

Multiple Screens and the Moving Image

A special two-week workshop by Assistant Professor, G. Alan Rhodes,
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The definition of the Design field has changed over the past decade. What began as the confluence of graphic design, programming, photography, and video production in web design has blossomed into a set of media and industries including the proliferation of new types of publications for devices including ebooks, apps, as well as interactive screen-based art. What was once mainly the area of film production—analysis and creative practice in the moving image—has become a broad media context in which designers create. And no longer are we presented with the simple screens of the movie theater or the television, but instead windowed environments, multiple screens, multiple channels of moving imagery presented on an array of devices. It is now vital that the contemporary designer have a solid understanding of both how to analyze and how to manipulate the moving image: moving image loops, tableau vivant, temporal montage, spatial montage surround us. This special two week course will introduce students to that vital territory.

LECTURES:

Lecture Day1: The Dreams of Cinema

In 1928 Sergei Eisenstein described his dream of cinema creating a new language that could revolutionize the world through the phenomenon of montage. What did he mean and what happened to that dream?

Lecture Day2: Looking Back at the Photo

With the telegraph and the photograph, the internet was already conceived more than a century ago. The technological fact that an image could be mechanically recorded and a message instantaneously transmitted were the inspiration of this current technological age. It just took a long time to make it happen. What is the fascination of a mechanical recording? What does it mean for signification once it starts moving? What in the past we thought were barriers of disciplines and medium(s)—Photography, Sculpture, Film, Video, Design—have now become fluid and confused. DSLR cameras can take video equally as still pictures and art galleries display video screens with images that loop and hardly move. Sculpture can be created in 3D software, and rendered out to virtual camera moves on a video screen. 'Film' and 'Video' now refer to the general practice of manipulating pixels over time. If we look back at the beginning of our technological age, can we find guiding principals of our new medium(s)?

Lecture Day3: The Sound Married to the Image

Eisenstein, Pudovkin, and Alexandrov released a warning against the sync-sound film in 1928 fearing an end to their universal language of montage. This largely came to pass, but the dream of a universal language was kept alive in avant-garde cinema and has experienced a resurgence in contemporary media online and in the art gallery. In the 1970s, media theorist Mary Anne Doane described the relationship of sound to the image in motion pictures as traditionally a feminine-masculine relationship, where sound is the realm of the psychological voice and emotion, mixed and below a primary image. But, in the past decades, the moving image is being manipulated more and more like multi-track sound—mixed, compiled, performed by VJs, creating image-scapes like the immersive soundscapes of cinema. What are we to make of the new sound-like images?

Lecture Day4: The Universal Language Continued, the Avant-Garde

With the advent of sound film, nationalistic cinema, Hollywood and the standardized narrative feature, the dream of a universal revolutionary language made up of montage of moving pictures was taken on in the underground cinema and later the art world. Filmmakers like Stan Brakhage explored the moving image medium as a unique medium of changing abstraction. Flicker-film artists like Paul Sharitz attempted to create an art form that would break through the paradigms of perception. Philosophers like Giles Deleuze and Francois Lyotard described a new cinema that would explore breakages in montage and movement-- tableau vivant and non sequiturs --that would rupture the clichés of perception that had become the cinema itself. Many of the practices of the avant-garde filmmakers of the 60s, 70s, and 80s have now become normal practice—from the music video, to the multi-channel, to the ‘optical printing’ of film. The avant-garde was the bed from which new media sprang.

Lecture Day5: The Electric Image

Since mid-last century the moving image has been electrified. First in simultaneous television broadcast, and then in the 70's with immediate recording, playback, graphics and effects. This quality of the moving image has become its dominant form with digital media: the flattening of space with live broadcast, the multiplying of signal to many screens... And with it, a new reality was created: the simulacrum. As photography had created a new mechanical reproduction of spatial forms a century before, 'live' video became a new simulation of time. This simulation has become our reality with the internet in live network communication, live effects, augmented reality and virtual reality. The experimental video works from the 70's by artists like Peter Campus, and Nam Jun Paik seem to have predicted our current aesthetics.

Lecture Day6: Lumiere Meets Melies

In the first decades of cinema two vectors for the moving image emerged: film as fact and film as fantasy-- Lumiere's *The Train Leaving the Station* and Melies' *Trip to the Moon*. Through the course of a century these lines have continued, and somewhere in the past few decades have converged with the realism of digital effects; now film can simulate fantasy. This new play-space between the real, the 'real', fantasy, and 'fantasy' is being constantly explored in contemporary media art and contemporary digital aesthetics, or 'New Style', by artists and designers.

Lecture Day7: Spatial Montage

Beginning in the 70s with video recording and effects, the screen became fractured and multiple. First with analogue graphics and keying effects and multiple screens, and then with the advent of digital media, windows, pixels, and layers. As the media theorist Lev Manovich proposes, the screen is now a database. This is a fundamental change in how moving images communicate. Temporal montage--the cutting between 'shots'-- was the fundamental of cinematic communication for a century. Now moving images are juxtaposed in space, presented next to each other moving in their own durations. What does this mean for contemporary moving image design?

