

THE CONTINUOUS VIEW
PRACTICES OF ATTRACTION IN THE
MOVING IMAGE

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requirements of the Royal College of Art
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ABSTRACT

This PhD project proposes the idea of ‘attractions’ as a tool for the critical analysis and reassessment of moving images. The term ‘attraction’ is not a description of textual features, but an interpretation of a dynamic interchange between the spectator and the screen. My methodology for this research examines the structuring principles of ‘attractions’, focusing on the single shot looped film. I reflect upon its relationship with narrative, its modes of temporality and its method of audience address.

My practical enquiry develops moving image works that incorporate these principles and attempt to reconfigure the perceptions of time through the movement of objects and things. In my written component, I accordingly expand and develop an understanding of the term ‘attractions’ to include practices that resist narrative integration, practices ranging from the ‘pre-cinematic’ devices of the nineteenth century, through the avant-garde filmmakers of the 1970s, and finally to contemporary digital developments.

The moving image loop has become a common mode of gallery presentation. However, there have been few enquiries into its mode of spectator address. I do not believe that adequate distinctions have been drawn between practices of narrative integration and practices that demonstrate ‘attractive’ principles. This research therefore considers the articulation of temporality, questions of narration, and the structural determinants shaping the moving image. I attempt to redefine these practices and to provide new answers by pointing to neglected connections between practices of narrative and practices of ‘attraction’.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification.

The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Signature Criodhna Costello

Date 10th May 2015

INTRODUCTION

This enquiry reflects on the notion ‘attraction,’ its use and usefulness, within the field of cinema and beyond. My project develops moving image works that attempt to reconfigure perceptions of time. These works are developed through an examination of the different paradigms pertaining to ‘attractions,’ which I reapply to a series of looped works. The term ‘attraction,’ as employed in the phrase ‘cinema of attractions,’ coined by Tom Gunning and André Gaudreault in relation to early cinema, is all about the cinema's ability to engage the viewer's curiosity, to directly address the spectator and to solicit a conscious awareness of the film image.

The starting point for this research project is an encounter with the origins of the moving image and the apparatuses of early cinematic ‘attractions.’ My position within this enquiry reflects a practitioner's response to the narrative lineages, which up to now have been used to frame the discussions of moving image practices. My moving image works depict extended autonomous ‘moments’ through the cinematic transformation of everyday actions and sights. While narrative is designed to evoke expectations of an oncoming ending, I attempt to tune viewers into a richness of the times that lie between and to create moments that possess their own weight and presence. These works attempt to reformulate the mode of ‘attractions’ through extended loops.

My methodology examines the structuring principles of ‘attractions’ focusing on the single shot film, the loop, its relationship with narrative, its modes of temporality and its method of audience address. Through the use of framing, actions are dissected and re-presented, forming a view that repeatedly examines abstracted movements. Focusing on minimal actions with no dramatic subjects and no climax, these moving image works consist mostly of spectacle and movement rather than consequential action or plot. They blend together beginnings and endings, and address the viewer through spectacular displays rather than through diegetic absorption or narrative integration. Although the continuity of the action does develop a minimal narrative, it remains only on the level of a first-degree narrative sequence. What thus emerges is the pull of ‘attraction,’ or a way of presenting a series of views to an audience that fascinate strictly based on their illusory power.

The Loop

By dissecting motion and re-presenting it, I explore a representation of time that is incarnated through a temporally circumscribed framework of the loop, where repetition is not conceived as supplementary accumulation, but as an essential operation. This act of editing sets in motion a structure that reconfigures the boundaries of space and time and creates an ‘attractional’ mode of address to the spectator rather than a narrative one. The loop is an interruption to the linear forward movement of the film, it is its re-articulation through editing. Instead of following the tradition that works have an exposition, a climax and a denouement, these works have a cyclical structure.

As a form, it can bind, separate, and refuse a single shape. It can fuse its ends together so neatly that the break becomes impossible to ascertain. There are manifold possibilities for its modeling: it can be a Möbius strip, a succession of rings, or a cat's cradle. My practice develops what I perceive as two overlapping forms of loops; the 'continuous' and the 'reiterating.' These loops vary from an almost seamless sense of a continual moment to those where the loops are recognisable and form a temporal rhythm that disrupts the sense of narrative progression. In the works that employ a 'continuous' loop the viewer is aware less of repetition than of extended continuity. The lack of punctuation through these loops is essential to create the effect of an uninterrupted and perpetual composition. Repetition is employed not to build on our memory of what it repeats, but as if this were the first time we had seen it. In contrast, a 'reiterating' loop is a pulsing vibrating force. You see the repetition happen before your eyes and so you are forced to deal with it as repetition. If 'continuous' loops attenuate the repetitiveness of the loop, then 'reiterating' ones foreground it, not by speeding up the video, but by fragmenting a portion of action into highly concentrated short loops with a distinctive moment and act repeated.

Viewing

Part of the aim of these moving image works is to explore the extent to which the gallery is another site for a spectacular experience. I do not want to privilege the gallery over the movie theatre, the home, or any other site of spectatorship,

however, I embrace the gallery, not because it is a ‘neutral’ space (we come to it with just as many cultural preconceptions as we do a movie theatre), but because it implies different rules than the movie theatre or a domestic setting. Within the gallery, the loop is a temporal form whose length is chosen by the viewer. We are relatively unbound by the start times and the rows of seats of the theatre. Even though we come and go as we please, the film will seemingly always be playing. This space provides an opportunity for us to pay attention to both the spectacle of the film and our presence in the gallery watching scenes slowly unfold.

Temporality

The loop contradicts the linear structure we typically associate with time. The common-sense formulation understands time as a progression forward from moment to moment, with a clear division of past, present and future. However, the universe in which the moving image loop occurs is that of a perpetual present, every element in the film is both before and after every other element. This temporality literally cuts up the time of cause and effect. These actions are presented with reference only to themselves and are therefore dependent not on causality but on repetition. The classical narrative structure, which is usually tamed by causation and the continuity of shots, is displaced by the continuous present. This displacement eddies the narrative flow allowing the spectator to experience the materiality of time beyond narration. The attention of the viewer is held through minimal developments, spectacle, the passage of time and the reoccurrence of a looped action.

Repetition

As with all repetitive series, the first encounter may strike us as new, and the second is likely to seem a derivation from the first, its ghost, or shadow. But the ubiquity of repetition in these works prevents us from seeing the first time through as necessarily primary, or any subsequent time through as terminal. Even though it may consist of the same piece of digital code read over and over again, each loop happens in a different instance and becomes, at each pass, a singularity unfolding in the present. The identical frame recurs later in time, and so it is a different time-space unit received by a later, aged, audience. In other words, each repetition of the loop is fundamentally different because we experience it in a continually shifting present of a different 'now.' Our perception of it changes as we become conscious of our accumulating memory of the image layering upon itself. The growth of the work, from one identical loop to another, makes exact repetition impossible.

Watching the same image over and over tends to intensify a self-conscious reflective viewing experience, in this way the loop can fracture the overwhelming familiarity of the moving image, blocking our most ingrained visual habits so that something else can take place. The process of thought, when given the opportunity to somehow be diverted from representations of progress and narrative, opens up the possibility of being transformed by the reflection on the condition of time itself. In the viewing of these loops, we may not completely escape the dominance of our own temporal coordinates, but it may be enough that we circle it in a different way to a different rhythm for a moment.

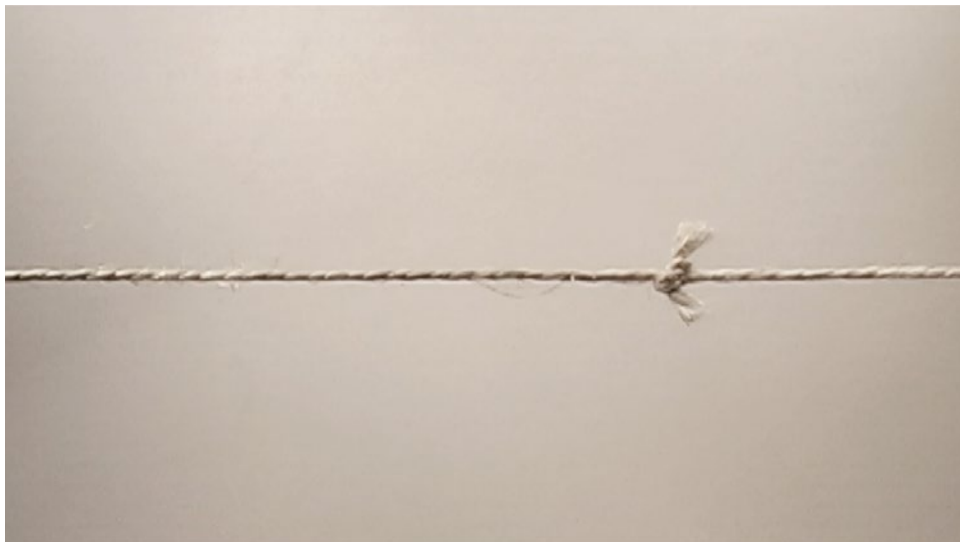
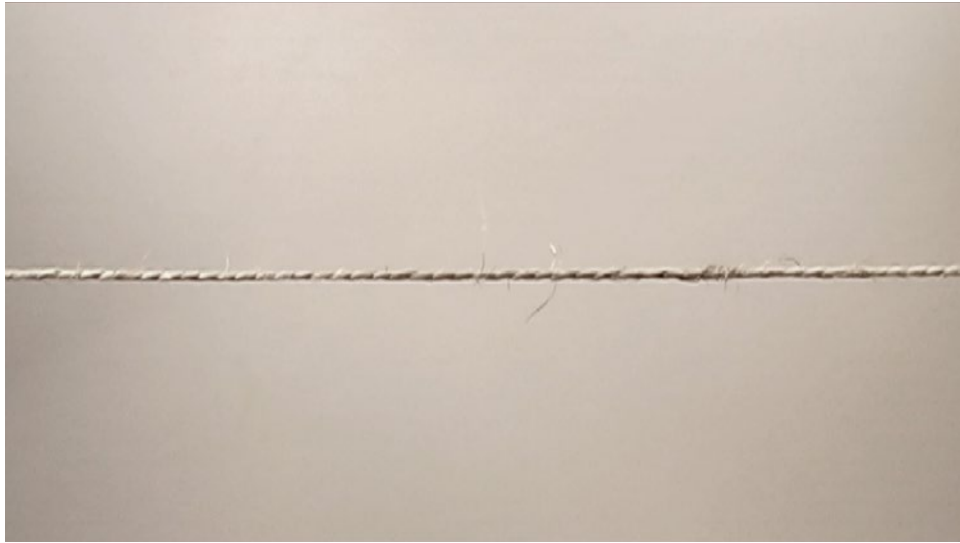


