The Time of Affect, or Bearing Witness to Life

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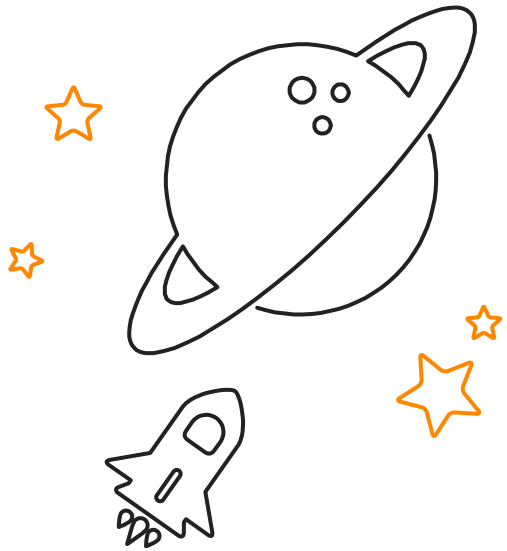
Structure

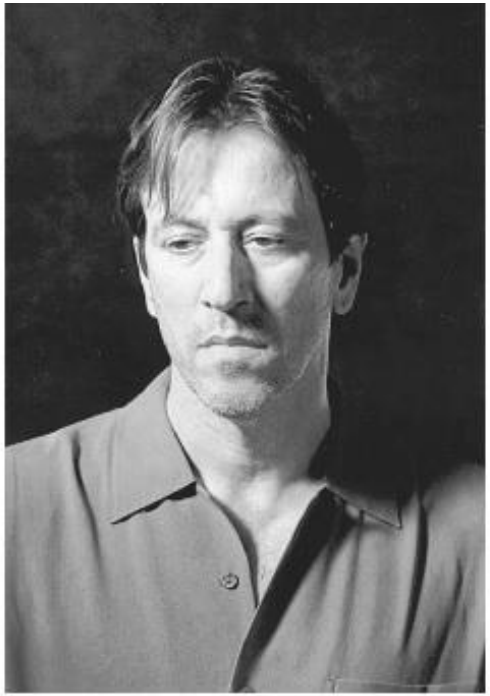
1. Introduction-Experiment
2. From image to body
3. Technicity
4. Double intentionality
5. Body
6. The Now, Technically Expanded
7. Bearing Witness to Life, or the Subject, Technically Expanded



INTRODUCTION

(born August 2, 1965), American literary scholar and media theorist.

- The digital image is no longer to be understood as an independent object, but only as a process that requires both an interface and an embodied recipient.
- The affective-bodily "bottom" of every act of perception would first become accessible to experience, which should be regarded as an active extension of affective potentials of the human body



EXPERIMENT

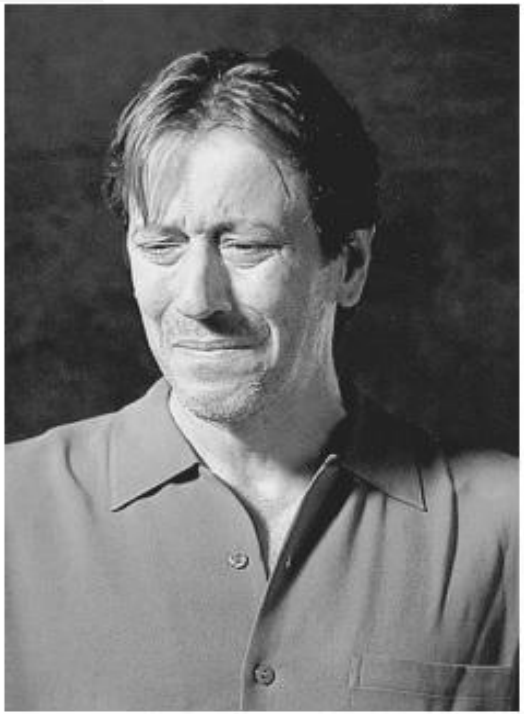
1. Asian woman: neutral emotional state, not certain of what she is looking at, struggling

2. Man in the middle: another neutral expression, indicates reflections about something, indifferent to the surroundings

3. Curly-haired woman: similar expression, however, sideway glance, slightly pursed lips

Images are moving! But due to physiological actions it seems like they are stasis.

