

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | 9

STATIC—OCEAN BLUE | 11

VIDEO UNCHAINED | 25

V-BRICKS | 71

TYRANNICAL LOOPS | 97

WAYS OF SEEING | 119

BEYONCE VERTICAL | 133

INTERIORS & EXTERIORS | 151

SPACE IS ONLY NOISE | 167

ILLUSTRATIONS | 187

BIBLIOGRAPHY | 189

STATIC—OCEAN BLUE

The sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel.

WILLIAM GIBSON/NEUROMANCER

Static, static, static. Be static! Movement is static! Movement is static because it is the only immutable thing—the only certainty, the only thing that is unchangeable. The only certainty is that movement, change, and metamorphosis exists. That is why movement is static.

JEAN TINGUELY/ZERO 3

FLOATING

BLUE. It is blue. The color of VIDEO is blue. A dead channel is black. Black is nothing. If a screen is black, then nothing is streamed, no content, no signal, and no function. Stand by? No, if the screen is black, then it is malfunctioning or defunct, or there is no reception. No signal, or no electricity, no connection, no network? It defines a lack, emptiness. There is something. And this something is nothing. Restart.

Blue is the screen when there is a connection identified, a technical signal transmitted and displayed, a lack of content, another emptiness, but defined and limited. There is something and that something is technical and operational, a framework unfilled. Simple On.

When the screen is not blue, it is colorful, a change of light, frequently. The screen is emitting light—bluish, technically, in reference to its color temperature. When video is playing/streaming, it lights up its surroundings, its environment with changing colors, brightness, contrast, intensities and densities.

I wonder what would be the color of all videos, played all together at the same time, streamed at once onto a huge screen looked at from a distance far, far away. Would it be blue like EARTH or would it be the color of TELEVISION referred to in the opening line of William Gibson's novel *Neuromancer*?

»The sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel.« (Gibson 1984)

When Gibson's famous cyberpunk novel was published in 1984, the public imagination of a television sky would be a grayish sky constructed by a noisy disturbed analog signal, lots of random dots instead of blue. STATIC! It is something seen on analog television after transmission ends, when there was no signal, or at the end of analog videotape when there was no more recording.

Some people called it SNOW—TV SNOW.

The colors of all videos together I assume should mix to the color of their light source—technically, their illumination, 5000 Kelvin, the color temperature of the bluish light point, which is moving in time, creating a rapid succession of images defined in a specific aspect ratio.

If our visual perception were quick enough to trace the movement of the little light dot—the tiny beam—writing the image on the phosphorus layer on its back (or, "in the inside"), what would we see on the screen? What would we see on our devices? We would see a point changing its position in a grid, changing its brightness and color. There is no image in video, at least not a photographic one, where the light is frozen in a single instance.

All videos of this moment seen together I imagine rather would appear similar to the view of the Mediterranean Sea from a sandy beach close to the Turkish holiday resort Çeşme or from a ship on a blue cruise along the

Turkish Riviera—the look down to the bottom of the Mediterranean water clear and the colors changing to TURQUOISE. Fishes swimming.

It is calming. Without describing any single video, just thinking about the amount of video viewed all together, ignoring any single entity or form or video object, just meditating on the sum, finally a calm OCEAN appears. The ocean is wide and deep. It has no end. It is around us and we are in it—an ocean of video. We see blue, an eternal blue. »But in that last is the unexpected in the face of the eternal: Blue is the color that knows no boundaries, knows no answers, and asks no questions. Blue is the eternal, the loss of discrimination and hatred, the blue of heaven.« (Jurek n.d.)¹

It is the sky above us, the never-ending sphere of dreams. The sum of all videos is the freedom unleashed from the chains of the single image. »It is the terrestrial paradise« (Jarman 1993).