Lecture Day8: The Virtual and the Real

In the 50's Andre Bazin dreamed of an "absolute cinema," one that would be a perfect simulation of reality. And before him the early filmmakers DW Griffith and Abel Gance imagined a cinema that could replace experience. This dream was taken up in the 90s with the technological advancement of digital media with Virtual Reality: Data on the Holo-deck. What has, instead, emerged in the last two decades is networked communication, multi-media, and now Augmented Reality, where the borders between the real and the virtual are clear and an important part of the communication. Looking at these new phenomena, what is ahead for moving image media?

WORKS SCREENED

DAY1 - Self-Introduction & The Dreams of Cinema:

Peter Campus, Three Transitions

Mike Figgis, Timecode

GARhodes, Timecodes

GARhodes, Tesseract

GARhodes, 52Card Psycho

ManifestAR – selected works

GARhodes – Arpresentation Spouting Off

David Rokeby – Taken

EXPO2010 – Australian & Chilean pavilion screens Google Project Glass demo

Dziga Vertov, Man With a Movie Camera

DAY3 – Looking Back at the Photo

Hollis Frampton – Nostalgia

Examples from Roland Barthes' "The Third Meaning": Battleship Potempkin & Ivan the Terrible

Salvador Cobo-Jimena, Psycho

James Benning, 13 Lakes

Phantom HD camera, ultra-slowmotion samples

Michael Snow, Wavelength

Chris Marker, La Jetée

GARhodes, Flash

Zoe Beloff, Sara Ludy, Brenna Murphy: selected works

IKEA | DRÖMKÖK ÅT ALLA. (<http://demo.fb.se/e/ikea/dreamkitchen2/site/default.htm>)

DAY4 – Sound Married to Image

Michel Hazanavicius, The Artist (excerpt)

Examples of the normal: Rocky IV, Rambo II Jacques Tati, Playtime

Janet Cardiff, The Berlin Files & ??

Thomas Draschan, Influence

Shinya Tsukamoto, Tetsuo: The Iron Man

Guy Maddin, Heart of the World

Candice Breitz, King & Mother

Peter Greenaway, The Pillow Book

David Rokeby, Dark Matter & Very Nervous System

DAY5 – ‘The Universal Language Continued, the Avant-Garde’ & ‘The Electric Image’

Stan Brakhage, Mothlight

Paul Sharits, Mandella

Brian Bress, Architect

David Rokeby, San Marco Flow & nChant

Lev Manovich, Soft Cinema

Alvo Castelli, Kronos Projector project

Aaron Koblin, selected works

Peter Campus, Three Transitions

Zbig Rybczynski, Media & Tango & Odessa Steps

GARhodes, Mirror Series & Billie Jean & Scopophilia & Weekend

Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries, Dakota

DAY6 — Spatial Montage (multi-channel windows)

Scott McCloud, Understanding Comics

Virgil Widrich, Fast Film

Eija Liisa Ahtila, If 6 Was 9

Gary Hill & Bill Viola, various installation works

G.A.Rhodes, Tesseract & BillieJean

Abel Gance, Napoleon

Zbig Rybczynski, New Book

Mike Figgis, Timecode

DAY7 — Lumiere Meets Melies & The Virtual and the Real

Louis Lumiere, L'arrivee dun train a La Ciotat (1896)

Georges Melies, Tchin Chao the Chinese Conjuror

BRC Imagination Arts, “The Ghost of the Castle”

SnapDragonAR (York University Future Cinema Lab)
GARhodes, "Augmented Reality: So What? Who Cares?"
Manifest.AR – various projects (Mark Skwarek, Craig Freeman, GARhodes)
Marco Tempest, AR Magic TED talk
Toni Dove, Spectropia
Julian Oliver, Level Head

PROJECTS

The Kulishov Effects (Days 1-2)

Using sampled media, students will create their own examples of Kulishov's two famous montage experiments from a century ago: creating meaning solely through montage, and inventing a form solely through montage. Footage will be sampled and manipulated on the video-editing timeline.

Animus (Days 3-4)

Using the basic tools of animation, students will create a single looping gesture in an animated GIF. The focus will be on exploring the effect of 'bringing an image to life' through movement and the loop, and the history of the tableau vivant. GIFs will be created through frame animation in Photoshop.

Montage: Rhythm, Juxtaposition, Repetition, Variation, Aberration (Days 5-6)

Using only text and music, students will create short animations inspired by the moving image concrete poetry of Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries. Text will be created, sequenced, and key-frame animated in video editing software (FCP or Premiere).

Gutters, Screens, and Windows (Days 6-8)

Inspired by the description of comic book language by Scott McCloud, students will first diagram and then create short videos that creatively examine multiple-windowed / screen / channel layouts. The focus will be on exploring and combining the ways that comic books communicate space and time across panels, and the properties of the moving image. Video will be sampled and compiled on the video-editing timeline.

Revisions (Days 9-10)

Students will select one of their projects to revise, polish, and expand into a finished work for portfolio.