

ACADEMY OF PERFORMING ARTS IN PRAGUE  
FILM AND TV SCHOOL

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Filip Kunovski

ACADEMY OF PERFORMING ARTS IN PRAGUE  
**FILM AND TV SCHOOL**

Photography

**BACHELOR'S THESIS**

**BETWEEN PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO**

**Filip Kunovski**

Thesis advisor: Tomáš Dvořák

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AKADEMIE MÚZICKÝCH UMĚNÍ V PRAZE  
FILMOVÁ A TELEVIZNÍ FAKULTA

Fotografie

**BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE**

MEZI FOTOGRAFIÍ A VIDEEM

**Filip Kunovski**

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**Abstract:**

This thesis is an attempt to observe the media of video and photography and the “space” between them. Many artists have operated within this “space”. The reasons behind this are the abilities of these media to be flexible and to transform, and with that, to give the artist, or the user, the wide pallet of possible interpretations by juxtaposing their characteristics. These two media are both widely used by inter-media artists and for communication purposes, mainly on social-media. Technically, they both operate similarly: both depict what is in front of the camera. However, because of the previously mentioned transformative character, video is capable of obtaining some of the characteristics of photography – and vice-versa – only by working with them in a specific manner. Through this thesis, I will attempt to show how the abilities of these media were put together in numerous authentic ways, blurring the lines between their separate fields.

**Abstrakt:**

Tato práce se snaží sledovat média videa a fotografie a “prostor” mezi nimi. Mnoho umělců působilo a působí právě v tomto “prostoru”. Důvodem jsou flexibilita těchto médií a schopnost jejich transformace, díky čemuž poskytují umělci či uživateli širokou škálu možných interpretací. Obě dvě média jsou hojně využívána intermediálními umělci a ke komunikaci, zejména na sociálních sítích. Technicky vzato obě fungují podobně: zobrazují, co je před kamerou. Díky již zmíněnému transformačnímu potenciálu je však video schopné nabýt určitých rysů videa – a vice versa – pokud s nimi určitým způsobem zacházíme. Prostřednictvím této práce se pokusím předvést, jak mohou být schopnosti těchto médií propojovány a tak vést k narušení hranice mezi jejich zvláštními světy.

## **Table of contents:**

1. Introduction: The urge to emerge; Early intentions and interpretations
2. Pieces that operate in the space between the media.
  - 2.1. Nam June Paik: TV Buddha (1974)
  - 2.2. Andy Warhol: Screen Tests (1964-1966)
  - 2.3. Douglas Gordon: 24 Hour Psycho (1993)
3. The medium of slideshow as a borderline between photography and video
  - 3.1. James Colman: Slide Piece (1972-1973)
  - 3.2. Chris Marker: La Jetée (1962)
4. Conclusion: The Media of Communication
5. Bibliography

## **1. Introduction: The urge to emerge; Early intentions and interpretations.**

The main focus of this thesis is to point out towards the little grey area of visual expression that is located somewhere in between video and photography. With it I would like to point out towards this “space” in between these media, as I consider it a vital part of the character, appearance and importance of some artworks. Among the representatives of such kind are artworks based on one of the media but extend its possibilities towards the other one. It will consist of chapters that will analyse and discuss the photographic character of artist video and the medium itself.

I am fully aware that the film and the filmic, as elements or characteristics of a narrative, are very relevant sources of inspiration for video and photography. However, film as a separate medium is not regarded in this thesis. One might ask why, and given that film is one of the most common and important media of our time, I feel the responsibility to further explain. Film has an enormous historical and theoretical basis, and therefore a lot of bias in comparison to photography and video. It would be unfair to just scratch the surface of such a big and important medium for artistic expressions without thoroughly doing so. When discussing film, there are plenty of aspects that are relevant enough for a discussion. I would just like to mention the “film language”, an element of film, that has nearly distinguished itself as a discipline important enough to be thought as a separate subject in schools. That is something that video or photography do not have as a standardised asset. The main reason why it is omitted as a relevant enough topic in regard to this thesis, is that the medium of film is constituted of a much broader palette of disciplines such as screenplay, set-design, light, grip, sound, direction, make-up etc., all of which include a large number of participants. Although a lot of these are included in some of the examples I will work with in this thesis – in film, they represent a combination of the creative output and craftsmanship of much more than only one person. Considering the fact that I am interested in, and study, a rather individual discipline, I decided to omit the medium of film as a separate subject in the thesis. However, I will try to compare the two media (photography and video) in the context of the visual narrative and their characteristics, as to what they impose on the viewer in regards to the swift manipulation by the artist, beginning with the emergence.



