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JORDAN CRANDALL: ART AND THE CINEMATOGRAPHIC IMAGINARY IN THE AGE OF PANOPTIC DATA PROCESSING

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For many cultural philosophers, film is the 20th century's guiding medium. At the end of the 20th century and the outset of the 21st, more and more artists see film as their primary reference medium, thus confirming the latter's guiding function – David Reed in painting, John Baldessari in photography, Douglas Gordon in video art, to name but a few. Currently, the preferred, not to say exclusive, preoccupation of the video medium is the cinematographic imaginary, as is evidenced by the works of the most respected video artists: Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Doug Aitken, Stan Douglas, Pierre Huyghe, Sam Taylor-Wood, Steve McQueen, etc. However, for these artists – such as Matthew Barney, who transforms Busby Berkeley's musical choreography ideas in *Cremaster* I-VI, or Pipilotti Rist, who appropriates music videos – as for major cultural philosophers (Slavoj Zizek, Elisabeth Bronfen), the point of reference is not avant-garde film, but the Hollywood movie and film as a mass medium. Yet most of these artists do impose upon the medium the new structures of a multiple narrative which they have indeed derived from the history of avant-garde film, by using multiple projections, slow-motion techniques, etc. Today, in many cases art references the cinematographic imaginary as its central aesthetic source.

This process of crossing the avant-garde with the mainstream, of transcending the bounds of aesthetics, culture and production requirements, articulates an attempt by the art of the early 21st century to become socially attractive and by the same token, perhaps more effective, by entering upon a new alliance with the mass media. At the same time, it is also an attempt to disarm an increasingly militarized society, by using information technology to re-civilize society.

Drive is a seven-part video installation that combines traditional film technology with military recognition and target processing techniques, in other words, that subordinates the history of the film to the history of war, as prescribed by the modern media-theory of writers from Paul Virilio to Friedrich Kittler.

The cinema has established a series of conventions for portraying movement. In computer-based tracking and target processing systems, however, movement is shown in a different way – by processing computer data. The database's visual format is imposed

on the film frame in such a way that the two technologies become intermingled. Because they use new digital technologies imbedded in the global systems of the art of war, what these images achieve is less portraying movement than tracking it in the form of moving machines (weapons). Such images mark a transition from the portrayal of movement to the processing of movement. Crandall is one of the outstanding exponents of a new generation of media artists who are consciously aware of this shift from representation to data processing and make it the subject of their work.

Current media art is not concerned with the production of pictures which facilitate the continuation of art history, nor is it interested in plundering that history and thereby satisfying the bourgeois hunger for pictures, as the heroes of video art in the 1980s did. Against the contemporary social background, where signal and data processing plays a central role (from military technology to money transactions by international companies), the new generation of media artists moves within the data landscapes and provides critical insights into the consequences of the processes on which our society is based.

An aesthetics of processing, of networking and targeting technology has replaced the pomp of the images of the past. Crandall and the new generation of media artists have moved from the ruins of representation to the practices of processing. This is the only way in which art can re-civilize particular areas of the military-commercial complex of the information society. The aesthetic method which they use is connected to modern media strategies, namely the mediums of film, Internet and television. This work, which we could call a practice of cross-media, is coordinated with current practices in the field of global media. The global information forum found on the Net is the new reference framework, the arena of action, replacing the picture-frame. From the studio onto the Net, from a picture into physical space, from physical space to the data realm. The locally bound modi operandi for production and reception in classical art are expanded into non-local telecommunication spaces.

In its shift from the cinematographic paradigm to the networked database, *Drive* highlights the arming of perception and the military complexes in which modern images are embedded. Armed vision produces regimented formats that profoundly alter our patterns of perception. If our vision is technically enhanced, and becomes a weapon, then the subject we are observing becomes an object, a target, a victim. Potentially, the act of looking becomes a sadistic act.

With this "strategic perception," *Drive* registers a sexual impulse. With the transference of militarized target-processing technology to subjects, the latter become the targets of an erotic desire to dominate and subjugate. *Drive* views the new erotic worlds that open up within a structure in a way that could otherwise only be described as the

observation technique employed by hunters and their prey. These worlds include new relationships between man and the machine, a new invasive lust that usurps the private sphere and new ways of seeing and being seen simultaneously that lend new dimensions to sadomasochistic and exhibitionist or voyeuristic feelings.

