

Computational Cinema

Elektra festival, May 7th & 10th, 2009

Martijn van Boven

total playing time 65'

In the midst of the '60s digital computer, technology and software became a field of research to a few artist and scientist in search for new visual and musical dialect. Where thru coding a meta language, formal compositions of lines, blocks and other graphic representations of codes became the main subject of their artistic research. This artistic theme in computer art faded away in the '80 when the pursuit to create the photorealistic image via computer modeling, rendering and to serve as a special effects tool for hollywood became the hegemony thought in computer science and artistic research.

This theme of visualizing codes of complex digital structures, methods and the relation between sound and image that underline the working of the computer's inner information flow became the interest once again by a new generation of artist. This film programme brings together a group of artists, thru out the young evolving history of computer art, sharing methods and a visual language which is unique in our contemporary (digital) media culture.

Catalog

John Whitney, 1961, 7' 30" 16mm, mono

This film was realized with an analogical computer. It was realized in the fifties as an exercises on points or letters that distort themselves, decompose themselves and reconstruct themselves, with an accompaniment of synthetic sounds. Originally produced for the television or for films – for example *Vertigo* by Hitchcock (1958). In 1961, it meets in *Catalog* for seven minutes as an ensemble of graphic results reduction or expansion of points and lines.

Opus 3

Pierre Hebert, 1967, 7', 16mm, mono

Pierre Hebert's early films were primarily camera-less and used abstract shapes, often on screen for only a single frame in combination with percussive soundtracks. They played with visual and rhythmic perception, one of this films was *Opus #* (1967), he began experimenting with computer animation, again emphasizing non-representational, cyclically repeating images. In these early film years, several of the elements that characterize his work are evident: the rough, jagged-incised image; the repetition and variation of elements within the work – what Hebert now refers to as "microcycles," and the strong, complicated sense of music and sound/image relations.

- Chis Gehman

Poemfield #7

Stan Vanderbeek, 1971, 6', 16mm, mono

Poemfield # 7 is the organization of electronic written calligraphy in black and white colorized by brown tones. The motives were realized according to a random computer program which was programmed with the aid of Ken Knowlton.

This film, accompanied with the music of John Cage, is an accidental lyric transposition of the Christian myth of the cross.

Olympiade

Lilian Schwartz, 1973, 5', video, stereo

Study in motion based on Muybridge's photographs of man-running. "Figures of computer stylized athletes are seen in brilliant hues chasing each other across the screen. Images are then reversed and run across the screen in the other direction; then images are flopped until athletes are running in countless ways ... not unlike a pack of humanity on a football field." Bob Lehmann, *Today's Film-maker* magazine. Lincoln Center Animation Festival of the 5th New York Film Festival. (3 min. 20 sec.)

Arabesque

John Whitney, 1975, 8'

The film director shows by means of graphic representation this architecture according to severe motives that move themselves in the time) as in Arabesque (1975). One applies to the graphic motion and to its elements (points, pixels, digits) harmonic outlines.

Out these harmonic structures arises digital harmony: to produce motives evolving in the time; organized motives of faces in expansion or in contraction that produce visual melodies, continuations of harmonious forms. The color introduces an additional dimension to the graphic drama, it gives the film texture and becomes the orchestration of the film.

Calculated Movements

Larry Cuba, 1985, 6'

Calculated Movements was produced at Cuba's studio in Santa Cruz on the Datamax UV-1 personal computer with Tom DeFanti's Zgrass graphics language. This is a raster-graphic system that allowed Cuba to work for the first time with solid areas and "volumes" rather than just dots of light. The result, both in design and dynamism, is strongly reminiscent of the films of Oskar Fischinger.

if there is a Bach of abstract animation it is Larry Cuba. - Gene Youngblood

The Kiss

Rafael Montanez Ortiz, 1986, 5'30".

'In my video work, I seek to suspend time, to magnify beyond all proportion the fantasy, dream, or nightmare I glimpse in even the most realistic straightforward documentary footage, in even the most innocent storyline.' (Rafael Montanez Ortiz). Montanez Ortiz' working method consists of appropriating one segment of just a few seconds of an old movie or musical recording that he transfers onto a laser disc so that he can use a computer to manipulate the 'frames' and sound to optimal effect. This results in a new and longer work in which the frames of the original film are exposed, re-arranged and sometimes repeated. This 'deconstructivist' method not only allows Ortiz to reveal an apparently complete and completed moment or to reconstruct it as a new and complex story with different temporal and psychological dimensions, it also enables him to elicit fresh meaning from that moment.

Vincit Veritas

Reml 2002, 10' 35mm, dolby Surround

Blue, green, red, crackling and popping – this is how Vincit Veritas commences. In uneven movement, blocks of color are driven vertically across the screen, evoking memories of technical problems experienced with the now almost historical apparatus used for film projection, of the series of frames which could get out of the proper rhythm, thereby destroying the illusion. At the same time, Vincit Veritas itself is big cinema, a swan song in the form of a flare-up, shot on 35mm film for the big screen. reMI, in images which push the viewer's sense of perception to its limits with their dizzying succession and nauseating changes in color and direction, has produced a study in the field of culture theory.

C.E.B. Reas, 2005, 6'30"

This work is a video documentation of live software derived from short text instructions explaining processes which define networks. Organic form emerges from precise mechanical structures. Strict minimal rules are tempered with intuition to form dense kinetic surfaces.

Chronomops

tina Frank, 2005, 2'

Tina Frank's Chronomops opens doors to truly different dimensions: different than digital art's reductionist studies so common today, different than the serially laid out minimalist images, and different than the omnipresent filtering and layering experiments.

Chronomops opens up a shimmering, colorful space that is simultaneously an excess of color, frenzy of perception, and pop carousel. An abstract architecture of vertical color bars is set in endless rotation, whereby the modules and building blocks fly around themselves—and the entire system likewise rotates. The forced movement forms a digital maelstrom whose suction pulls the observer deep into it.

– Christian Höller

Additional information

Elekra festival

<http://www.elekramontreal.ca/2009/>

Sonic Acts

<http://www.sonicacts.com>

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<http://www.474746.org>