The Daguerreotype, a photograph on a plate, named after its inventor, the French scenic designer and Diorama owner Louis Jacques Mande Daguerre introduced in January, 1839 with the invention as a consequence of numerous causes. As Naomi Rosenblum has noted:

“By the time it was announced in 1839, Western industrialised society was ready for photography. The camera's images appeared and remained viable because they filled cultural and sociological needs that were not being met by pictures created by hand. The photograph was the ultimate response to a social and cultural appetite for a more accurate and real-looking representation of reality, need that had its origins in the Renaissance.” (Rosenblum 2007: 15).

The Western world has longed for a direct depiction of different aspects of human existence: from scientific research and document, to portraiture of certain individuals, as that was a major social statement at that time and also, the documentation of the landscape and cityscape in the big and developed metropolises. Therefore, as it emerged, it somehow took over the whole Western world in a glance. It seems that a whole lot of enthusiasts, intellectuals and a good share of the high society were ready for the invention and therefore supplied it financially and promoted it on a large scale. It was inevitable that photography would happen to the world, and therefore everybody was prepared and anticipated the technological development of the apparatus. It was so awaited that there were a couple of technological parties with their own ways of approaching this enterprise. So we can guess that once it happened, the mass use of the medium has taken off. But even from the beginning, artistic interest emerged, as artists could reason that the prime position of painting and drawing as a depicting medium lost its place.

“Realistic depiction in the visual arts was stimulated and assisted also by the climate of scientific inquiry that had emerged in the 16th century and was supported by the middle class during the Enlightenment and Industrial revolution of the late 18th century..... As physical scientists explored aspects of heat, light, and the solar spectrum, painters became increasingly aware of the visual effects of weather conditions, sunlight and moonlight, atmosphere, and, eventually, the nature of colour itself.” (Rosenblum 2007: 15)

Opposed to the same aspects in photography, the circumstances of emergence for video were a little more complicated in their influence on the medium and its use. Video

became an excitingly immediate medium for artists after its introduction in the early 1960s. The expensive technology, which had been available prior only within the corporate broadcasting arena, experienced an advent when Sony first created an economical consumer piece of equipment that allowed everyday people access to vast new possibilities in documentation, it was called the Sony Portapak. In comparison to photography, whose set of functions has been pre-contemplated and only the technology was the problem, video was practically a consequence of technological development at the time and users did not anticipate this change in the same manner as they did during the process of emergence of photography. Additionally, the artistic progress played a big role. Artists in the middle of the 19th century were very much into experimenting with media and the artists consciousness towards modernism and conceptual art was raised enough and prepared for a new technological invention. However, video, as it was used by artists, was mainly invented or rather, made available to the mass consumer for the purpose of profit. Nonetheless, the idea of recording something was nothing new at the time. People were familiar with recordings of a video camera from the TV and film and at some point, the technological progress as well as the capitalistic trends of consumerism and profit based interests, made a certain tool (video) accessible, and a possibility to the wider masses. Also, it is worth mentioning that since there was no previous art form of such manner, video was very much prone to experiments by artists that already based their work, and were highly influenced by, movements and ideas from Fluxism, Performance art, Body art, Pop Art, Arte Povera, Conceptual Art, Minimalist sculpture, avant-garde music, contemporary dance and theatre, experimental film and a diverse range of other cross-disciplinary cultural activities and theoretical discourses. As Chris Meigh-Andrews notes:

“Video had a unique and compelling immediacy – and with the introduction of the Portapak, it's instantly 'replayable' image and sound made it ideal for personal experimentation. For artists seeking new possibilities, video offered something equivalent to an audio-visual sketchbook, and additionally could be operated by a single person in just about any location and situation.” (Meigh-Andrews, 2014: Preface to the 2nd edition)

These ideas were quite advanced and the concept of experimenting with media was not new at this moment. Accordingly, with this *unique and compelling immediacy* of video, such widespread use of the medium was inevitable.

One important aspect in favour of my discussion is the fact that at the time of the emergence of video, photography has already been used in different forms and variations, and thus acquired a kind of bias. That unlocked the possibility to experiment with video in the direction, among others, more close to photography. Video, as a medium did not have any reference to seminal or canonical works, as much as photography or other visual media had had at the time. It was a completely blank area awaiting to be fulfilled with extraordinary interpretations and experiments.

Even though it is not as relevant from today's perspective, this “story” of emergence of the two media offers a prism through which the following content of this thesis can be analysed. That will, however, make the connection between the usage of the media more understandable, so the experiments that resulted in extraordinary masterpieces will be better understood. That is, the relevance of the limitations and freedom that each medium has, used by artists in order to extend the possibilities and characteristics of their pieces through a combination of different aspects of the two media. I would like to note, that in this thesis, I will be generally discussing video content that operates with extreme slowness, and therefore is in a way – photographic, as well as photographic content that operates through the idea of motion and consequently, becomes video-graphic.