80 minutes later..



1. The man: in depths sorrow, mouth curved downward, face tensed, eyes squinted

2. Curly-haired woman: some kind of shock, looking at something, eyes wide open, eyebrows are raised, mouth drooping, shoulders arched

3. Asian woman: state of inward bliss, close mouth, wide smile, cheeks scrunched and puffy, eyes clenched, shoulders inward

Those images still seems static.
Those images are portraying emotional vicissitudes of life that, paradoxically, remain imperceptible to your eye.

Images portraying the passage among the four primary emotions of joy, sorrow, anger, and fear.

We encounter in this work is the rich texture of the microstages in between recognizable or discrete emotional states.

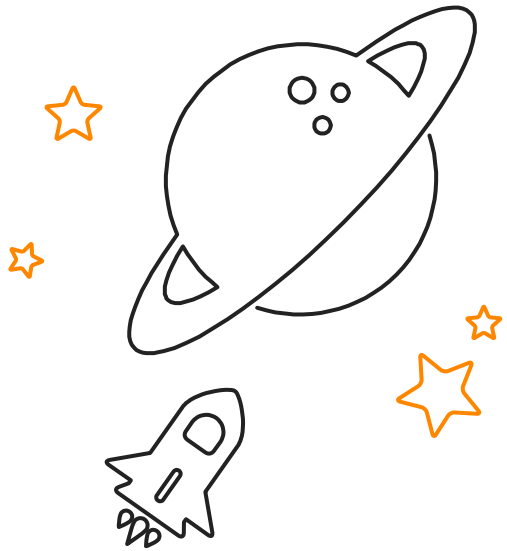
Interstitial microstages of affectivity are imperceptible because they happen too slowly.

Watching second time with that in mind: gives a feeling that you've lived through something quite intense, even if oddly unidentifiable.

Hansen (by using this experiment): Affection undergoes a technical expansion.

By opening the imperceptible in-between of emotional states, Viola's *Anima* exemplifies the capacity of new media to broker a technical enlargement of the threshold of the now, to intensify the body's subject-constituting experience of its own vitality.

Insofar as new media art invests in the bodily experience of affectivity, intensifying it and enlarging its scope.



FROM IMAGE TO BODY

In classic cinema: the open merged with the indirect representation of time: everywhere where there was movement, there was a changing whole open somewhere, in time.
What counts is on the contrary the interstice between images.

The time-image involves an opening of the image to something not only outside the frame but outside the whole set of images that can potentially be framed.

Deleuze's concept of the time-image marks the culmination of a logic of disembodiment.

Viola's configuration of time, image, and body proposes is precisely the irreducibility, as well as the privilege, of bodily mediation in the experience of time as self-affection (subjectivity).

Douglas Gordon

Gordon excavates the temporal dimension of cinema through a practice that is specific to video as the privileged mode through which images, as the very material basis of contemporary perception, are actually lived or experienced.

Effect of the presentation in *24 Hour Psycho* film is an eerie experience of protracted anticipation as well as a sobering insight into temporal relativity.

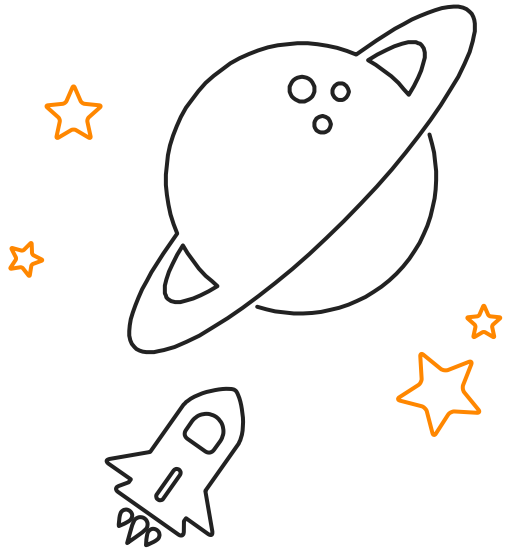
Viewers quickly find their attention intensely concentrated on anticipating this moment of change.
Gordon’s technical modifications of cinema are designed specifically to induce particular physiological effects.

Contrasted with Deleuze’s conception, Gordon’s work thus relocates the time-image from a purely mental space.