Figure 1: *String* (2008) Criodhna Costello

Examples

String

2008, DVD projection, 3 minutes (loop)

In all moving image loops that begin with a determined piece of footage to be looped, a break will always occur, a moment of rupture, a lingering non-finality or a moment when the image loops back around to the beginning. And while this moment of rupture may appear to be imperceptible, it will always be present in a looped work, even if only conceptually. When an identical frame repeats, it recurs later in time, and is a later instant of projection that builds even if it is the same piece of film, video tape or digital code.

This moving image work highlights this paradox of a linear structure within the recurring loop, and folds this moment of rupture within the structure of continuity.

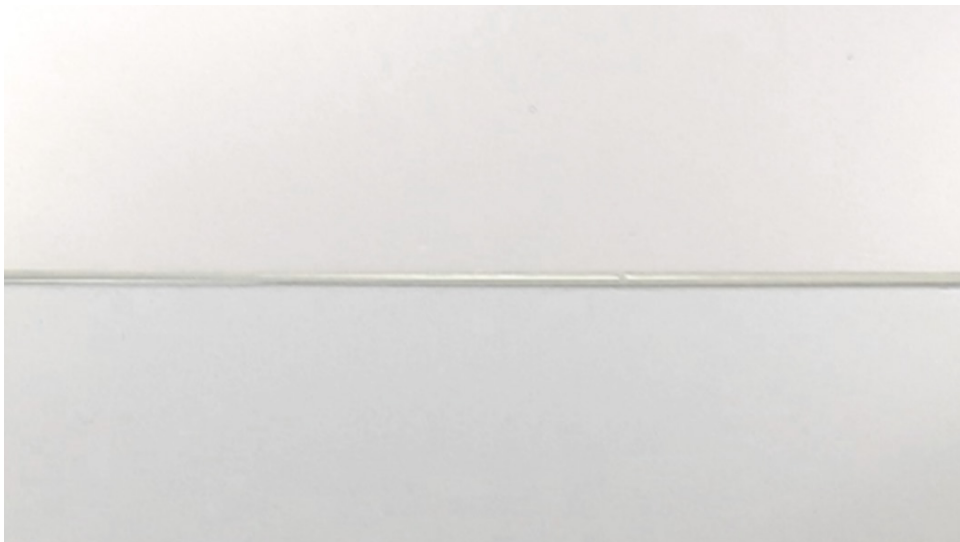
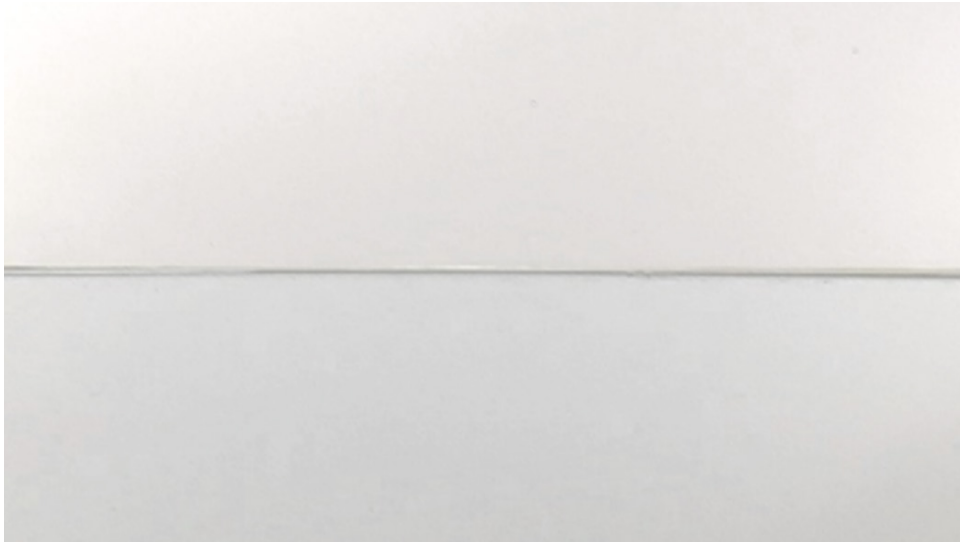


Figure 2: *Waterline* (2008) Criodhna Costello

Waterline

2008, DVD projection, 2 minute (loop)

A film in which each frame is identical would not move. The near repetition of similar frames, when projected, communicates life and movement. For the early cinema pioneers water was seen as being particularly filmic, because its constant ebb and flow provided continuous movement from frame to frame. This can be seen in the numerous 'Falls' films and *Rough Sea at Dover*. At this early stage in the medium's development this, in itself, was enough to attract interest. *Waterline* attempts to reproduce this interest, but reduces it to its most minimal component parts.

Waterline attempts to develop a different experience of time through movement, duration and repetition. I attempt to explore how the repetition of the 'continuous' loop can form a meaningless mesmerizing image, immersing the viewer in a different relationship to time. The loop in this work creates a sense of continuation rather than repetition. The situation, (the slight swaying of the waterline), is presented in relation only to itself. It is a work that is there all at once.



Figure 3: *Salt* (2008) Criodhna Costello

Salt

2008, DVD projection, 3 minute (loop)

Salt displays a composition in which millions of grains of salt fall through the frame over the course of a minute. These incomprehensible and indistinguishable amounts of individual fragments resemble an hourglass, as they appear to form lines similar to film grain.

The hourglass is a symbol of time running out. It is an enduring symbol that has survived its obsolescence as a timekeeper. Unlike most other methods of measuring time, the hourglass concretely represents the present as being between the past and the future. Once the top reservoir is empty, it can be inverted to begin timing again. However, in this work the present fades into its reconstitution in future repetition, as the grains of salt inexhaustibly return to the upper reservoir. The present is always not yet or already gone. However close one tries to measure the present, it slips into past or future time. This pries apart the seam between the now and the then, and situates the viewers neither fully there, nor entirely here.