STATIC—WAR OF THE ANTS

We are using the word *static* with lots of different meanings. Static could refer to a static electricity, the charge of an object; static could mean the effect appearing when shoes rub on a carpet; static could be the white noise, the random signal with a flat power spectral density, a random crackling in a radio receiver, produced by atmospheric disturbance of the signal. It could be a branch of physics concerned with physical systems in equilibrium, relating to bodies at rest or forces that balance each other, forces that

1 Blue was all the nearly blind painter and filmmaker Derek Jarman could see before his death and while making his remarkable last film with the same title. The 79-minute film *Blue* is shot entirely »of a blue background, with narrators giving voice to Jarman’s fearless confrontation of sight loss and imminent mortality. It lists the effects of the virus [HIV], recounts the tedium of hospital visits and endless pill-popping, and recalls past lovers, living and lost. It may sound inaccessible, but it’s an incredible sensory experience complemented by an immersive and beautiful score by Simon Fisher Turner and Brian Eno« (Davidson 2014).

do not produce movement; or it could be fluid statistics, static pressure, or static space-time.

Static in sociology refers to characteristic of or relating to a society that has reached a state of equilibrium so that no changes are taking place.

Of course, when television people or moviemakers refer to it, they talk about the snow seen on a television screen. It is not only them; all the human generations that lived analog television were clearly aware of the little random jumping white and black dots on the screen when there was no program broadcasted, when there was not a signal but just a "snowy" noise pattern.

Static was the first image experience when installing a new analog television set at home, and it was usually the last experience when the channel or the station finished its daily program, helping thousands of people sleep on the sofa. When in Europe in the 1980s broadcasters started to transmit 24 hours, for a while it became popular to fill the empty slot in the very early mornings with live footage from a fish tank or the front window of a train passing through the Bavarian landscape replacing the static.

Static results from electronic and electromagnetic noise picked up by the antenna. In digital broadcast, static is nearly nonexistent for the television audience; if static noise becomes visible, it is somehow less random and more still like another meaning of static—not moving or less moving, stationary or at rest. But most modern televisions automatically change to a blue screen and go to standby after some time if the only signal input present is static. The broadcast is resting, and so is the device.

Static in general is characterized as a lack of activity, a lack of change, of movement, or of progress. The noisy electromagnetic interference image disrupting the reception of television is clearly related to communications in an analog world. On the Internet and in computer programming, static elements are those that are fixed and incapable of any kind of action or change; they're the opposite of dynamic websites or programming. Dynamic programming therefore means to assign the capability of action and change.

»When a Web page is requested (by a computer user clicking a hyperlink or entering a URL), the server where the page is stored returns the HTML document to the user's computer and the browser displays it. On a static Web page, this is all that happens. The user may interact with the document through clicking available links, or a

small program (an applet) may be activated, but the document has no capacity to return information that is not pre-formatted. On a dynamic Web page, the user can make requests (often through a form) for data contained in a database on the server.« (Rouse 2005)

Static, according to the Urban Dictionary, has much different qualities than the ones we've seen thus far:

Static causes friction during intense situations, and is an unnecessary contribution of verbal, physical, and/or emotional aggression.² »Static is the act of giving shit to boys when they aren't treatin the sistas propa, or the nickname for girlfriends lookin out for their sistas when the boys aren't acting propa.« (Urban Dictionary n.d.)

Statics is the beginning class for most civil and mechanical engineers, electric charge that is built up, something that's fresh, like attitude, or backtalk, also, resistance or reluctance.

Static can be said to be a paranoid behavior around police or any other authority.

Static is »The white and black flakey crap that comes up on your television when you don't get a certain channel« (Urban Dictionary n.d.).

Static is »being extraordinary. Inspirational. Electrifying. Stands out in a crowd. Completely misunderstood. Has extreme determination. Static is unable to be labeled. Undefined. Thrilling. Incredible vibe« (Urban Dictionary n.d.).

Static is a character in a book, which is not undergoing change. It is a »word used when someone either says or does something repetitively to the point where the action or phrase is getting annoying« (Urban Dictionary n.d.).