Everyone who passes through an airport today is familiar with the following scene: before boarding the airplane, the passenger is subjected to a series of inspections which aim at expanding and insuring the realm of visibility by erasing every last remnant of invisibility and by dragging every object that evades visibility into the light. A relatively extensive apparatus, a network of detectors and cameras, is constructed to place local events under the dictates of absolute visibility. Thus, at the airport, the regime of the panoptic principle reigns: everything must be seen and everything must be shown.

Under the rituals of control, however, quite different libidinal regimes take form. A social pretext legitimates the massive besiegement of public and social life with voyeuristic and exhibitionist modes of behavior. The pleasure principle of the voyeur, to see everything, and the pleasure principle of the exhibitionist, to show all, have shifted from the fates of private drives to social norms. Voyeurism, exhibitionism, and narcissism are transformed from individual-psychological criteria to social categories. These are accompanied by a narcissistic identification with the all-seeing power of the observer and infantile castration fears of those who do not want to show all. As Foucault has already revealed, behind the mechanisms of surveillance lie the mechanisms of power, which are likewise supported by libidinal mechanisms. These power mechanisms are formed from psychological mechanisms. Through this entanglement, exhibitionism and voyeurism transform from illegitimate to legitimate pleasures. Likewise, the sadistic pleasure associated with controlling the gaze and the masochistic pleasure associated with subordination under the gaze, are afforded new liberties in the social realm. Masochistic and sadistic behavior, exhibitionist and voyeuristic pleasures, invade the public realm and move in new zones whose gestalt is still undetermined. The morphology of desire appears daily in new forms. A theater of drives is concealed beneath the masks of control rituals.

The work of Jordan Crandall is the first journey into this new danger zone. It is already comprehensive in terms of the new sadistic or masochistic pleasures of the panoptic principle, as a study of the transformation of the gaze in the age of the panoptic principle between punishment and pleasure, between pleasure and pain.

The visible field is one of symbolic order, and just as rejections are necessarily arrived at in the symbolic order, the field of the visible necessarily arrives at invisible zones. Many realms of reality are not available to our natural senses. The naked human eye cannot see them, they are only visible through specially created instruments. Thus we do not see the world, but, rather, images of a world that the instruments create for our

eyes. If the image is the only reality that signifies the sensually experienced reality, and if the reality is no longer available to our natural senses, then it becomes a matter of correctly interpreting the image. There are, in effect, instruments that penetrate deeper and further into reality than the human eye. Photographic conditions therefore also determine the conditions of the world.

The postmodern formulation of that which is visible refers to the technology of seeing, to the images of the technological world, to the experience of technical seeing. Technical seeing teaches us that there is a reality which is invisible (to the naked eye), but which can be made visible in (technical) images. Visibility and invisibility, the visible and the hidden, form a new equation in the technical world: the hidden can become visible; the visible can contain the invisible. An invisible reality can become visible in images. A repressed reality is articulated in images because the reality principle is not sufficient to solve the conflicts. The pleasure principle assures that the psychological function of attention withdraws from phenomena that do not stir desire – it represses them. But since desires cannot be satisfied by reality, they are satisfied through images that function like hallucinations. The result is post-real satisfaction. The images of the mass media show the social subconscious, repressed collective desires and fears. A visible world can show the invisible in images. Actors on the political stage who also cannot achieve the reality principle produce the depraved and ideologically excluded as images. Through real deeds they produce images for the mass media in order to make the socially repressed visible. The postmodern image-theory of simulation, as Baudrillard explains, is "the desert of the real," the agony and the repression of the real, precisely because of the fact that the images to which we make reference become reality. We produce for the images. A postmodern image-theory therefore does not begin with an observation of the world, but rather with an observation of the image. The communicative act occurs through images. And this act refers, in particular, to the shifting of the zones of visibility and diaphanousness. Visibility is controlled as though with a regulator. The visible field becomes a mobile hatch; the screen is the regulator that travels along the zones of visibility. The visible field becomes a variable zone, in which the diaphanous state of the object is likewise variable. This variable visibility and diaphanousness is a decisive characteristic of the postmodern world after the technological transformation of the earth, after the establishment of the rule of electromagnetic waves and beams via radio, TV, and satellite. Total global control via satellite, GPS, and data surveillance is precisely this variable visibility and diaphanousness; its power but also its border.