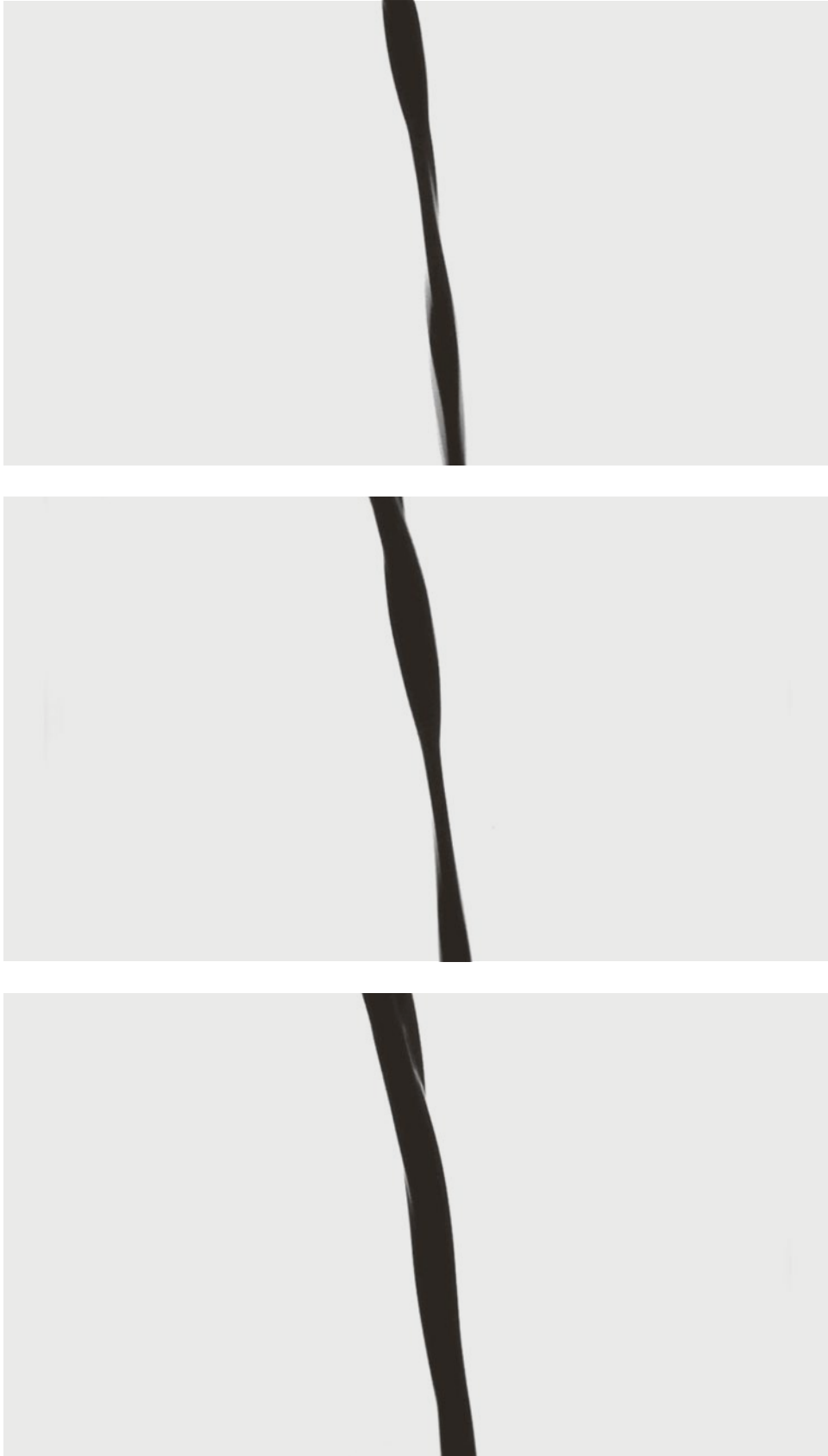


Figure 4: *Pour* (2009) Criodhna Costello

Pour

2009, DVD projection, 1 minute (loop)

A repeated moment within the moving image loop can be considered repetitious to the viewer who both remembers and anticipates. The loop can also, however, create a continuous moment where there is no consciousness of repetition, and where the work's manifest tense is the present. The metaphor of time building upon itself is inadequate in this context, for it fails to reckon with this unstructured interpenetration of past and present.

In this work a form emerges from the substance that spills to continually dissect the frame. The form is a disposition of movement, charted in a space free from temporal or spatial references. The action is a non-catastrophic intrusion and fails to destabilise the repeated sequence, returning always to what is already in progress, in a state of perpetual suspense that strips away the moorings of past-present and creates a continuous moment.



Figure 5: *Drop* (2009) Criodhna Costello

Drop,

2009, 3 x DVD projection, (loop)

Drop is a multi screen video instillation that illustrates an equation first proposed by Georg Simmel. Simmel put forward an argument that attempted to rebut Friedrich Nietzsche's 'Eternal Return' claim that a finite number of states must repeat within an infinite amount of time. Eternal recurrence is an ancient cyclical conception of time that Nietzsche proposes as a hypothetical thought experiment, and not a fact. Simmel believed that even if there were exceedingly few things in a finite space and in an infinite time, they would not have to repeat in the same configurations:

Suppose there were three wheels of equal size, rotating on the same axis, one point marked on the circumference of each wheel, and these three points lined up in one straight line. If the second wheel rotated twice as fast as the first, and if the speed of the third wheel was $1/\pi$ of the speed of the first, the initial line-up would never recur.¹

In this work the intervals between the three drops correspond to Simmel's equation and the three lines on his wheels. This work thus explores contradictions and questions of repetition and the loop.

¹ Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Princeton University Press, 1974) p327.

A rite tree

Eater tire

Reiterate

Figure 6: *Reiterate II* (2009) Criodhna Costello

Reiterate II

2009, DVD projection, 4 minute (loop)

Reiterate II is an example of exhaustive enumeration. The repetitions are actually permutations that sequentially list every possible anagrammatic variation of the word 'reiterate.' It is repetition with variation and builds repetitions one on the other but not toward a total effect. It is at the moment when we recognize that a repetition has taken place, that the text begins to bulk in our apprehension as arbitrary, systematic and material. The reiterations dismantle language's power to produce linear progress, action, or meaning. Instead, sense turns back on itself, returning to enclose its own beginning. The permutations are rigorously logical but a logic taken to the point of absurdity. The texts are ritornellos. It is an example of repeated words transcending their literal meaning, where to repeat oneself is to say progressively less. The reiterations continue until the permutations have been exhausted, when they start again and repeat the same permutations ad infinitum.

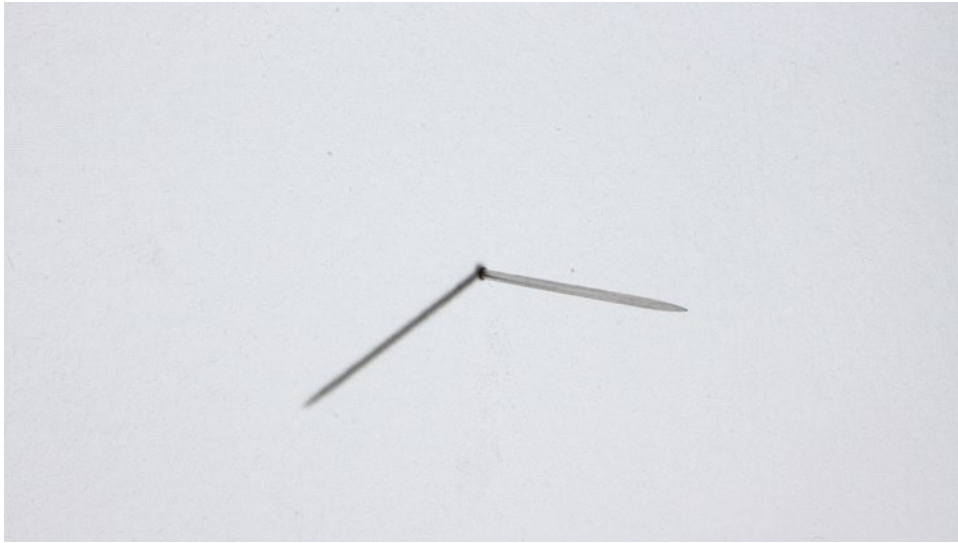


Figure 7: *Pin* (2010) Criodhna Costello

Pin

2010, HD media player projection, plinth. 1 hour 13 minutes (loop)

Pin is a small installation, consisting of an animated projection of the shadow of a pin, which rotates around a real pin that extrudes from the wall. The movement of the shadow projected is imperceptible. However, over the course of 1 hour 13 minutes the shadow rotates 360 degrees, appearing to form a sundial. The loop is both physical and temporal. The video salutes the oldest and simplest form of proto-cinema, shadow play. The prominence of the projector, the image of the shadow and the awareness of the video loop together endeavour to create a model in which technology, human presence, and the representation of objects are all participants in the production of the work, allowing the apparatus to make its own revelatory presence felt. The video does not require a sustained conscious engagement; instead the work is intended to be viewed in passing.