## **2. Pieces that operate in the space between the media.**

Helen Westgeest describes video’s challenge of photography, drawing and painting and notes:

“Video is only recognisable when the presented image is changing. If it does not, while being projected on some surface or presented on a monitor, it might as well be a photograph... But, also, today’s photography and video – both lens based media, reproduction technologies, and digital media – have much in common in how they represent their subject.” (Westgeest 2016: p. 121)

In these next few chapters I would like to focus a little bit more to the pieces that, in a way, represent and operate with what I had suggested in the introduction – the space between the two media. Here, I would like to analyse and point out how these transformations and juxtaposing of characteristics work. However, this connection has more to do with the way the works are presented or rather, it is vivid into their physical manifestation. Additionally, it has also to do with the subconscious response from the audience that is based upon what they actually see and not the background concept that the works stand for. In these particular cases I will be discussing the video outcome that operates with extreme, near-photographic, slowness. It is important to note that these works are not contemporary considering the time of their emergence. They are rather old, though they are revolutionary, and that is the main reason behind my choice. I consider these among the most important works that defined this relation and are an epitome of how the lines between the media can be blurred. Raymond Bellour argues in his small seminal text *The Pensive Spectator* (1987: 6-10) on the effects of still images in film and the way images are perceived. The spectator experiences the still, should it be a freeze frame or a still photograph, as a pause in the flow. When facing such a visual appearance, the spectator has the time to start adding to the image. This is not the case for the film, as Bellour says, as the dynamics of the visual content are more frequent and changing, and I would add – more close to what human perception is used to biologically. Therefore, the time frame for subjectiveness regarding the image itself is way shorter. This is how, in the words of Bellour, we become pensive spectators while watching a still. For this reason, the works that I have chosen are letting the spectator be pensive while still operating with a moving image. With this, once again, we can prove to ourselves that video is one of the most, if not the most, flexible media, with the ability to bend theoretical knowledge adding to artistic expression like no other medium.

### **2.1. Nam June Paik: *Tv Buddha* (1974)**

Known as the “father of video art” – Nam June Paik, was one of the pioneers that revolutionised the use of the video for artistic purposes. Since the emergence, he has been working and experimenting with the medium. First presented in 1974 as a gap filler to an empty wall in his fourth show in Galeria Bonino, New York, it became possibly one of Paik’s

most famous works. *TV Buddha* (1974) is a great example of the transition that I would like to discuss. It is a closed circuit video to observe the relationship between technology and humanity. A camera facing the sitting Buddha, posed in a tranquil meditation *mudra*, which is a symbolic hand gesture used in Buddhism, is producing an image that is also facing the Buddha. According to Westgeest, it is visually an ever-actual photograph, or rather, a photograph that is not limited within the constraints of time, but rather, within the constraints of what is being depicted. That way, the work induces the feeling that the Buddha is doomed to be forever caught in the closed circuit loop that is the infinite play of his reflection on the TV screen. An amazing juxtaposition of not only themes, symbols, technology, humanity, relationships but video and photography as well.

This work is one of the first, if not the very first, that includes a video of such slowness which makes it hard to differentiate it from a photograph. We could comfortably say that the only element that is making it a video is the viewer and the visible camera apparatus behind the monitor. Otherwise, the whole work is very static, which is a characteristic of a photograph, and it is very much a contemplation-stimulating source of information. The miraculous part is that there is plenty of information to the viewer, including semiotically orchestrated references that indicate upon the symbols. Even though it seems bizarre and static at first, it is quite the work that requires the audience to explore it. This exploration does not include only watching it from aside, but rather visually exploring it by literally physically approaching it from different angles. The work does not transform, until a member of the audience approaches it from behind the statue of the Buddha. Then, the viewer can notice its own presence in the piece on the monitor that is projecting the camera image and therefore elevate by breeding motion into a practically still image, thus visually making it a video. At that particular point the work acquires its depth and the subtle manipulation of the artist comes to life.

In reference to Bellour's text, this work has the ability to transform and offer to the viewer different stages of activity in terms of observation, analysis and engagement. The circumstances that the work itself creates, while being static and observing it from afar, allows the audience to become "pensive" and contemplate the work as it is a "photograph" (in the sense of Bellour's usage of the term as a freeze frame or a still). Yet, when interacting with it, it becomes an ever shifting and actual reality, as well as a directed

mix of symbols adding on another layer, while the motion of the images within comes to life. In an unpublished thesis by Mary Ann Kearns (1988), a reference is made to Nancy Miller's text *The Color of Time: Video Sculpture by Nam June Paik*, about Paik's understanding of time within his art:

“Time, Paik believed, was the characteristic which made video (as a visual art) exceptional. He stated:

- From Monet to Joseph Kosuth, people tried everything. After that, in painting's world, everything was done. You can only do so much within the limited styles of painting from realistic to abstract to conceptual art. One way to move painting forward was to inject the element of time.” (quoted in Kearns 1988).