This variability of the visual zones and the increasing diaphanousness can also be seen in the mass media in the realm of entertainment. Today's society of the spectacle, as Debord denounced the advancing reification of culture – and as Adorno and

Horkheimer had already done in 1947 in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* – has reached its final point in the so-called reality shows and in the afternoon talk shows where people expose their most intimate emotions. The same panoptic principle, which George Orwell still felt to be a threat when he summed up his political experience with the totalitarian systems of National Socialism and Stalinism – the authoritarian system of total observation, which he described as "Big Brother" in his 1949 novel *1984* – has sunk back into the entertainment industry. There, however, the panoptic principle is felt as neither threat nor punishment, but rather as amusement, liberation, and pleasure.

In the reality shows *Big Brother* in Germany, *Loft Story* in France, and *Taxi Orange* in Austria, staged by TV stations for the mass audience, the panoptic principle, "everything must be seen and all must be shown," is put into effect more than ever before as a model for becoming immune to the society of the future. Observation is not a menace; observation is entertaining. In the field of surveillance the panoptic pleasures of exhibitionism and voyeurism, or scopophilia, unfold. The TV viewers at home are members of a television society, inhabitants of a mediatized world, enlightened in the ways of the artificial, technological far-senses ("tele" means "far" in Greek) such as television, telephone, telex. They observe the inhabitants of a long-lost "near-society" without newspapers, TV, fax, phone, etc.; they watch cave-life, so to speak, which consists of close communication, face-to-face communication. The container is prison as entertainment. From the heights of "far-society," the people of the historical "near-society" are observed like diaphenes, transparent images. They are the objects of seeing. They cannot see the TV observers, just as the prisoners could not see the guards. Masculinity, femininity, humanity become spectacles, objects of the gaze, sources providing the pleasure of power, the pleasure of sadism, voyeurism, exhibitionism, scopophilia, and narcissism.

Andy Warhol was not only the pope of Pop, but also the pope of soap. In his early video works and films such as *Outer and Inner Space* (1965) and *Screen Test* (1965) he exploits the narcissism of his community members. His factory was the first container in TV history, the first arena for reality TV. The lives of the members of his factory community were documented as comprehensively as the technological means available at the time allowed. Every conversation was tape-recorded, every telephone call documented (see *A: A Novel*, 1968); there was constant photographing and filming. Warhol exploited the exhibitionism and narcissism of his factory members and made use of the voyeurism of the mass media. Just like every sweatshop production, the owner becomes a millionaire and most of the production workers leave empty handed or die from amphetamines and other drugs that supported the staging of them as diaphenes, "eccentrics," and "originals" – as their radical and uninhibited physical and mental intimacy exhibited before the cameras. Possession and destruction are well-known his-

torical strategies of sexuality in the Western world. Warhol's world presented these new strategies for the first time: surveillance is enjoyment; observation is entertaining. Warhol was a pioneer, paving the way for the soap operas, game shows, and reality shows.

Good Morning, Mr. Orwell (1984) by Nam June Paik is a further example of media art that cleared the way for the mass-media game shows and afternoon talk shows. On the occasion of the Orwell year, 1984, a live broadcast was made from Centre Pompidou in Paris and the studios of WNET-TV in New York. A heterogeneous mixture of Pop (Peter Gabriel, Laurie Anderson, Philip Glass, Urban Sax) and avant-garde (Joseph Beuys, Ben Vautier, John Cage, Maurizio Kagel) was electronically collaged and transformed. Through a split-screen technique, the TV picture showed simultaneous events occurring in different locations. *Good Morning, Mr. Orwell* was broadcast at the same time in Korea, the Netherlands, and Germany. The panoptic principle turned into the pleasure principle.