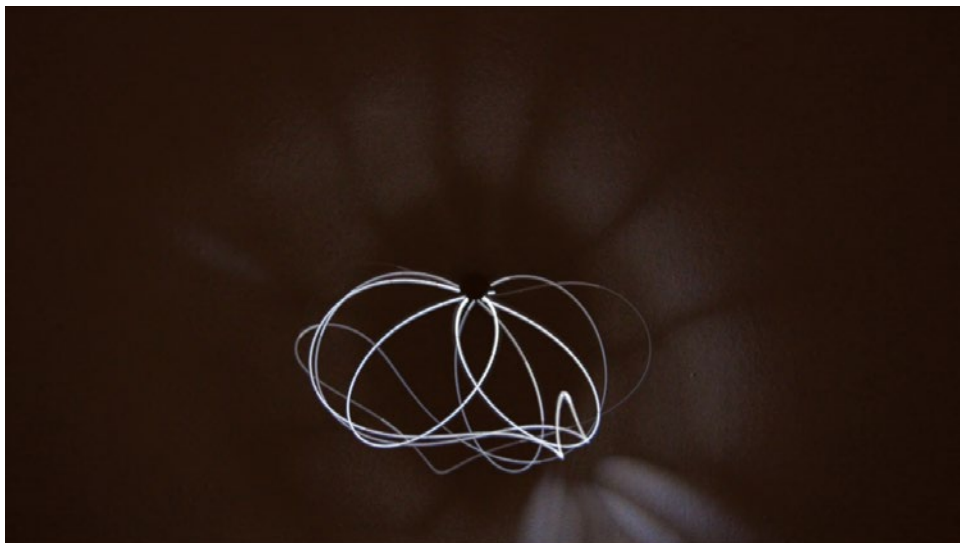
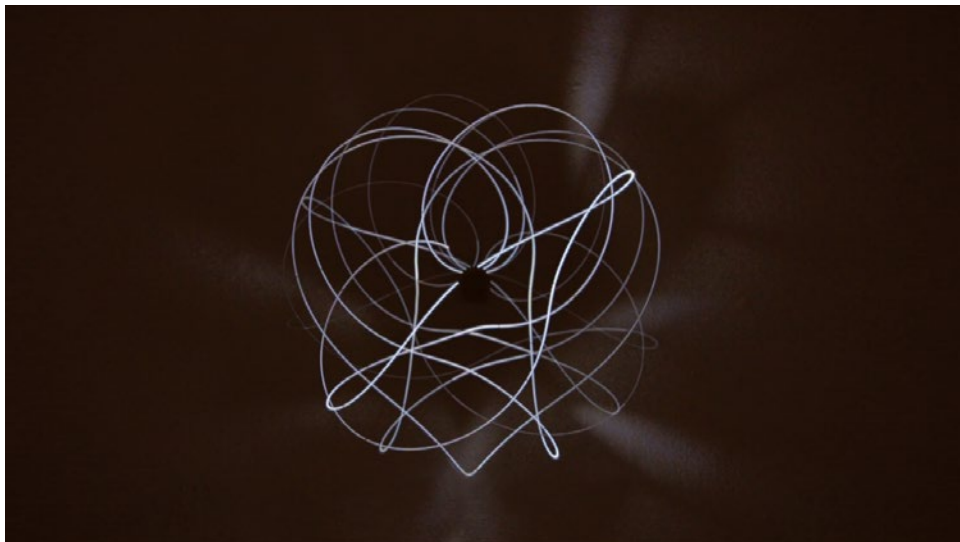
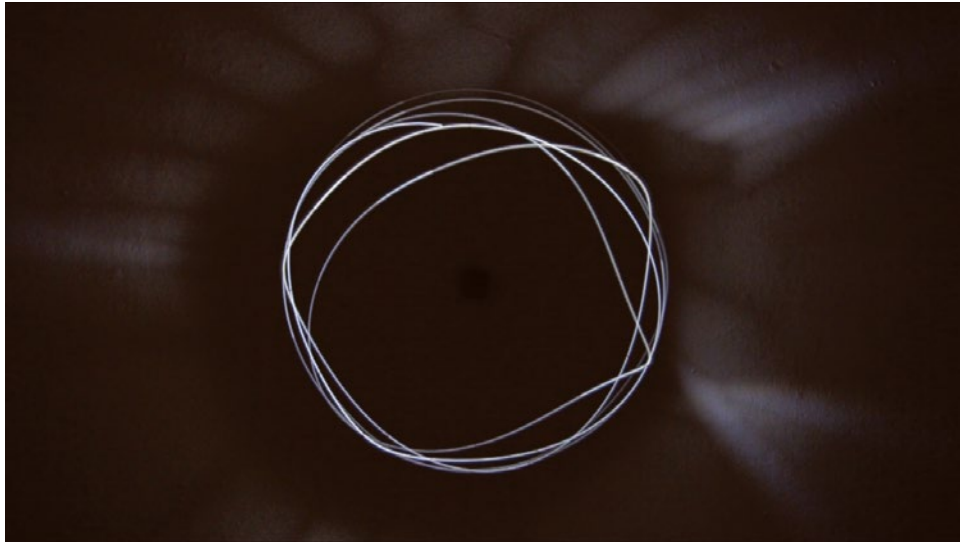


Figure 8: *Double Pendulum* (2011) Criodhna Costello

Double Pendulum

2011, HD media player projection, 23 minutes (loop)

A double pendulum is a device that consists of two pendulums, linked together on a common mounting, which move in anti-phase to each other. These pendulums are used to demonstrate chaotic motion. It is impossible to accurately predict the motion or progression through time of a chaotic system, so therefore it is impossible to predict the motion or behaviour of the double pendulum.

In this work this chaotic trajectory is tracked using an LED light. It is a kind of animation, generated by light, kinesis, rhythm, time and duration. The movement of the pendulum is registered through a continuously evolving line of light that forms a chronocyclograph, a moving chart for examining fine details of movement over time. This representation of chaotic movement through time is inspired by the work of Frank B. Gilbrecht who, during the 1910s, attached small electric lights to the limbs of workers and used a time exposure to photograph the movement as a continuous line in space. He called the result a cyclograph or a chronocyclograph if a motion picture camera was used.²

2. Siegfried Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command: A Contribution to an Anonymous History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975) pp. 102-106.

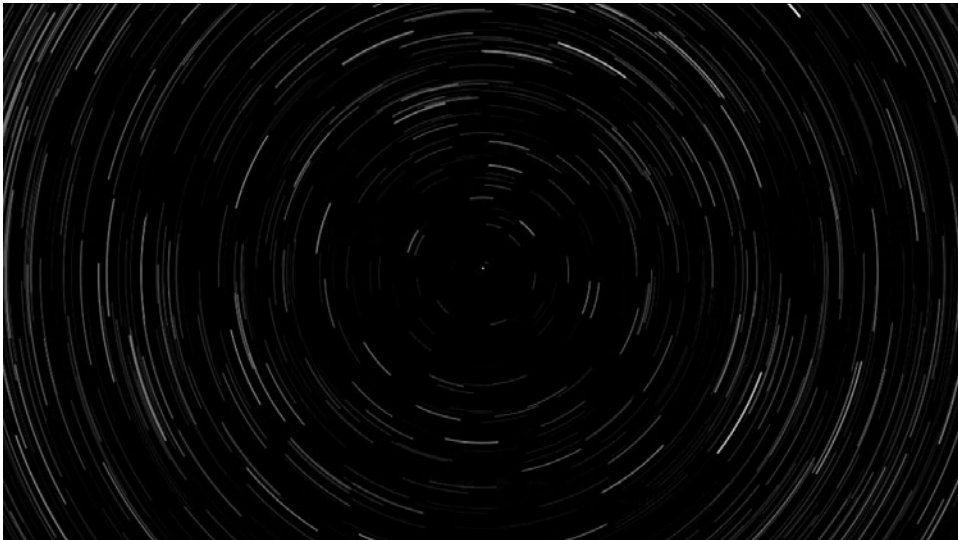


Figure 9: *Polaris* (2012) Criodhna Costello

Polaris

2012, HD media player projection, 24 minutes (loop)

Polaris, from the Latin '*polus*', is the North Star. Whilst other stars' apparent positions in the sky change throughout the night, the North Star's position remains essentially static.

Shot using time-lapse photography over the course of one night, *Polaris* shows the gradual procession of the stars as they slowly rotate around the North Star. Individual frames accumulate into movements by breaking down the film image into its basic elements and then reconstructing these frames into multiple temporal layers. Time is stripped of the co-ordinates with which we normally apprehend it. Movement pivots from a central axis, as all the recorded successive positions of each of the stars are layered to trace their motion through the night sky. This layering emphasises the movement of light and the way it creates form through its trajectory. However, the movement that occurs in the video is the movement of the earth as opposed to camera pans or tilts, and the real trajectory that the video charts is that of the Earth's rotational axis, whilst the stars are fixed.

The film is shown continuously within a dedicated room. The film runs continuously throughout the day. Visitors enter the room at different moments during the film's unfolding and choose how long they will give it.

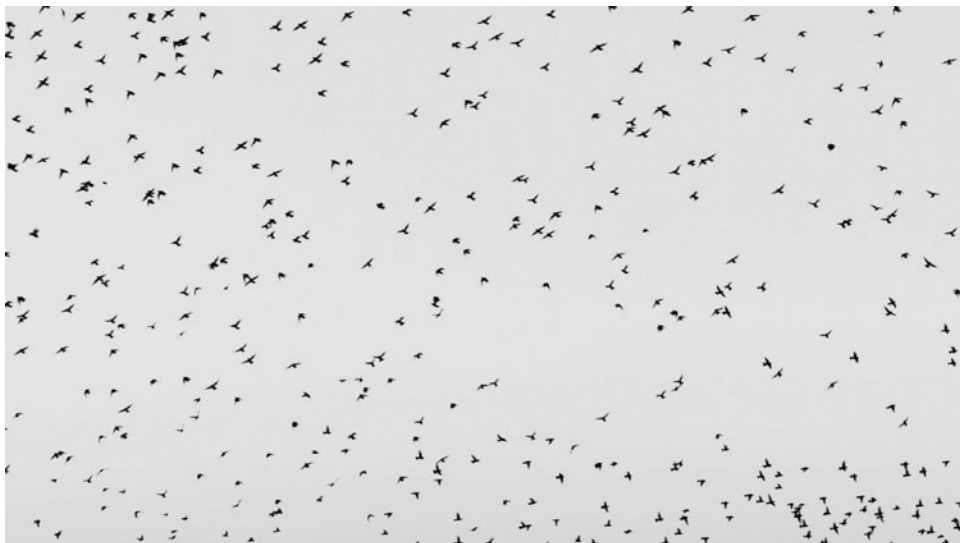


Figure 10: *Murmuration* (2013) Criodhna Costello

Murmuration

2013, HD media player projection, 20 minutes (loop)

A Murmuration is a flock of migrant starlings that come together during the winter months. Each evening, just before dusk, they perform a unified aerial dance as they prepare to roost. As they fly the starlings appear to be connected together. They twist and turn and change direction at a moment's notice. The uncanny coordination of these murmurations reveals patterns that scientists believe are similar to principles of physical systems, such as crystal formation, avalanches, metals becoming magnetized and liquids turning to gases. These systems are 'on the edge', which means they are ready to be completely transformed in an instant.

In this work this natural pro-filmic process is not simply recorded as an objective observation, it is composed in order to participate in a scheme of movement and repetition. The video is framed to maximise the play of off-screen space and to divide the frame in various ways without a central focal point. The space within the frame replaces all narration and coordinates with movement and spectacle. The video has neither cuts nor dissolves, but exists as a single looped shot made with a static camera.