This idea of the great artist statement in the interview can surely be interpreted in favour of this thesis and put in the context of photography. Both photography and painting hold a number of similarities in the visual expression which is constrained by nearly all the same factors, except for the apparatus and its role to depict, and that, however, is more close to video than painting itself.

It is important to mention that Paik has continued to develop the idea from this piece in few other pieces later on in his career. Amongst them: *Stone Buddha/Burnt TV* (1982), *TV Buddha* (1982) and *TV Rodin* the same year. What they all have in common, apart from society's continual re-contemplation of its own image from the mirrors of the ever-developing technology, is that they are giving insight to the individual relationship between the artist and the technological advancements, as well as the exact same interpretation of the medium of video, that is employing the characteristics of a photograph while still technically remaining a moving image.

## **2.2. Andy Warhol: *Screen Tests* (1964-1966)**

Another example of the transition between photography and video that signifies the space between photography and video are Andy Warhol's *Screen Tests* created between 1964 and 1966. This artwork operates with nearly the same resources as the one of Paik, but now, the main intervention by the author is not the installation, nor the space itself, nor any kind of

material symbolism, but rather, the medium of the video itself. In the context of Roland Barthes' text *Rhetoric of the Image* (1977: 32-51) it would seem that the *symbolic* message is conveyed not by any other cultural symbols, what in Paik's example would be the Buddha, its meditating pose, etc., but the medium of video itself. Here the symbolism lies in the consciously blurred border between photography, its visual and temporal character and video's capability to operate in a certain time frame. The Warhol *Screen Tests* are a single-taken short footage of celebrities and friends of the author, who happened to be in his studio *The Factory*, and agreed to remain still and silent in front of his movie camera for about four minutes. Inspired by the photo-booth and the New York Police Department's booklet called *The Thirteen Most Wanted* (1962), Warhol began this process of nearly three years of spontaneous shootings in his studio. The short film portraits were not pre-arranged with the subjects, however, there was an area inside his studio that was set-up and waiting for the subject to sit in front of the camera. The use of the camera in a fixed position, the conventional portrait framing (head and shoulder), and the thoughtfully orchestrated presentation of the subject to the movie camera, as it was a photo-camera, all indicate the attempt of the author to describe and precisely portray a certain "space" that is recognizably "photographic". That is the precise thing that elevates Warhol's *Screen Tests* to the "next" level. He successfully managed to materialize one, until then, rather abstract idea of juxtaposing the characteristics of video and photography.

What I find intriguing in this work is the subject's awareness of the whole process and possible outcomes. Does the awareness of the situation, subconsciously of course, trigger someone to be more artificial than usual? Probably it does, however, we clearly see that everything is orchestrated for a pre-contemplated outcome. Ascribing it to chance is not the most appealing idea, since we have the knowledge that the process was repeated more than 500 times of which there are 472 preserved videos. The question, in regard to the subconscious awareness of the situation, refers to the act of posing. So as Westgeest (2016: 134) elaborates, that this type of work operates with all the conventions of the still photograph, such as its framing principles, though extends it in time, discarding the idea of the still image and preserving the temporality of the pose. So, practically, the act of posing corresponds more to the act of taking a photograph, rather than the actual process of filming the pose. As Westgeest states:

“Another possible conclusion is that photographs give us the illusion that time can be halted, whereas video portraits annul that illusion and demonstrate that we can only control the time of recording by the camera and the duration of the pose.” (Ibid.: 135).

Westgeest further elaborates the statement of Johana Drucker about “temporal photography”, in her similarly entitled 2010 essay, that the process of posing turns the merely banal act of taking a photograph into an “epistemological” event (Ibid.). Hence, the whole idea of filming a pose is an event in which Warhol managed to reassociate the characteristics of photography with the medium of video.

### **2.3. Douglas Gordon: *24 Hour Psycho* (1993)**

Continuing my argument from the previous chapters, I would like to gently change the direction of the discourse and attach another layer in the description of the differences and correlations between the characteristics of the media of photography and video. In what follows I would like to discuss an artwork that represents a beautiful way to deconstruct the whole idea of the moving picture. It is a medium that encapsulates the mixture of video and photography but at the end, stands out for the authenticity of its visual character. This work, apart from photography and film, also uses some of the visual principles of the slide-show, which will be discussed later on in this thesis.

Douglas Gordon's *24 Hour Psycho*, made in 1993 and first shown at Tramway in Glasgow, was his first work to use this newfound ability, which he deployed the technique of down a single film so that it lasts a full day. The work acknowledges an unseen and unknowable space in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960). The Scottish artist takes Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), slows down its original duration by extending it to 24 hours and taking away its sound. With the film's extreme prolongation – compared to the normal projection speed which is twenty-four frames per second – each frame of it appears on-screen for half a second, showing previously unnoticed details appearing as stills.