STATIC is also the name of a 2013 short film by Ege Ulucan based on a haiku by Shuson Kato:

2 From The Urban Dictionary a reference to Quentin Tarantino's film "Reservoir Dogs": »...Managers know better than to fuck around, so if you get one that's giving you static, he probably thinks he's a real cowboy, so you gotta break that son-of-a-bitch in two...«

»I kill an ant
and realize my three children
have been watching.« (Kato n.d.)

Ulucan uses parallel editing to combine footage of busy ants with detailed shot of brushing a stone floor with water to clean away the blood of sacrificed animals. The blood and water run into a sewer opening. When the movement of ants and cleaning becomes more intense through the action as well as through the selection of closer shots, she cuts to the image of static and the disturbance of a video signal. The image fades to black and the haiku appears on the screen (Ulucan 2013).

Static in this short student film functions as a dramatic, disturbing and disorienting element, but also as a quote. The disturbance and imbalance is portrayed through the shots of moving ants and the blood on the floor in the next shot. The parallel editing is interrupted by or culminates in the static, therefore duplicating and extending what Ulucan intended—the feeling of the observer with the camera in her hand. The quote is a double quote, first through the participation and documentation of ant life, their movement and activity, ants as the dots in the analogue static constantly moving; and second through cutting to the disturbed signal itself.

»Since one impression of the ‘snow’ is of fast-flickering black bugs on a cool white background, in Sweden, Denmark and Hungary the phenomenon is often called myrornas krig in Swedish, myrekrig in Danish, hangyák háborúja in Hungarian, and semut bertengkar in Indonesian, which translate to ‘war of the ants’ or sometimes hangyafoci which means ‘ant soccer’, and in Romanian, purici, which translates into ‘fleas’.« (Wikipedia n.d.)

THE PLEASURES OF VIDEO

»Imagine someone (a kind of Monsieur Teste in reverse) who abolishes within himself all barriers, all classes, all exclusions, not by syncretism but by simple discard of that old specter: logical contradiction; who mixes every language, even those said to be incompatible; who silently accepts every charge of illogicality, of incongruity; who remains passive in the face of Socratic irony (leading the interlocutor to the supreme disgrace: self-contradiction) and legal terrorism (how much penal evidence is

based on a psychology of consistency!). Such a man would be the mockery of our society: court, school, asylum, polite conversation would cast him out: who endures contradiction without shame? Now this anti-hero exists: he is the reader of the text at the moment he takes his pleasure. Thus the Biblical myth is reversed, the confusion of tongues is no longer a punishment, the subject gains access to bliss by the cohabitation of languages working *side by side*: the text of pleasure is a sanctioned Babel.« (Barthes 1975, 3)

If we replace the word *text* with the word *video*, the last passage of Barthes' text reads like this:

Now this anti-hero exists: he is the reader of the video at the moment he takes his pleasure. Thus the Biblical myth is reversed, the confusion of tongues is no longer a punishment, the subject gains access to bliss by the cohabitation of languages working side by side: the video of pleasure is a sanctioned Babel.

In the West, Babel stands for the ultimate punishment—after Babel, the tongues are split. What Barthes proposes provokes the Western tradition emphasizing contradiction and confusion. The confusion of languages is something positive, sensible, and full of pleasures.

The term *reader* might be still the accurate characterization and might not need to be changed to construct a meaningful conclusion, as it is not just a viewer watching a video or a user engaging with a video. A video is constructed like television by a reading and writing process. Viewer and user are readers and writers. As the reader becomes or became the writer, the viewer (who was once called audience) is the producer, the blogger, the author—also the activist, the gamer, the inventor, the hacker and more. Berthold Brecht has already described and demanded the transformation of the radio listener into the producer. A text is not only readable but also writable, a video viewable as well as editable.

Pleasure, on the one hand for Barthes, confirms the reader's expectations and establishes cultural conventions, but bliss, as a state of perfect happiness, euphoria, or joy on the other is unsettling and creates a crisis against our cultural assumptions. It is a step too far.

FOR A NEW AESTHETIC

This is a text about video. Its aim is to think about video—or better, rethink video. Video has become such a daily element of our lives that we rarely reflect on it, the way we use it, when and how we use it, its forms and appearances. Video plays many different roles.