Written Component

In this written component of the enquiry I expand the 'attractional' mode that we find in early cinema to a wider practice of moving images and contemporary modes of spectatorship. The discussions are structured through four parts, each of which comprises separate enquiries, across a dichotomy of time periods. I begin with a critical introduction to attractions. Following this introduction I experiment by coupling different paradigms to bring together a series of juxtapositions, juxtaposing early cinema with the avant-garde practitioners, the very earliest devices of moving image with contemporary digital technology and 'YouTube' and contemporary cinema with early cinematic attractions. This written component incorporates a corresponding visual essay, demonstrating pivotal examples of attraction from the corresponding moving image works.

1

A Critical Introduction to Attraction

Originally a medical word, ‘attraction’ meaning ‘action of drawing to’ derives from the 16th century. Etymologically the English term was appropriated from the French attraction, which evolved from the Latin *tractio*, denoting contraction, and, grammatically from *attrahere*, to pull.¹ Conversely, the ‘attraction’ in terms of spectacle or any other form of entertainment drawing spectators was adapted into French from English in the early nineteenth century. The word ‘attraction’ as spectacle and ‘interesting or amusing exhibition’ had become quite prevalent by the era of the Great Exhibitions.

The first application of the term attraction, in connection with the moving image, was in Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein’s paper on theatre ‘The Montage of Attractions’. This paper, also called the ‘Theory of Attraction Assembly’, was first published in *LEF* magazine in 1923.² *LEF* was the journal of the *Left Front of the Arts*, a widely ranging association of writers, photographers, critics and designers in

the Soviet Union. The journal's objective was to 're-examine the ideology and practices of so-called leftist art, and to abandon individualism to increase art's value for developing communism.' The work of Eisenstein, both as theorist and as filmmaker, presented the possibilities of cinema deriving from the convergence of modernist practice and the political revolution of Russian Constructivism. Eisenstein developed the term 'attraction' in his search for the 'unit of impression' of theatrical art and the foundation of an analysis that would undermine realistic representational theatre.

In the early 1920's the term 'attraction' had already been in use for thirty years. It was the same term that was used to describe the presentations of a vaudeville or circus act, in fact, the Russian noun *atraktsion* means 'sideshow.'³ The word attraction can be seen in newspaper reports as early as 1896: 'With the arrival of the warm weather, attractions in Paris are more numerous and varied every day at the kinematograph.' Or, as a different reviewer commentated about a 1906 Pathé view, '*Le Tour du monde d'un policier* (A Detective's Trip Around the World) is a magnificent kinematographic attraction.'⁴

According to the Oxford English Dictionary attraction is 'the action or power of evoking interest in or liking for someone or something', 'a force under the influence of which objects tend to move towards each other' or 'a thing or feature which draws people by appealing to their desires, tastes, any interesting or amusing exhibition which 'draws' crowds.' More precisely, it can ascribe to a spectacle or in Eisenstein's formation to the 'peak moments' of a circus, cinema or theatrical show.



Figure 11: *Le Tour du Monde d'un policier* (1906) Pathé Frères poster

Having observed how popular entertainments at fairs and circuses held the attention of the spectators, Eisenstein's 'attraction' was born out of these exhibitionist performances of a 'low form' of recreation in antithesis to the high art of 'realist representational theatre.'⁵ The circus origins of 'attraction' imply the principle characteristics of the idea, as it will be developed subsequently and more specifically, in considering the moving image.⁶

The first film produced by Eisenstein was an insert into a play, *Enough Simplicity for Every Wise Man* (1923), a collaboration with playwright Sergei Tretyakov.⁷ The principle behind their production was the mathematical calculation of their 'effect', what Eisenstein was to call the attractions. The idea was to reach out to viewers in their seats in order to create audience participation that could be emotional, sensorial or intellectual, according to ones desired goal, as Eisenstein states: 'I tried like a Cubist to dissect a classical play into its individual effective attractions, the setting for the action was a circus.'⁸ The production was punctuated with circus performances and shocks and infamously, with the firecrackers that were meant to go off below the seats of the audience, Eisenstein describes how at the end of the play 'there was a pyrotechnical explosion beneath the seats of the auditorium.'⁹ It was the shock waves from Eisensteins production of *Enough Simplicity for Every Wise Man* that was the inspiration for his first theoretical article 'The Montage of Attractions' and these words appeared on the play's publicity poster.¹⁰

Attractions are central to Eisenstein's montage theory, they continue to recur in different guises throughout his later career. Eisenstein defined the montage of attractions as a direct address of the spectator that goes beyond a simple process of

appealing to the taste of the public.¹¹ He proposed a system of ‘aggressive actions’ in the presentation of a theatrical work that subjected the audience to ‘emotional or psychological influence, calculated to produce specific emotional shocks in the spectator’.¹² Attraction, as Eisenstein conceived it, grabs hold of viewers and pushes them towards reflection, preventing them from the absorption of narrative or ‘illusory imitativeness’.¹³ Attraction is the drive towards spectacle, rather than the development of a fictional world. It is a disposition towards punctual temporality, rather than prolonged development, and it is also a direct address to the spectator at the expense of the creation of a sphere or world in which narrated events and other elements occur.¹⁴

Efficacy

Eisenstein’s first full-length film in 1924 was *Stachka (The Strike)*, made for the Proletkult, an organization established in the Soviet Union to provide the foundations for proletarian culture that is, a culture that was created by proletarians for proletarians, the class of industrial workers who, possessing neither capital nor production means, earn their living by selling their labour. While *Stachka* was in production, Eisenstein reiterated the purpose of the attraction in *The Montage of Film Attractions*, which was not published until after his death:

An attraction is in our understanding any demonstrable fact (an action, an object, a phenomenon, a conscious combination and so on) that is known and proven to exercise a definite effect on the attention and emotions of the

audience and that, combined with others, possesses the characteristic of concentrating the audience's emotions in any direction dictated by the production's purpose.¹⁵

The essential focus of Eisenstein's enquiry is the spectator. When he coined the phrase 'montage of attractions' he insisted on the essential importance of what happened within the imagination of the viewer. He approached the question of film-form by thematising it in relation to the ability the film has to influence its spectator. He describes the 'attraction' as 'the mathematical calculation of effect'.¹⁶ His aim was to develop and employ cinematic strategies that would have a determinable effect on the viewer:

An attraction [...] is any aggressive moment in theatre, i.e. any element of it that subjects the audience to emotional or psychological influence, verified by experience and mathematically calculated to produce specific emotional shocks in the spectator.¹⁷

The entire Eisensteinian reflection on attraction is connected to the idea of efficacy. In defining the effect of art in terms of a calculated shock, it was with the aim of aggressively subjecting the spectator to an emotional or psychological influence. This was intended to undermine the absorption of the spectator into the narrative and to keep the spectator thinking 'objectively' about what they were watching.¹⁸ This was an attention-grabber, something that could not be incorporated through the terms of a psychologised narrative. Eisenstein is precise about the spectator-effect an attraction should produce: an attraction should employ shock as an

aesthetic and political strategy and should assault the senses of the audience's in order to construct political ideologies.¹⁹

Eisenstein's theory is predicated on the impact of an attraction: adhering to a basic tenet of Constructivist art. Standish Lawder points out that Constructivist art 'was not developed as an aesthetic experiment, but sprang from [the artists'] passionate desire to incite the spectator to action.'²⁰ Attraction thus had something of Brecht's 'alienation effect' to it, which involves the use of techniques designed to distance the audience from emotional involvement in the play through jolting reminders of the artificiality of the theatrical performance.²¹ Attractions also return the audience to the role of spectator or the role of witness. This is, after all, the definition of spectacle itself: an impressive, unusual, or disturbing phenomenon or event that is observed or witnessed. The attraction was a step for Eisenstein along the road toward an intellectual cinema that would teach the worker to think dialectically.²²

An example of the 'attractions' in *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) is the sequence juxtaposing the ship's medical officer being cast overboard with the close-up of maggot-infested meat that precedes his fall. Another example is Eisenstein's juxtaposition of the Russian rebellion with the waking of a sleeping lion by contrasting images of three different lion statues: the first lion is sleeping, the second rousing itself and the third has risen to full height.

The feature of 'attraction', which lends itself so well to the calculation of efficacy, is its isolatable nature, its ability to be autonomized, separated out. That is what Eisenstein had in mind when he speaks of the attraction as the 'molecular unit': 'I

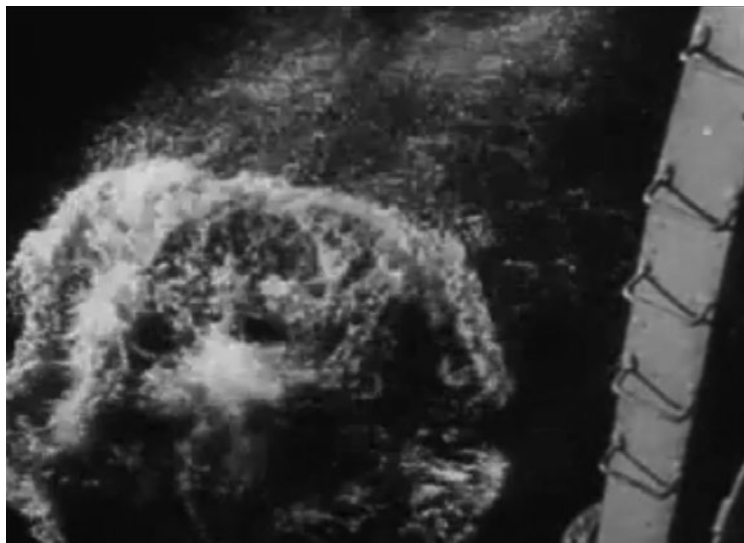


Figure 12: *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) Sergei Eisenstein

regard the attraction as being in normal conditions an independent and primary element in structuring the show, a molecular (i.e. compound) unity of the effectiveness of theatre and of theatre as a whole.’²³ Eisenstein was an architect and engineer by training and as an engineer he learned that in order to calculate efficacy, it is better to deal with material composed of discrete elements that would be measurable. In *How I Became a Film Director* (1945), Eisenstein introduced and elaborated upon this compound notion of attraction. For Eisenstein this pursuit was scientific:

Let us not forget that the man who has saddled himself with this task of a scientific study of the mysteries and secrets (of art) is a young engineer. From all the disciplines he has explored, he has retained this first rule, that, properly speaking, a procedure becomes scientific from the moment the field of investigation acquires a unit of measure. Let us therefore search for the unit which will measure the influence exerted by art! Science has its ‘ions,’ its ‘electrons,’ its ‘neutrons.’ Art will have attractions!²⁴

Montage

Eisenstein proposed that film should consist of a montage of attractions. He proposed a cinema that is constructed through the juxtaposition or collision of shocks, which have a calculated effect on the audience, creating a relation to the spectator entirely distinct from the absorption in ‘illusory imitativeness’.²⁵ Montage, according to Eisenstein, refers to a construction of ‘fragments’. Images and scenes



Figure 13: *Battleship Potemkin* (1925) Sergei Eisenstein

from distinct sources are not fused into a coherent whole, but placed into a play of contrast. This construction, through fragmentation, operates not only through cutting between shots, but also in how the compositional framing ‘cuts’ the individual shot out from a surrounding reality. Fragments are valued units of composition, which, once united, determine the possibility of perceiving the final ideological conclusion.²⁶ This is the central principle in Eisenstein’s montage theory, in which the juxtaposition of two attractions creates a third meaning, which is not contained in the attractions themselves, but is actively constructed by the spectator.

This method of the montage of attractions is the comparison of subjects for thematic effect, it is opposed to the static ‘reflection’ of action, and therefore it escapes from the corollary obligation to treat the theme by means of actions logically connected to that event. Montage is not used to develop a continuous view of time; rather, it is motivated primarily by the construction of spectacles. ‘It is this path that liberates film from the plot based script and for the first time takes account of film material, both thematically and formally, in the construction.’²⁷

Montage connects disparate images and generates a shock of thought. The spectator is required to stay alert since the film takes new turns with every new fragment. Here is a very different conception of spectatorship, one less based on an enveloping and immersive story world that smoothly and snugly tucks in the spectator, but rather an assaulting and aggressive environment with which the visitor has to confront.

Montage is effective due to the calculation that is made and the ‘associative’ relationship between the central theme and the attractions that carry it. As Eisenstein explains when discussing *Strike*:

I shall refer to the original version of the montage resolution in the finale of my film *The Strike*: the mass shooting where I employed the associational comparison with a slaughterhouse. I did this [...] mainly to excise from such a serious scene the falseness that the screen will not tolerate but that is unavoidable in even the most brilliant death scene and, on the other hand, to extract the maximum effect of bloody horror. [...] all the close-ups are provided by a demonstration of the real horrors of the slaughterhouse where cattle are slaughtered and skinned.²⁸

Eisenstein believed that a spectator must participate and that film viewing was an active process in response to an aesthetic construction. It was the filmmaker’s art to create a work where the fragmentation solicited the spectator’s involvement. In Eisenstein’s view the goal of attraction was to mould viewers by predisposing their feelings in the desired manner. In that involvement lay its efficacy, its ability to transform the views and thinking of the viewer. For Eisenstein, this was always ideological, in the broadest sense of conveying an idea, which was expressed in aesthetic terms.

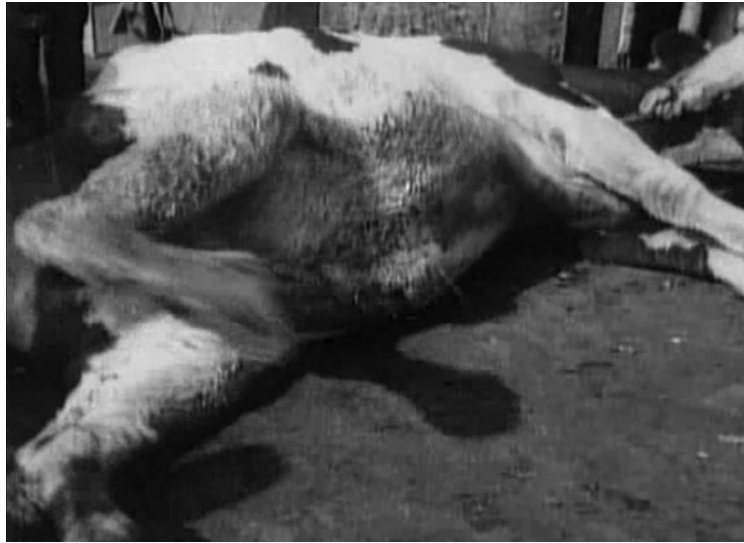


Figure 14: *The Strike* (1925) Sergei Eisenstein

Cinema of Attractions

Sixty years after Eisenstein's paper, two essays were published which were fundamental to a new application of the Eisensteinian 'attraction' in the field of 'early cinema'. The first essay by Tom Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attraction: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde', (1986) first appeared in *Wide Angle* in 1986.²⁹ The second, is a joint paper by Gunning and André Gaudreault, 'Le cinéma des premiers temps: un défi à l'histoire du cinéma' ('Early Cinema as a Challenge to Film History', 1986),³⁰ which with some revision, adding one extra paragraph and changing the singular 'attraction' of the title into plural,³¹ was published as a final version in the anthology *Early Cinema: Space Frame Narrative* edited by Thomas Elsaesser.³² In this paper Gaudreault and Gunning distinguish between two modes of film practice: the 'system of monstrative attractions,' which covers the period 1895-1907 and the 'system of narrative integration', which defines the period 1908-1914.³³

The fundamental category of 'attractions' in the field of 'early cinema' is based on the work of Eisenstein, and Gunning and Gaudreault's application of the term incorporates the key themes of Eisenstein's attraction. What they propose is an ambition to progress the historical comprehension of the emergence of cinema, to retain a methodology (inherited from the Russian Formalists) that illuminates the practice of history and the period examined.³⁴ Although it is difficult to disassociate Eisenstein's conception of 'attraction' from his ideas on montage, Gaudreault and Gunning employ Jacques Aumont's critical description of the system of attractions and his treatment of the term in his 1983 book *Montage Eisenstein*.³⁵

The genealogy of 'attraction', for Gaudreault and Gunning as well as Eisenstein, came from the showmen and exhibitions of popular culture. Eisensteinian 'attraction' and the 'cinema of attractions' both shared the culture of popular stage entertainments dating from the turn of the twentieth century. Between 1890-1907 Vaudeville theatres remained the primary venue for films; cameras, projectors and moving images were experienced by spectators as just one of several sorts of 'views' that regularly shared a stage, a tent, or a lecture hall with attractions of the widest possible nature.³⁶

Sean Cubitt has pointed out the cinematograph was anchored not in literary or popular genres of the novel and theatre but in the crowd. Social, public and active, the event of cinema articulated the modernisation of urban experience. As Cubitt explains:

As attraction the cinematograph belongs to the new urbanity of the late nineteenth century. The drain of populations toward the cities is both effect and cause of their status as communication centres, financial or spectacular. The attraction of the city is its energy, especially in the last decade of the nineteenth century when the society of the spectacle is coming into being³⁷

Attractions were a part of the daily life of the protagonists of early moving images. By its reference to vaudeville and fairground, the term denoted early cinema's fascination with novelty and its foregrounding of the act of display that early spectators associated with fairground attractions. As Charles Musser explains, 'attraction [...] utilised a term that reaffirmed early cinema's affinities with Coney

Island and its rides that thrill, disorient and shock those who visit these heterotopic spaces.³⁸ Thus 'attraction' would not be foreign to the practitioners of the era.

The return to Eisenstein, by Gunning and Gaudreault, signalled an intention to rediscover the aspiration that cinema displayed in the 1920s. In stark contrast to the ideological critique that had dominated film theory during the 1970s, the early practitioners of the 1920s had seen revolutionary possibilities, both political and aesthetic, in cinema and moreover in the ways the 'attractions' took hold of spectators. However, Gunning's theorising of an earlier mode of cinematic representation did not have the same political or polemical focus; he did not, for example, advocate a return to the mode of attractions. Although he knew that this was precisely what Eisenstein was advocating in 1924.³⁹

'The Cinema of Attraction' can be understood in two ways firstly: as an intervention into the way cinema history had been theorised and, secondly, as a contribution to theories of spectatorship. The paper is the product of a number of converging influences, which led to a climate of re-evaluation of 'early cinema' during the late 1970s. These Influences included the new archive of early films in the Library of Congress in Washington, the Museum of Modern Art screenings of early films in New York, the Archive of the British Film Institute in London and especially the FIAF Cinema 1900-1906 Brighton conference on early film in 1978.⁴⁰ These screenings altered the conceptions that theorists held at the time of the early years of cinema and provided the opportunity for a reappraisal of early moving image works. The subsequent processes of re-evaluation generated a series of publications

and conferences with ramifications both for the study of early film and for film studies in general.