In his *24 Hour Psycho* (1993) – Douglas Gordon manages, through the visual character of the piece, to create a narrative that will directly apply its influence to the audience. Given the time, the audience can pay attention to Hitchcock's exquisitely crafted compositions and the glorious contrast between the films blacks and whites and grey-silver tones. In this fascinating 24-hour long video work we can see a complete deconstruction of the elements that each media carries within and a comparison between the characteristics of both the moving picture and the still. They become vivid and the spectator is faced with the immediate consequence of the transcendence as well as the juxtaposing of aspects of different media. This is exactly the reason why this piece is so important and interesting. The viewer is exposed to the singularity of the film frames. He or she does not interact with the tension that the original piece has had. By detaching this essential aspect of Hitchcock's masterpiece, the viewer is faced with another problem – the meaning of the single images. Now the viewers are confronted with what they see in the image and not in what is to come. Due to the time given to every single frame of the film, thus creating a 24-hour sequence, the audience is abstracted from the power of the motion-picture medium that applies to the perception, thus relieving them from the tension of "what is to come next". Simply said, the author extracts the drama out of the film. This way, the artist manipulates the idea of consequentiality, which is a characteristic of the film, and brings the temporality – a characteristic of a photograph, as a main concept under the nose of the audience. So, we can comfortably say that Douglas Gordon has successfully achieved to detach the element of tension from the film and transfer the attention of the spectator to a single image and therefore gain the time for a single subjective analysis of each and every frame the viewer is going to see. Gordon achieved a narrative by foregrounding the technical and physiological basis of cinema – the fact that our brain transforms a stream of still images into an apparent or virtual moving image. In this operation the viewer leaves the role of an interpreter and takes possession of a significant number of images to construct its own translation; what Jacques Rancière has called “emancipated spectator” (2009; p.1-24).

In an article by Eleanor Heartney the works of Douglas Gordon have been described:

“Such works have been discussed in relation to cinema’s manipulation of the experience of time, the blending of fiction and reality, and psychoanalytic notions of memory, mirroring, and consciousness. But, as many commentators have

pointed out, an equally important source for Gordon's fascination with doubling, splitting, mirroring, and inverting is his Scottish heritage and personal history." (Art in America; Heartney, 2020)

Gordon is known for implementing slow-motion in his other works that came up in 1994 and 1995 in which a similar technique is applied to historical documentary footage. However, the slow-motion approach would be stretched to its extreme in 1995 when Gordon developed *5 Year Drive-by* which extended John Ford's legendary western *The Searchers* (1956) to match the search referenced in the story of the film. Within this authentic approach Douglas managed to encapsulate the difference between photography and film (a form of moving picture) while exhibiting something as a "video-art" or rather, an "artist's video".

Douglas revisited his work *24 Hour Psycho* in 2010 when he re-exhibited in a new two-screen installation called *24 Hour Psycho Back And Forth And To And Fro*, that got its premiere at the Glasgow International Festival of Visual Art, showcased at Tramway, the venue where the original piece was first exhibited.

### **3. The medium of slideshow as a borderline between photography and video**

Even though the word *slideshow* itself is pretty much self-explanatory, I think this ephemeral medium deserves a brief historical and technical introduction, so as for the thoroughness of this thesis as much as for the purpose of narrowing down the term itself. The medium hit the market in the late 1930s as the 35mm slide film was invented in 1935 and immediately became the new standard for projecting images. The first virtues of the usage of the medium came in the 1950s and were mainly home projections of family events. Later on the use of slide projections widely spread for educational and institutional purposes. However, despite many efforts, some even 50 years before the medium of the slideshow, or rather, slide projection, it did not become an acknowledged medium for artistic purposes until the second half of the 20th century. In an essay by Darsie Alexander, the slideshow is considered as a bridge between photography and video/film as the author explains:

“Indeed, slide projection bridged aspects of still photography and film in a distinct and meaningful way... Specifically, it provided a way to capture time by operating as a vehicle for photographs made at split-second intervals; moreover as a system for automating and moving still images, it registered time, breaking and accelerating the time intervals between images. Given these features, it comes as no surprise that slide projection was often considered a bridge between photography and film.” (Alexander, 2005: xix, 5)

The “artistic” slideshow somehow represents the middle ground between the two media discussed in this thesis. It is revolutionary, not only because of the technology but also regarding one very specific aspect where “what” is seen and “how” is it seen complement each other on the basis of photography in order to create, to a certain extent, a narrative of image transformation that has the capacity to narrate as a video.

“The round slide carousel, the kind most frequently used by artists... contains successive slots for images, which are projected in time and in sequence, like a film. But by the same token, the different frames capture a past moment that was taken out of time, like a photograph.” (Ibid.: 5).

