a technique used to *suture* and immobilize the viewer in a movie theatre, the cinematic turn in the museum has demonstrated how the viewer can take the cut back, and in a way edit the view herself.²⁰ We reach the

19 Belting, Hans. 1994. *Likeness and presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*. The theme of "technologies of the self" (a term that goes back to Michel Foucault) is discussed more fully in relation to Viola's art videos in Eivind Røssaak, 2010, *The Still/Moving Image: Cinema and the Arts*.

20 We still need to investigate more fully how competing forms of editing and theater exhibitions before the contemporary cinematic turn in the art gallery have influenced and been instantiated in different ways in contemporary museums and art galleries. Important work in this direction has been done by Tom Gunning (starting in pre-cinema and early cinema) and Jennifer Wilde (on the French avant-garde and the exhibition), and Yuri Tsivian's work on Soviet montage opens up many new questions.

point where, as in Eliasson's words, the viewer becomes the subject.²¹ Michael Fried's position – "The success, even the survival, of the arts has come increasingly to depend on their ability to defeat theater" – is untenable.²² Fried had hoped the modernist ethos could defeat what he called the theatricalization of the arts taking place through the 1960s art scene in environmental and tableau sculpture, along with performance art and "happenings," going back to kinetic and light art. What Fried feared according to Krauss was "a merging of the temporal experience of sculpture with real time, that pushes the plastic arts into the modality of theater" (Krauss 1981 [1977], pp. 203-4).

Krauss' observation is precise, but she uses the notion of a "real time" in a nonspecific way throughout her 1977 study, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*. Today, this is impossible. All modes of living in contemporary society are somehow caught up in the real-time speed of new media and information. The new technicity of real-time challenges both Krauss' model and the traditional phenomenological position (Merleau-Ponty) which sought refuge in a rather idealist (non-technical) notion of personal expression and living duration (as the *real* time). New media technologies store, process and transmit the real and uncannily align themselves with the temporal matter of consciousness. Rather than seeing technology as incidental or detrimental, we now need to consider technology as an essential dimension of the human. We need to ask, like Mark B. N. Hansen and Bernard Stiegler, how does the human co-evolve with technology? Stiegler calls this evolution *technogenesis*.²³

The art works discussed in this chapter transform the art gallery into a slow space where aspects of this technogenesis can be studied. Technology *appears* as an "invisible" force (movement, spacings, "real-time") co-determining the aesthetic experience. The slow spaces produced by these art installations render technogenesis *visible*. The speed of technology meets the slowness of physiology and our senses. The environment makes the spectator aware of how sensations are technically mediated. The technical moments become the preeminent means

21 Many have seen the rise of postmodernism in arts as a new birth of the viewer. But this "birth" actually goes back to site specific art and a long trajectory of art movements since the 1960s that critiqued modernist idealism, to the extent that it activated the interrelationship between object, context and viewer. "Such a reorientation of the perceptual experience of art made the viewer, in effect, the subject of the art" (Douglas Crimps, 1993)

22 M. Fried's essay "Art and Objecthood" from 1967 is quoted after Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture*, 1981 [1977], p. 203.

23 Technogenesis is the main theme in Bernard Stiegler's trilogy *Technics and Time [Technique et temps]*, 1994, 1996, 2002]. Mark B.N. Hansen discusses the concept in *New Philosophy for New Media*, 2004; *Bodies in Code: Interfaces with Digital Media*, 2006, and in W.J.T. Mitchell and Hansen, *Critical Terms for Media Studies*, 2010, see especially the article "Memory."

by which human beings extend their perceptual grasp over matter in the widest possible sense, as *being* in a *technical* world. This being is not simply an experience of continuity or living duration. Duration as a deeply felt continuity of being is a problematical concept in a media saturated real-time world. Today, there is no living duration outside media. The slow spaces of Viola, Gordon, Rehberger and Eliasson] are not places of comfort – they intervene, redirect and displace duration as a feeling of continuity to establish awareness through “spectator’s cuts” and the epiphany of technical moments.

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