In the 1970s film theory was dominated by ideas related to spectatorship; for example, the uncovering of ideological complicity in the narrative construction of popular films, which described cinema spectatorship technically as a process of unconscious enthrallment, drawing on inherently psychological states. The so-called traditional film historians were known for an 'idealist' conception of cinema (and a teleological vision of its history), which privileged narrative and perceived 'early cinema' as a period of lack in relation to narrative cinema.

Historians constructed a teleological approach to early film according to the films ability to anticipate narrative, and presented a view of the early years of moving image as an incubation period before so-called 'classical' narrative cinema dominated. This lack has most often been specified as a relative absence of editing, as films were mostly single shot films and were unsubordinated to any editing schema. Jean Mitry, for example, built a historical system and developed the argument that between 1903 and 1911, cinema was divided into two major tendencies, the theatrical and the narrative.⁴¹

'Primitive cinema'

Because of the ideal narrative standard of a cinema yet to come, the period, from 1895 to 1907, was referred to by Charles Musser as 'early cinema' or 'primitive cinema' where the sole criteria was to strive toward a cinematic potential.⁴² However, the term 'primitive' has a pejorative tone and implies the product of an undeveloped culture.⁴³ Also, this title is not taken from that period but from what could be called a historicising present. This was the prescriptive view until the 1980s, when a new generation of film theorists began a thorough re-examination of those historical accounts of the cinema and began to object to the way techniques and innovations in early films were conceived as 'primitive' attempts at narrative cinema. As well as Gunning and Gaudreault, these theorists included Douglas Gomery, Robert C Allen, Janet Staiger, Kristin Thompson, Donald Crafton, Charles Musser and Russell Merritt. They proved how intimately the cinema fed on and was implicated in the history of vaudeville, and other popular entertainments. They constructed a history that ran counter to traditional assumptions about early cinema's affiliation with the novel and theatre.

This new generation of film theorists rejected the perspective that viewed cinema's first decades as embryonic forms of later practices or stuttering attempts at later achievements and felt it was theoretically lazy to take the measure of early moving images, using the yardstick of classical narrative cinema. They questioned the 'teleological' implications of the terms 'primitive' and 'early' and insisted that a radical reappraisal was required to develop a term that would better reflect the historical realities of this period. Both Musser and Gunning have pointed out that a

teleological approach tends to mask the fact that the dominant genre of the early cinema dealt with current events or incidents of general interest. As Gunning explains: 'it was important not to see these anomalies as primitive mistakes groping towards the later established ideal of match cutting and diegetic unity but as indications of another direction in film narrative than that of later dominant cinema, a road not taken by the major film industries.'⁴⁴

Gunning and Gaudreault felt that traditional notions of cinema were severely lacking. Essentially, they were dissatisfied with the way early cinema had been theorised, mainly from the perspective of the development of narrative films. They argued that the distinguishing feature of early cinema was not the narrative drive that later dominated the medium. For Gunning, cinema before 1906 presented a different landscape.⁴⁵ Rather than early approximations of the later practices of narration, aspects of early cinema are best understood if a purpose other than storytelling is factored in.⁴⁶ This period of moving image represented a much more polymorphous stage in which the potential for a variety of developments lay. Gunning uncovered 'differences rather than organic development, a series of contrasting conceptualisations of cinema's role, mode of exhibition and method of address.'⁴⁷

System of Monstrative Attractions

So what precisely is this 'cinema of attractions'? Firstly it is a cinema that bases itself on its 'ability to show something.'⁴⁸ Unlike narrative cinema, which solicits a voyeuristic spectatorial gaze where the viewer watches without being seen, early

cinema is an exhibitionist cinema where the spectator is overtly acknowledged and invited to look.⁴⁹ Films that display exhibitionism and spectacle take precedence over narrative. As Gunning puts it: 'the 'attraction' is there, before the viewer, in order to be seen and therefore invokes an exhibitionist rather than a voyeuristic regime.'⁵⁰

This is a cinema of presenting rather than telling, where viewers are captivated by stunning views and rewarded with visual thrills through the simple pleasure of looking. Jean Giraud describes the 'attraction' as the 'captivating element of the programme.'⁵¹ Even the single shot film included the gesture of presenting for view or displaying. Attractions, however, are not only the dominant principle of short, punctiliar views from the early years of cinematography. They are also present in the pluripunctiliar views (views made up of more than one shot) that began to grow in number around the turn of the century.

Using the term 'monstration' (from the French term *montrer*, to show) rather than narration to characterise this form, Gunning and Gaudreault emphasised that this is a cinema of 'showing' rather than 'telling.' Within the system of 'monstrative' attractions, film narration is secondary and the regime of cinematic narration is barely perceptible. So called classical cinema is a cinema of narrative and thus requires a narrator; however, early cinema needs no narrator, rather it favours the fairground crier, the master of ceremonies in concert halls, vaudeville theatres and the cinema showmen. This is a cinema of monstration. This is a cinema of showing and of the showman.⁵²

Exhibitionist Confrontation

As I have previously discussed, what matters for Eisenstein in his theory of 'attractions' is the impact on the spectator, which is one of the most important reasons why Gunning and Gaudreault borrow the term 'attraction' from him. To quote Gunning: 'I pick up this term partly to underscore the relation to the spectator [...] that of exhibitionist confrontation rather than diegetic absorption.'⁵³ However, the definition of Gunning's expression, like that of the Eisensteinian attraction, also involved an explicit, to some extent aggressive, address to a viewer that could go beyond an easy process of appealing to the taste of the spectator.⁵⁴ According to Eisenstein, an 'attraction' was supposed to produce 'emotional shocks.' Early audiences were assaulted with films of car accidents and disturbing images such as Thomas Edison's 1903 film *Electrocuting an Elephant*. This film showed the public electrocution of Topsy, a circus elephant that had killed a man, reportedly after being burned by his cigarette. The film consists of two shots, one in which Topsy is brought to the site and a second shot, recording the smoke rising from the animal's feet as they are burned by the voltage as the elephant topples over and collapses. The spectator watches as the attraction unfolds before it, in all its horror.

Another example is the film *How It Feels to Be Run Over* (1900), by Cecil Hepworth, which shows the essential role a single viewpoint played in the structure of early films by invoking a direct address presented to the spectator. This single shot film shows a horse and cart passing the camera, followed by an automobile. The driver,



Figure 15: *Electrocuting an Elephant* (1903) Thomas Edison



Figure 16: *How It Feels to Be Run Over* (1900) Cecil Hepworth

blinded by the cart's dust, suddenly veers the automobile straight toward the camera, causing a sudden and unexpected interruption that threatens a collision with this fixed viewpoint of camera/spectator. The collision appears to occur, as the front of the car engulfs the field of vision and the film cuts to a section of black to represent the attraction of this impact. A similar effect is produced with the spectacular moment when a locomotive appears to charge at the spectator in *L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat* (*Train Entering a Station*, Lumière, 1895).

Gunning's conceptual distinction between attraction and narrative enables him to rewrite the history of early cinema by positing a break in its periodisation, occurring around 1907, rather than a continuous linear teleological development towards narrative. This break positively defines early cinema, by identifying it as a distinct unified practice with its own rules and conventions, rather than as merely an imperfect narrative cinema. Although Gunning and Gaudreault do not claim that attractions were the only aspect of early cinema, they do claim that they dominate the period between 1895 to 1907. However, this shift from attraction to narrative integration should not be conceived as a jerky and mutually exclusive switch from one position to another but, rather, as a slow, constant sliding on a continuum in which the dominance of one mode over the other imperceptibly gave way.

System of Narrative Integration

The cinema of attractions gave way to a transitional period between 1907 and 1910, where the tendency towards narrativisation became more pronounced, and the

prominence of shocks and visual display diminished. After 1910 the system of narrative integration displaced the system of attractions. The dances, tricks and peripheral incidents, common to so many films before 1907, were disappearing or being pushed into the background. The purely visual pleasures of cinema lose their autonomy and become suppressed by the organising structures and increasing linearity of film narrative. This seems to be the moment when filmmakers started to become conscious of the narrative potential in an instrument previously consigned to recording the movement of beings and things. As Gunning states: 'The often free-floating filmic attractions of early film became part of a narrative system as film unambiguously defined its primary role as a teller of tales, a constructor of narratives.'⁵⁵

Beyond 1907, manufacturers at Pathé, Vitagraph, Biograph and elsewhere developed strategies that would produce the basic framework for classical narrative cinema. The development of plot, parallel editing and matching action both demanded and created a more efficient narrative structure. The regular use of inter-titles, the linear unfolding of narrative and an increasingly seamless fictional world were some of the new rules of storytelling. In such films, the shot ceased to act as a discrete unit on any level. The shot was completely subservient to the narrative and linear flow of events. Cinema after 1907 became dominated by narrative, although moments of attraction occasionally occurred in musicals, prolonged action sequences and other moments of spectacle.