Here, I am pointing towards the fact that within this particular medium, these works test the possibilities of both the narrative and viewers imagination. It is not only what images will be shown, but also for how long and in what order. Much like video itself, many artists from a pallet of different disciplines showed interest in the slide medium because it was free of any artistic claims and pedigree, and much like the case of Sony’s Portapak, it was cheap, user friendly and easy to reproduce. Therefore, many artists found it easy to experiment with, since the projection offered a way to reattach that particular moment in time, that a photograph depicted, to a new reality, one defined by the structures of carousel and repetition. Each and every image keeps its status of an “individual” unit that fills an allotted space and time, ending by the blinks of the machine and the next one appears, directly pointing towards the fact that no image is more or less important than the others. In the next few chapters, I would like to visually contrast the few artworks discussed above and to expose another view towards mixing the characteristics of the media of photography and video. I will be discussing and analysing works that, in essence, operate with still images, but they develop through time and therefore acquire a unique, rather video-like, sense of motion.

### 3.1. James Coleman: *Slide Piece* (1972-1973)

A great artwork that truly represents the power of this medium is James Coleman's *Slide Piece* (1972-1973). Even though, I know, it is somewhat inexcusable not to mention the rest of Coleman's work, I have decided to narrow my attention to this one in particular. The rest, however, is worth mentioning in numerous ways, but the following one, I consider the most eloquent and pragmatic in reference to this thesis.

In the catalogue of artists and artworks on the Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona's (MACBA) website, there is a certain classification of the works of James Coleman:

“To date, three stages can be distinguished in Coleman's output: perceptive installations (1970-1974), installations implying psychological, social, historical or cultural dimensions (1975-1979), and works taking place within a theatrical context (1980-1985).” (MACBA web).

Rosalind E. Krauss in her two essays (Krauss, 1997; 1999) on James Coleman attempts to make an in-depth analysis of the works of the artist. Among the many ideas Krauss manages to discuss in her essays, the most vital one, according to my modest (in comparison to hers) literacy and judgement on this topic, I chose the idea of *re/inventing* a medium – elaborated from different perspectives in both of Krausses' essays. What this in particular refers to, is that in order for an artist to “invent” a medium, they must develop a certain language that defines that medium and to experience and experiment different types of usage of it. By comparing Coleman's way to the one of Chris Marker's *La Jetée* she implies that in order to give the “title” to some artist of “inventing” a medium, the artist himself has to show that he can manipulate within the frames of the medium that they “invented”, as to prove and acknowledge the limitations and ways of exploring the visual language in the discourse of the “invented” medium. Considering that, Marker has not “invented” a medium, but rather just experimented. So in comparison to Marker, Krauss implies that Coleman has successfully “invented” a medium and the before mentioned classification of Coleman's works proves that.

James Coleman is known for his deconstruction of the photographic image, or rather, questioning the postulates of representation, cinema and theater by channelling his comment through the slide projections, thus visually exploring the concepts of space, time, social and psychological conditioning. In his numerous works he has managed to deconstruct the typical cinematic conventions first by technique and later by the concept behind the narrative. In regard to the loads of literature, critique and essays on Coleman, I somehow see it redundant to dive into the whole complex world of creativity of the artist, as it is previously explained and in-depth analysed by some of the worlds best art critiques and theoreticians. However, I will try to focus and analyse the particular *Slide Piece* by the same method as I did with the analysis of the previous works, so as to put it in the context of this thesis.

*Slide Piece* (1972-73) is a continuous projection of slides followed by a synchronised narration. Each and every one of the slides projecting represents the same, ordinary, de-contextualised, urban, and somewhat banal sight: a little square in Milan. This image, because of the lack of a particular interest in depiction, gives out a documentary, or rather, reportage-like feeling. On top of the slide projection, an assertive male voice is narrating the verbal part of the piece. Once the narration stops, a new slide comes. Conflicting the audience, the same picture reoccurs, again, and a new, different than the previous one, narration is heard. Again, the whole process is repeated and at the end, it starts all over again. This, obviously, is the key element in Coleman's *Slide Piece*. That is the exact moment when the work transforms from a static, one image – photograph, to a narrative that operates in a time sequence, thus extending the possibilities and adding motion to the photograph itself. Through the recurring image, the different narrations that represent different aspects and readings of the image, Coleman manages to slightly frustrate the audience, and with that to pull off great manipulation of the perceptual powers of the viewer. Pushing the viewer further and further into the consecutive process of constructing and deconstructing possible meanings of the image, Coleman manages to additionally push the viewer into further exploration, where the quality of analysis is certainly developing in-depth. This way, the artist playfully stimulates the spectator and provides a show for which I cannot find a more suitable description than: “a thorough analytic and perceptual experience”. This work, we can comfortably say, stimulates the spectator towards two aforementioned stages, and that is both “pensive”, in Bellour's terms and “emancipated” in Rancière's.