Short summary

Because of Gordon's, Deleuze’s claim that new circuits in the cinema must generate new cerebral circuitsineffect repudiates the very cognitive revolution on which it claims to draw.

Gordon’s work contests Deleuze’s model of the time image precisely by questioning such a direct transmission of time into experience.
It contest not only his cinema model, but also the model of the brain as something irrational.



TECHNICITY

Douglas Gordon:

>Constituted raw material for his manipulations

>Focused on the pole of playback and not on that of recording

>Show 2 frames in 1 second -> not smooth

Viola’s Anima:

>Project clip seamlessly at normal speed:

>Overabundance of affective information with smooth continuous overlay image

>Embodied sensation of self-affection

Technical expansion of subjectivity

To grasp the radicality of this expansion:
Self-affection happened because of technology and the changing form of video(recording)

Husserl:
>The consciousness of the self flowing in time, be dependent on technical mediation.

Stiegler:
>Account for the correlation of being and technics
“Our effort to grasp the flux of our own consciousness encounters a structural deferral or *differance* because what is to be grasped (the flux itself) would always be already gone by at the moment of grasping.”

Introducing technicity

tertiary memory(third form of retention)	>storage of the past in forms that allow it to be revivified or assumed by consciousness in the present >re-present its own past >protentions and retentions
secondary memory	Retentions
primary retention	Current consciousness base on the media technologies

-Perceiving the same temporal object twice>recognizing some form of selection within retention
(The first audition modifies the second audition)

@Tertiary memory becomes the operator of contamination to primary and secondary memory(image-consciousness)

>Consciousness simply is “cinematographic”

>Center of post-production in charge of editing, staging and realizing the flux of primary, secondary, and tertiary retentions.

Double Intentionality

Challenging Stiegler:

Stiegler:

The material available for consciousness to intend has been preselected, part of the job of consciousness has been taken over by technology, that is, by tertiary memory

>>>>intended

Husserl:

Every experience is ‘consciousness”.

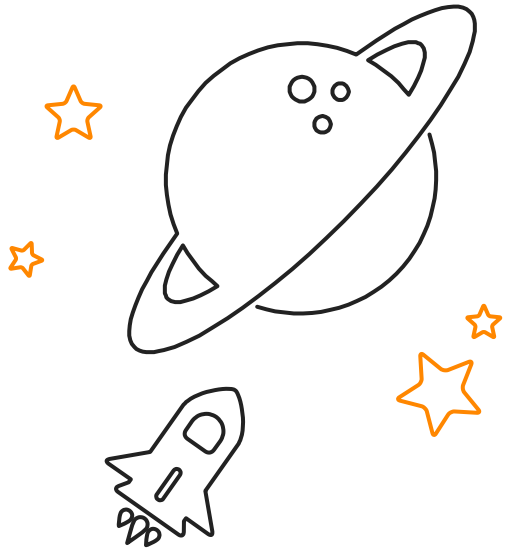
Consciousness is always consciousness of itself experienced and to that extent also intended this being intended is consciousness of the experience.

>>>>Consciousness exist also beyond and in every time.

Double Intentionality:
a consciousness of the content of the flux
a consciousness of the flux itself

P.600>> 3 disadvantage of Stiegler’s theory

>Not impacted by our conscious recollection of the first experience in its entirety or as a preselected unit, but rather by our largely unconscious, deeply embodied, and singular response to particular aspects of it.



BODY

Thickness of Now (Merleau- Ponty)

> The extension of the thickness of the now by the very technologies that can invade primary retention in the first place

Reason:
presence explains the intimate correlation between time and the subject(p.603)

Method:
Thickness of the present by embedding it in the context of a phenomenology of the living body.