Two models of explanation can be offered for this transformation in the reception of the panoptic principle. On the one hand, a psychological explanation: new forms of voyeurism and exhibitionism have formed under the new conditions of the gaze in the technical age. In her influential essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975), Laura Mulvey investigated cinematic spectatorship and came to the conclusion that film is constructed as an instrument of the male gaze which designs images of women from a male point of view. In mainstream cinema, the man is the subject of the gaze and the woman is the object of seeing. The male gaze controls, and not only enjoys dominance and the pleasure of power to the point of sadism ("pleasure lies in ascertaining guilt – asserting control and subjecting the guilty person to punishment or forgiveness"), but also enjoys the infantile "scopophilia," the pleasure involved in looking at other people's bodies as (erotic) objects. The woman becomes an image, a spectacle. Men do the looking; women are there to be looked at. The situation of the warden in the panoptic prison is repeated in the cinema. In the darkness of the auditorium, neither the figures on the movie screen nor the members of the audience see the observer, whereas they see the persons on the movie screen. This situation of the panoptic prison also applies to the spectatorship in front of the TV screens of game shows and reality shows such as *Big Brother*. A group of people lives in a container and is observed by a crowd of cameras. The viewers in front of the picture screen see everything. The inhabitants of the container see nothing. Exhibitionism and voyeurism complement each other, like the sadism of control and the masochism of being controlled. Additionally, the formation of narcissistic processes of identification with power or an ideal self are made easier, as is the voyeuristic process of transformation of a gazing subject into an object subjected to the gaze.

This formation of new scopophilic pleasures and other pleasures of surveillance also has a social relevance, which offers the second model of explanation: development of new forms of desire and of gaze serves for conforming to future social relations. "Enjoying surveillance" means enjoying the advancing militarization of perception and the progressing armament of society. When in fact, as can be observed, society is militarily and technically arming visibility, when the experience of the world is determined by the media apparatus from film to television, and even daily life is ever more mediatized through the omnipresence of surveillance cameras, then the danger lurks that under this increasing pressure of surveillance and control, the population will feel a sense of unease and eventually begin to protest, demonstrate, and even revolt against the system of control. To avoid civil revolt against the future surveillance state, the population is acquainted with, and adapted to, progressively increasing doses through the entertainment media. The entertainment industry has always fulfilled this function in totalitarian systems: becoming increasingly accustomed to advancing repression through the entertainment media and voluntarily sacrificing to surveillance in the containers of the thousand eyes of Doctor Mabuse, voluntarily becoming the victim of total control. In these new zones of reinforced, technically armed visibility, surveillance is not perceived as a threat or a punishment, as Foucault described the disciplinary society, but instead – finally having arrived at the society of the spectacle – surveillance is enthusiastically enjoyed. Instead of punishment, surveillance becomes pleasure.

Jordan Crandall's work introduces our attention critically to these new forms of social adaptation to totalitarian regimes disguised as enjoying surveillance and as spectacles of panoptic pleasures and pains, of narcissism, of sadomasochism, of voyeurism and exhibitionism.

This transformation of surveillance from punishment to pleasure and the psychological mechanisms on which that is based, as well as the related structures of power are very explicitly expressed in the films *Rear Window* (1954) by Alfred Hitchcock and *Peeping Tom* (1960) by Michael Powell. In these films, the camera becomes a voyeuristic eye, and finally, a sadistic eye (*Peeping Tom*). In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault wrote: "Our society is not one of spectacle but of surveillance... We are neither in the amphitheatre, nor on the stage, but in the panoptic machine." But it seems apparent to us that in postmodern society, surveillance can become spectacle and that people can enjoy surveillance as a spectacle because seeing is entangled with sexuality and power (a further theme of Foucault). Martin Jay, in *Downcast Eyes* (1993), wrote:

> Freud came to believe that the very desire to know, rather than being innocent, was itself ultimately derived from an infantile desire to see, which had sexual origins. Sexuality, mastery and vision were thus intricately intertwined in ways that could produce problematic as well as 'healthy' effects. Infantile scopophilia could result in adult voyeurism or other perverse disorders such as exhibitionism and scopophobia (the fear of being seen).

Fear too, belongs in the topology of enjoyment, and horror is also on the psychological road map of voyeurism. Terror and voyeurism, joy and fear are rings of a common geometry.

This geometry shapes the topology of contemporary and future society. Crandall is the first artist who gives us a vision of this geometry, an insight into a dark zone of new pleasures and pains within a techno-militaristic controlled society. His vision of the armed vision of today comments the "fear studies" that accompany the transformations of American society. Various forms of fear crept out from the refusal to reform the real conditions of the panoptic principle: sociophobia, cultural conspiracy, plagues of paranoia. Crandall's cinema shows the Janus-head of the panoptic principle, from which the cinema arose: seeing and being seen, visual pleasure and paranoia. His art shows us the two roots of the cinematographic experience and its dangerous future in a media society based on armed vision. It shows the real face of a society based on cinematographic media: paranoid scopophilia as the agent of a panoptic regime.