### 3.2. Chris Marker: *La Jetée* (1962)

As bizarre as it seems, *La Jetée* is Chris Marker's cinematic enterprise made almost entirely out of photographs. The reason I address them as photographs and not *stills* is because stills are often associated with images that are extracted from the film – *freeze frames*, whereas this one is made of photographs as such. The medium of photography is used for the creation of a film. It is thus vivid that the stylisation and the manoeuvre within the frame is rather photographic than film-like. The hybrid of different media used to deliver the narrative is a powerful statement on its own. Each and every image alone is a symbolic photograph. The individuality of the separate frames dictates the tempo of the narrative. The consecutive images, orchestrated in the way they are, are part of a bigger statement than the single image itself can bear.

This piece questions the idea of time itself. Although this statement seems quite bold I am incapable of avoiding it. The film is based in a post-World-War-III setting, which from today's perspective seems kind of phantasmatic, in the sense that the film is staged in the past, yet the structure of the film, or rather, its principle of visual narration, is based upon photographs, whose one of the main characteristics is that in their essence they take the depicted out of time. Considering that each of the media of film, slide-projection and photography depicts and "plays" with time in its own recognisable manner, it seems as this work operates with the idea of time as hierarchical, complementary combination of the time-play of different media, deductively deconstructing it in the following manner: film-slideshow-photograph.

I found it important to theoretically structuralize the idea of motion for the purpose of more eloquent analysis. Since this particular piece operates with a very unique sense of motion, one that cannot be found in such form elsewhere, I would like to propose the following classification for it. There is an *immediate* motion – one that operates within time, like a regular 24-frames a second recording, that is ever-actual, vivid, and a *sequential* motion – one that happens over time, in specific moments, but in-between, there is no movement, everything is static, just like in this piece. By this I am trying to simplify our perceptive state when we are exposed to different kinds of motion.

The approach from the viewer to a film and to a photograph is different to the very essence. When we see a film, we are always anticipating what will come next, whilst a photograph does not offer this feeling in the same manner. In a film, our attention is generally focused on the flow of the story. We consciously perceive only what the director wants us to, and the rest remains to our unconscious perception. That is because the typical film operates with what I defined as “immediate” motion. The narrative of a photograph is static, it displays things, waiting to be decoded by the perceptive powers of the viewer and a logical reaction is anticipated. A photograph poses a question, or an answer, or association. However, with the photograph we have the time to be pensive and to analyse and add to the image. As Bellour argues – the more time the viewer has, the more meaning will be added to the image. In other words, the photograph has the ability to become fully conscious, since our perception anticipates no “next” frame. That is, because a photograph does not operate “in” time, it rather freezes it and takes the content “out” of time. It is one meaning, one image, no time and no motion and continuity. A rather unconventional way of deconstructing the rules of continuity in film. As Douglas Gordon in his *24 Hour Psycho* managed to detach drama from the film and expose its frame's singularity in a huge time frame, by extracting the motion out of what previously was known to exist only in such a manner. What Gordon actually did, according to my attempt to structuralize the idea of motion, is that he transferred the original footage, which operates with the so called “immediate” motion, to a different one that operates with “sequential” motion. That is a great example that directly accentuates our perceptive state during the anticipation of a moving-image sequence (regardless if it is a film or a video).

*La Jetée*, much like *24-hour Psycho*, provides us with a narrative that is detached from the “immediate” motion, thus exposing us to the concept of “sequential” motion. In this film every photograph is a whole itself and has no need for another photograph, it can stand on its own. Even though we know, *a priori*, that the image will change, as we understand the principle of the film, we are still carefully analysing each and every image, thus triggering us to dedicate our attention not only to what is most important for us to understand the film. We pay complete attention to every detail: silver tones, moving grain, expression, atmosphere, light, for there is no “immediate” motion. By giving priority to single photographs as the main tool for the construction of the narrative, Marker is pointing out the priority of every

scene and every shot. It seems as in every shot of the film the meditative mantra of *here-and-now* is repeated, and thus it is ubiquitous to the whole. That way Marker successfully points out that every part (photograph) of the film is equally important to the narrative.

It seems as this film, constructed the way it is, triggers some certain kind of feeling that is somewhat indescribable. The closest I can get to a description is by referring to Barthes' idea of the "third" or "obtuse" meaning. Maybe it is subjective, as Barthes states. However, he locates the filmic in the still, rather than in the movement ("immediate" motion). Taken that this one is made almost entirely out of still images – photographs, I would say that Chris Marker managed to create a work of art based upon the obtuse, third meaning.

"The filmic is that in the film which cannot be described, the representation which cannot be represented. The filmic begins where language and metalanguage end... The third meaning – theoretically locatable but not describable – can now be seen as the 'passage' from language to 'significance' and the founding act of the filmic itself...the filmic, very paradoxically, cannot be grasped in the film 'in situation', 'in movement', 'in its natural state', but only in that major artefact, the still."(Barthes, 1977: 64-65)

And in Marker's case, I would add, in the photographic.