It is not only that we do not think or question what is this thing we call *video*; we also don't find it relevant to do so. Video is something of the everyday, like driving a car or taking a shower. It is with us and around us, available on demand and attached to objects, skins, structures and architectures in our environment, the locations, places, and spaces where we live. Video plays on remote or in our field of sight. Recording anything—any important event of our lives, a birthday party, a wedding, a car accident, a demonstration, a beautiful tourist site, some cats—is absolutely simple and readily available. It's also easy to modify a recorded video, trimming its head and tail, combining it with music, adjusting the color. The way we process video reflects our skills, and reflects our habits, our individual experiences. It also defines and states our emotions.

It is true that video through the Internet became something lifelike. Video became a life of its own. As a simple matter of fact, »we are conditioned by our context, our beliefs, histories, emotional dispositions, physical needs, and communities.«³ Online video not only is an essential element of expression and relation to our conditions, but is acting with us. With the world around us constantly changing, video went beyond a simple practical expansion of television technology. Similar to how Ludwig Wittgenstein described language, the way we use video and continue using video further is a »form of life.«

3 In a rewriting of Wollheim and Wittgenstein we are conditioned by our context, our beliefs, histories, emotional dispositions, physical needs, and communities. The world we interpret is a world of constant change. For Wittgenstein, language is a 'form of life', because the way we use language is always a reflection of our individual experiences, habits, and skills. This points towards the many different roles language plays in our lives. See: *Wittgenstein and Wollheim: Seeing-As and Seeing-In* (2013), Cooper (1985, 443-453), Matteucci (2013).

Video goes beyond television and cinema, and thus we need a different set of conceptual tools to discuss it. If we continue to use the categories and tool sets based on established media theories developed out of practices defining cinema and television as the dominant media and cultural technologies, we will be unable to see and include the potential and multiple transformations of such an entity, form and experience. These existing tools condescend to video as a rising amateur culture, when actually in its developmental states, video frees the moving image from its architectural corset and employs device technologies to mobilize and reshape.

The beauty of video is that it is uncontrolled and unstructured; it does not underlie a system of narrative dictatorship. It is free of the television mode of control and elimination of worlds. It stands in opposition to the worlds of power and systems of social control and organization. Video is free from the complex and carefully designed structure of something wanting something—it is a mode of choice. Video is atmospheric. Video is constantly creating, modifying, and tinkering with new atmospheres of being and togetherness.

We are asked to formulate an aesthetic theory as a form of radical gesture, an aesthetics as a politics of form and experience that is honest and truthful, and to reflect upon a realness of multiple worlds and forms of living with these worlds in what has been reality.

In the fusion of culture, remix and mash, the ocean of video, is ignoring the constrictions of an established system of media, and its operations. It ignores the construction of televised society of elderly and wise men, of one person speaking to many others. An aesthetic theory of video, reflecting on a manifestation of video as life and thought, and acknowledging videos dual character as either form or object or frequency or wave of events calls in its various atmospheric conditions back to the very perceptual basics—seeing and looking, but as well feeling and touching. We are immersing in video atmospheres.

»The new aesthetics is first of all what its name states, namely a general theory of perception. The concept of perception is liberated from its reduction to information processing, provision of data or (re)cognition of a situation. Perception includes the affective impact of the observed, the *reality of images*, corporeality. Perception is basically the manner in which one is bodily present for something or someone or one's bodily state in an environment. The primary *object* of perception is atmos-

pheres. What is first and immediately perceived is neither sensations nor shapes or objects or their constellations, as Gestalt psychology thought, but atmospheres, against whose background the analytic regard distinguishes such things as objects, forms, colours etc.