Retention vs recollective:

Retention designates a mode in which the past remains with the living present
(continuity of the past that inheres in living presence - the simultaneously time-constituting and time-constituted living body)

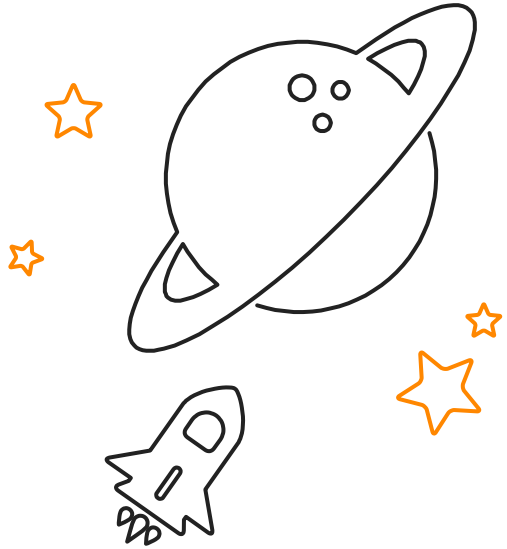
VS

Recollection is itself grounded in embodied retention
(re-presents a moment of the past and retention)

Ecological relationship

>Time differs fundamentally from any object in the world because it discloses subject and object as two abstract ‘moments’ of a unique structure which is *presence*.

>time-consciousness and temporal object = living being (subject) and environment (world)



THE NOW, TECHNICALLY EXPANDED

The Now, Technically Expanded

- Viola's experimentation with radical temporal acceleration & deceleration
- The now enlarged
- Rather than opening the now to the past, **intensifies the now** by overloading it with stimuli (units of information) imperceptible to natural perception

The *Passions* Series

- Project “The Representation of the Passions” - Getty Research Center
- “How the extremes of emotion - in which the ability to reflect is actually lost - can be visually depicted”

Quintet of the Astonished (2000)

- “I am interested in what the Old Masters didn’t paint, those steps in between.”

*I was most interested in opening up the **spaces between the emotions**. I wanted to focus on **gradual transitions** - the idea of emotional expression as a continual fluid motion. This meant that the **transitions** [...] **is just as important as the main emotion itself**.*

The Now, Technically Expanded

vitality affects

designate normally imperceptible facial (and bodily) cues that signal the very fact of the body’s aliveness

categorical affects

designate the emotions proper

Quintet of the Astonished (2000)

Stiegler's tertiary memory

comprises a nonlived *content* of consciousness

Viola's affective excess

cannot be a content of perception

-> a nonlived paradoxically *within* the living present

The *Passions* Series

- Motivation: “the paradoxical duplicity of emotions that are both the most fleeting of experiences and in some curious sense autonomous from or outside of experience”
- Peculiar autonomy of emotion from the temporal flux of perception
- “Emotions are outside of time”

Technicity

Stiegler

= exteriority of the nonlived past

Viola

= mediator between perception and affectivity

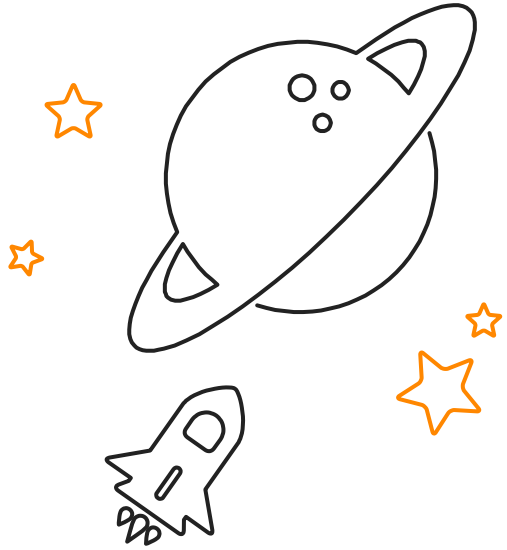
The essence of the medium [of video] is time.

Dolorosa (2000) & *The Locked Garden* (2000)

- Unreadable grammatization of life that can only be felt
- Break the time barrier
- Bring us face to face with life, call forth our own vitality as the medium for experiencing life

Dolorosa (2000) & *The Locked Garden* (2000)

- Life = properly unrecordable, always in excess of, faster than, what can be inscribed & made available for repetition



BEARING WITNESS TO LIFE, OR THE SUBJECT, TECHNICALLY EXPANDED

- Viola’s works put us in touch with a dimension of the living - affectivity - that renders our perception passive.
- Subjectivity is a transductive relation between affectivity & perception, between that in us which exceeds us and that which seeks to capture it as content.

Observance (2002)

- Commonality of emotional expression vs “many emotions & no point of focus” (*Quintet*)
- Collective individuation - transindividuation
- Revitalized “culture of mourning”

THANKS!

Any questions?