#### **4. Conclusion: The Media of Communication**

When discussing the "denoted image", Barthes states:

"This is without doubt an important historical paradox: the more technology develops the diffusion of information (and notably of images), the more it provides the means of masking the constructed meaning under the appearance of the given meaning." (Barthes 1977, 46)

From the static motion-picture, the extreme slowness and fragmentation into frames, to the principle of slide-show and creating a cinematic experience by capturing the "filmic", I tried to grasp as many forms of this "grey" area as I found necessary. However, that was the past, and I find it necessary to talk about what is to come, or at least the present. Interesting enough, there is a certain aspect that was not there at the time of creation of most of the



examples in this thesis: and that is the aspect of technology, as we know it in the 21st century. However, technology developed to that extent, that these media-based capabilities are today, more than ever, a part of everyday life, artistic or not. Even though all the art pieces discussed throughout this thesis did not even take place in the near past, but rather the second half of the previous century, they acknowledge and represent a revolution, or if one prefers, an evolution towards the ubiquity of video and photography and the juxtaposition of their characteristics. That way, those works triggered an outcome on a larger cultural and social scale, and for sure play a big role in how these media are interpreted today. Although it is speculation, I find it relevant to state that the way we perceive images and “work” with them on platforms such as Instagram and other predominantly visual social-media, is due to the revolutionary works of art in the previous century, such as the ones discussed before. However, it is inevitable, that through the development of the internet, artists found these platforms quite useful and are successfully participating and creating the “next” revolutionary ways of practicing art through the media of video and photography.

Technology plays a big role in the distribution of information and therefore, images. Photography as much as video, there is no significant difference since both are the most dominant means of communication in the 21st century. I find the idea of “everyone owns a smartphone with a camera” quite similar to the idea of the “accessibility of the Sony Portapak”, as well as “one slide-projector in every ‘good’ household”. By 2017, there were 600 million instagramers, of which 400 million used instagram daily, and of them, 100 million use the Instagram “story” feature daily. I find it necessary to state that the Instagram “story” is a feature much similar to a diary. It requires eloquence and operates on the basis of continuity between images. This is of course not mandatory for the “story” but is a vital aspect when discussing the delivery of meanings through a series of photographs/videos. That way, whoever posts the “story” is publicly exhibiting a visual narrative, not necessarily artistic, but nonetheless an existing one. Surveys as well as Instagram itself shows that in 2018, 95 million photos are uploaded each day and more than 300 million daily on Facebook. Even though Facebook is an immensely large part of everyday lives, I will focus and draw my conclusion in regard to Instagram, since it is a platform (social-media) that is specifically designed to communicate through images, still or moving. So, do people interact with images? – This might as well be a rhetorical question. The numbers are immense, and

communication through images is more present today, than ever before. On a platform such as Instagram, one can post a single image, series of images, videos and even combine them for a purposeful narrative through the “story” feature. However, the use of it is not only for the purpose of making an image (still or moving) but rather advertisement, either individual or corporate, which implies that there “should” be some kind of narrative to the image. These platforms provided a lot of people with the recognition of “public individuals” as well as a lot of companies with a larger profit. Instagram has proved to be successful, for nearly every purpose it stands for. This platform stimulates its users to narrate through images, since text alone is not a possibility. So, through it all, it seems that people are successfully communicating, or rather, delivering messages (meanings) quite efficiently through images, still or moving. So, once it is established that people know how to communicate with images, regardless whether artistic or not, we are to question: can people understand images more than they did before the invention of these platforms? – I strongly believe in an affirmative answer to this question. Regardless of the fact that narrating through images is not necessarily an artistic enterprise – as it once were – the mere idea of doing so is as global as the media itself. So, at the end of the day, there are a lot of people that express themselves and deliver messages (meanings) through images. What this also implies, is that the wider masses – consumers of social-media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook – are getting more and more used to the delivery of meanings through images. And considering the fact that by 2020, 3.8 billion people use social-media daily is a proof that video and photography, as major visual media of communication, with or without all the background and bias acquired throughout the years of artistic use, are media that can be extremely efficient in delivering messages (meanings), now more than ever.

Do these facts about the ubiquitous character of the visuals of social-media make the media themselves more capable of producing messages and meanings outside the industrialised artistic scene? – My argument is that in spite of the long process of implementation both in galleries and in everyday social life (either on social-media or on television), video and photography have somehow taken the primate in terms of communication. Nearly everyone, especially younger generations of the 21st century, are familiar with the use of video and photography and their different contexts in the wide pallet of virtual communication engines. Therefore, because of the ubiquitous character of the

media, it is way more understandable, not only for the so-called "industry" that encapsulates all the artists, academics and critics, but the regular art anticipators around the world. I feel like video and photography have the role of bringing art to the people in a way that has not been seen till now.

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