The new aesthetics is a response to the progressive aestheticization of reality. An aesthetics, which is a theory of art or of the work of art, is completely inadequate to this task. Moreover, since it is confined to a sphere separated from action and to educated elites, it hides the fact that aesthetics represents a real social power. There are aesthetic needs and an aesthetic supply. There is, of course, aesthetic pleasure but there is also aesthetic manipulation. To the aesthetics of the work of art we can now add with equal right the aesthetics of everyday life, the aesthetics of commodities and a political aesthetics. General aesthetics has the task of making this broad range of aesthetic reality transparent and articulatable.« (Boehme 1993, 11.113)

Gernot Böhme demands a critical understanding and acting in a place and a present constructed and relying on atmospheres. Aesthetics itself has the task of thinking critically and reflecting, and should not be reduced to the arts. The critical potential of an aesthetic of atmospheres legitimizes the aesthetics of the everyday. For Böhme, because we are surrounded by atmospheres and atmosphere-building techniques of the everyday, the social and the political—which might be or even are biasing, alienating, and even blinding—a critic is already tasked with showing the feasibility of atmospheres to break their suggestive powers and create playfulness toward them. By their nature, atmospheres are gripping and grasping, immersive. They are forms of realness, which appear to be real or to be reality. Video is a substantial element, a method and technology for the realization of atmosphere; in itself, it creates atmosphere.

THE EDITING ROOM PARADIGM

What shall we do with all this video?

To meaningfully analyze such an ocean of material might only be methodologically possible if we construct a deductive or inductive conclusion by zooming in and out, moving and scanning freely through the present phe-

nomenon that we call video—or, more broadly speaking, digital moving images or time-based changing images or image parts.

As guidance and examples of such a methodology, this text will relate to the practice and process of postproduction of audiovisual objects, sequences, and events. In its concrete manifestation, it means adopting methods and practices of the film editing room as a model with which to investigate online video.

Thinking in an editing room paradigm means, first of all, thinking in a simple, very traditional and historical way about a huge amount of material that will be handled, logged, evaluated, sorted, and prepared in meaningful chunks. It is a subjective process. It is, of course, analog.

The material—video—is split into smaller parts, units, or elements, which we can call “clips.” The split material in the editing room is logged and annotated; metadata is added; it is time-stamped, indexed, sorted into bins related to various kinds of principles, affects, keywords, mechanics, and so on. The bins later are split again into trim bins, the clips in subclips to build sequences; the editor conceives of items or objects as keyframes, timelines, heads, or heads and tails, forming linear strings and flows of events, creating beginnings and endings, rearranging, fine-tuning, vertical adjusting with layered shapes, graphics, sounds; the color is graded and processed for a single version while keeping the original clip untouched.

This text proposes a rethinking of the conceptualization of digital non-linear moving image editing; it involves conceptualizing a new workflow of software for such an editing practice to organize meaningful singular cases of online video and relate them to an overall formal aesthetic principle of shaping a cultural object—even shaping culture itself through its essentially atmospheric material video.

The digital video revolution of the early 2000s already addressed the problem of exponential increase of material in the editing or assemblage stage, calling for a modification of traditional editing and audiovisual postproduction methods, a multiplication of the process. A single editor was no longer able to handle all the material, to know all the shots to be considered. Of course, one of the main reasons for the increase in material was the enormous decrease of production costs, making recording equipment and materials available for consumers and gaining comparable high-quality results.

Video has always been assembled (RE: Assemblies of Video 2013). Such an assemblage has always been a cultural form built by other assemblages, which again were assembled by other ones. As online video, it is reassembled in new contexts, levels, affordances, customizations and personalizations. Thinking about editing means engaging with a *structural* analysis of online video culture. This is a process-oriented viewing of online video that considers that temporary items are the basic substance for construction of meanings. These temporary items could be seen as little bricks similar to video bricks. They can assemble into any kind of shape or spatial object. It is like Lego for moving images or LEGO made of moving-image-based temporary objects. The moving image or video is the plastic the brick is made of. The brick itself is a temporal category or object.

»LEGO pieces can be combined in multiple ways. But what allows them to interact effectively is the shape and structure of the bricks—the bundle of properties that allow them to snap together easily.« (Arbesman 2013)

In some way, video is a bundle of properties that allows the creation of various or multiple atmosphere-creating audiovisual temporal objects and frequencies. Video at first look appears to be solid while imitating cinematic assemblage practices, but video items might also be described as molecules, atoms, or bubbles and foam. Video items are not simply repetitive: yes, meaningful objects or units can be repeated, but rather than repetition and repeatability, it is their multifunctionality, modularity, automatism and algorithmic being that build video's multiverse of meaning. Each of the millions and millions of moving dots of light used to construct units of images and time can create in repetition something fresh and therefore new. It can be another sequence initiated from the same material, but it can also create another connection to and with another materiality, or open up another sphere or aura.

In the editing paradigm, the smallest possible element or item for video as moving image is a clip. The short-form video-sharing service Vine, for example, combines a maximum of three small clips into a six-second video. It emphasizes a practice of use of small short units, or shots, or clips. A clip must be differentiated from the "shot" of classical cinematography. Vine, and the definition of the clip, raise the question of duration. What is the impact of videos limited to a few seconds? Can we set them in the tradition of

short Flash animations or animated gifs? Is the flood of online videos related to a way of seeing and viewing/showing? What is the meaning of the loop and its rebirth through applications like Vine and various practices on the web?

Clips can be created en masse and if constituted as bricks reassembled over and over, creating endless variations of cultural expressions. Technically storage is needed only for new recordings and renders, but not for new assemblages as the material is already stored somewhere on a server or multiple servers.

In a further analytical step, in the editing room the sorted and indexed clip is evaluated by its graphical quality. Independent from any metadata attached, the clip is evaluated formally and aesthetically by its shape and the shapes of its framed content. Once again here the question of framing something as a recording or as a moving image becomes relevant and all too obvious.

The advent of video-enabled smartphones violates cinematic conventions through their acceptance of verticality—it's natural to hold a smartphone vertically instead of horizontally, so the natural frame shape is taller than it is wide, unlike film formats. This links online video aesthetics very closely to mobile devices and breaks with embedded cinematic conditions. Beyoncé's rehearsal video from 2011, which was shot by her husband on his mobile device, serves as an exemplary vertical video, questioning the act of framing and the authenticity of the depicted. Beyoncé's video questions the shape of video and opens up to discussions of the influence of the frame as shape as well as the shape itself on the viewer and user.

In the next part of this approach, I'll discuss interiors and exteriors of video, the question of video surfaces and insides. Robert Ochshorn's approach of rethinking compression and his look inside video in projects like *Montage Interdit* will be a starting point to explore what happens when you step into a clip as a nest—an already existing assemblage—and what happens when you extend a clip through spatial layering, thickening and expanding it, building multiple relations with multiple objects of other kinds. As the code of the web comes to understand video, video can become code-like and code might become video-like. The world, our world can then be understood as process or as in process.

Finally, we look at instances of space making, atmospheres, environmental conditions, sabotages and noise making through online video.

Online video seems to overlies as a living system of noise our physical world. It's a dust slowly building layer-by-layer, thickening and changing regional climates. This noise of video can only be deciphered through various kinds of patterns in multiple layers, patterns we already know as cultural artifacts and constants. More interesting than the patterns might be the noise, as Michel Serres points out:

»Background noise is the ground of our perception, absolutely uninterrupted, it is our perennial sustenance, the element of the software of all our logic. It is the residue and the cesspool of our messages. No life without heat, no matter, neither; no warmth without air, no logos without noise, either. Noise is the basic element of the software of all our logic, or it is to the logos what matter used to be to form. Noise is the background of information, the material of that form.« (Serres 1995, 7)

At the end of the text is the beginning repeated. In looking at the space-making ability of video, we consider again the exploration of multiple possible worlds and forms of existence. In the overall processes of *view*, *overview*, *looking at*, and *looking in*, video neutralizes an overloaded single world through an experience of lights and colors not transformed by the dictatorship and domination of narrative structure and design. Video is the pure change of light in time.