The move to narrative cinema was the point at which industrialisation and mass dissemination of films had created a financial necessity to standardise narrative

structure. During this time we see the first broad economic organisation of the film industry, the first moves on the part of production companies to attract a middle class audience and the dominance of narrative cinema over actualités, along with the development of the basic syntax of narrative film. At every level, elements of cinematic expression were mobilised for narrative ends, be it ‘pro-filmic’ elements, the composition of the frame, or editing.⁵⁶

Industrialisation

Longer narratives and multi-shot films produced not only continuity editing and narrative integration, but an institution dedicated to processing a large number of paying spectators. Fundamentally, it was necessary for the industry to find economic solutions for the distribution and mass consumption of their product. Industrialisation led to a change in spectatorship in that the earlier collective audience that had experienced a physical, performative space now ‘turned into isolated spectators, each was bound to the imaginary representations or diegesis of a constructed screen space.’⁵⁷ As early as 1912 the commentator Fouquet distinguished between the ‘old-style’ cinema, a cinema that was ‘seen as an attraction,’ and a ‘today’s’ cinema ‘which suffices unto itself.’⁵⁸

There is much to be said for the convergence of Eisensteinian attraction and the attractions of early cinema, as well as for the significance of attraction, throughout the twentieth century for culture in general. Rather than naming a specific period as ‘the cinema of attractions,’ Gunning and Gaudreault used the term to refer to an

approach to spectatorship that dominated early cinema before the dominance of narrative films. The term 'attraction' is not a description of structural appearances, but an analysis of a dynamic interchange between the spectator and screen.

Gunning concludes his paper on 'The Cinema of Attractions' by commenting that although narrative cinema succeeds early spectacle, roughly during the period following 1907, the system of attraction, nevertheless, continues to be an essential part of moving image, appearing at different times throughout film history. So, can we accommodate the insights of the cinema of attractions and expand the periodic and technical parameters into which it has developed?

NOTES

1. Wanda Strauven, *Nouveau Dictionnaire Etymologique et Historique*, trans. Dauzat, A, Dubois, H. and Mitterrand, H. (Paris: Larousse, 1985) p. 55.

2. In the same year that Eisenstein published his first article on attraction, in 1923, the French magazine *Ciné pour tous* published an anonymous two-page article entitled 'Attraction in Films,' which set out how films of the day were constructed around brief moments of attraction such as storms, explosions, and other sudden occurrences. 'We have quickly reached the point where the attraction reigns in a sensational manner and is incorporated into films sometimes without cause in order to heighten their appeal.' See André Gaudreault, *Film and Attraction: from Kinematography to Cinema*, trans. Timothy Barnard (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2011) p.49.

3. In Jacques Aumont's description of the system of attractions, the appropriateness of the circus is clear: 'the attraction is originally the music hall number or sketch, a peak moment in the show, relatively autonomous, and calling upon techniques of representation which are not those of dramatic illusion, drawing upon more aggressive forms of the performing arts, the circus, the music hall, the sideshow.' Jacques Aumont, *Montage Eisenstein*, trans. Lee Hildreth, Constance Penley and Andrew Ross (London: British Film Institute, 1987) p.42.

4. 'La Nature,' January 11, 1896 and 'Le Progrès,' Lyon, July 17 1906, quoted in Gaudreault, *Film and Attraction: from Kinematography to Cinema*, p. 49.

5. Sergei Eisenstein, 'The Montage of Attractions,' (1923) Richard Taylor (ed.), *The Eisenstein Reader*, trans. William Powell (London: British Film Institute, 1989) p. 30.

6. It is not by chance that the circus is a privileged space for Eisenstein. It is a circular enclosure where everything is focused on the action. When the Proletkult was established in Moscow, it called its theatre the Central Arena. The theatre was always viewed by Eisenstein in terms of a contest, a violent and dangerous ritual, a

virtuoso event, whose spectacle is concentrated in such a way that it will have its most explosive effect. See Jacques Aumont discussion on ‘The Circus: A Decentered Arena,’ Aumont, *Montage Eisenstein*, p.20.

7. The comedy *Enough Simplicity for Every Wise Man* [*Na vsyakogo mudretsa dovol'no prostoty*] by Alexander N. Ostrovsky, was re-worked by Sergei M. Tretyakov for Proletkult in 1923.

8. Sergei Eisenstein, ‘Eisenstein on Eisenstein, the Director of Potemkin,’ (1926) Richard Taylor (ed.), in *The Eisenstein Reader*, trans. William Powell (London: British Film Institute, 1989) p.64.

9. Eisenstein, ‘The Montage of Attractions,’ p 38.

10. The phrase ‘The Montage of Attractions,’ also featured as backdrop in the film sequence as the various characters and finally Eisenstein himself, take their bows.

11. Eisenstein, ‘The Montage of Attractions,’ p. 31.

12. Eisenstein, ‘The Montage of Attractions,’ p. 30.

13. Eisenstein, ‘The Montage of Attractions,’ p. 30.

14. This had parallels with Bertolt Brecht’s assertion that; identification was a passive process. He wrote that theatrical patrons ‘look at the stage as if in a trance’. Brechtian estrangement is explicitly opposed to dramatic theatre’s identification. Brecht similarly called for a new mode of theatrical production. See John Willett, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht, A Study from Eight Aspects* (1959) (London: Methuen, 1967) p116.

15. Eisenstein, ‘The Montage of Attractions,’ pp. 35-36.

16. Eisenstein, ‘Eisenstein on Eisenstein, the Director of Potemkin,’ p.64.

17. Eisenstein, 'The Montage of Attractions,' p.34.

18. In passages dealing with the spectator, it is a question of 'plowing up his psyche,' of 'shaping him in the desired mould,' even of 'obliging him to like dull, everyday work.' All of this belongs largely to the style of the period and the intellectual trends which, like the Proletkult, extolled the advent of 'proletarian culture,' or which, like *Lef*, called for the shaping of a 'new spectator.' Sergei Eisenstein, 'Problem of a materialist approach to form' (1925) in *The Eisenstein Reader* (ed.) Richard Taylor, trans. William Powell (London: British Film Institute, 1989) p.53-60. Eisenstein, 'The Montage of Attractions,' p.34. Eisenstein, 'Eisenstein on Eisenstein, the Director of Potemkin' p.66.

19. According to Eisenstein, the effect of the attraction upon the viewer, had to be calculated on the basis of certain psychological and political principles. Essentially Pavlov's 'reflex' system and Marx's ideology.

20. Standish Lawder points out that Constructivist art 'was not developed as an aesthetic experiment, but sprang from [the artists'] passionate desire to incite the spectator to action.' Standish D. Lawder, 'Eisenstein and Constructivism (Strike, Potemkin)' in: *The Essential Cinema*, P. Adams Sitney (ed.), (New York: New York University Press, 1975) p. 65.

21. Alienation effect, also called a-effect or distancing effect, the idea is central to the dramatic theory of the German dramatist-director Bertolt Brecht.

22. See Sergei Eisenstein, 'Notes for a Film of Capital,' trans. Maciej Sliwowski, Jay Leyda and Annette Michelson, *October* Vol 2, Summer (1976) p.10.

23. Eisenstein, 'The Montage of Attractions,' p.30.

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24. Sergei Eisenstein, *Mémoires* trans. Jacques Aumont (Paris: Union Générale d'éditions. 1978) p.241.
25. Eisenstein, 'The Montage of Attractions,' p.30.
26. Eisenstein, 'The Montage of Attractions,' p. 30.
27. Eisenstein, 'The Montage of Attractions,' p. 35.
28. Eisenstein, 'The Montage of Attractions,' p. 38.
29. This paper was the product of a series of discussions between Gunning and Gaudreault, which had grown out of their participation in the 34th FIAF Brighton conference, on Early Fiction Film in 1978.
30. Over the next few years Gunning developed the attractions in several other essays: 'An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In) Credulous Spectator' in *Art and Text* (Fall 1989); 'Now You See it, Now You Don't: The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions' in *Velvet Light Trap* (Fall 1993); and 'The Whole Town's Gawking: Early Cinema and the Visual Experience of Modernity' in *Yale Journal of Criticism* 7.2 (Fall 1994).
31. The 'singular' refers here to cinema (the Cinématographe, the Biograph or the Vitascope) as an attraction, whereas the 'plural' focuses on the cinema as a series of attractions, as a succession of astonishing numbers, be it the individual animated views or the magical tricks within one and the same view or within one and the same feature length film.

32. Tom Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attraction[s]: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde' (1986) in: *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (ed.), Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006) pp. 56-62.

33. The term 'monstrative' builds upon the concept of 'monstration' that André Gaudreault had introduced in the field of early cinema. Monstration (showing) is to narration (telling) what presentation is to representation or, in Gunning's terms, 'exhibitionism' to 'voyeurism.' André Gaudreault, 'Film, Narrative, Narration: The Cinema of the Lumière Brothers' (1984) in: *Early cinema: space, frame, narrative* (ed.), Thomas Elsaesser (London: British Film Institute, 1990) pp.68-75.

34. Donald Crafton's essay on the slapstick comedy of early cinema, 'Pie and chase' (1987) also drew on Eisenstein's attractions. Crafton described gags in slapstick comedy as 'attractions', which often intrude on narrative development, and do not necessarily strive to become integrated into narrative structures. See Donald Crafton, 'Pie and chase: gag, spectacle and narrative in slapstick comedy,' *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006) pp.355-365. Ben Brewster also used the term in his essay published in *Screen* in 1982. At one point, discussing the role of the early close-up point of view structure, Brewster described it as the 'pleasure point of the film, its attraction.' Ben Brewster, 'A scene at the movies,' in *Early cinema: space, frame, narrative* (ed.), Thomas Elsaesser (London: British Film Institute, 1990) p.320. Brewster and Crafton's simultaneous use of 'attraction' is evident of the cultural climate and the applicability of the term during this period of re-evaluation.

35. Although the reference to Aumont is missing in *The Cinema of Attraction*, Gunning does not overlook the fundamental question of the impact on the spectator.

36. Fouquet, writing in 1912, stated that the moving pictures were seen as an 'attraction.' It was used in café-concert, music hall, and vaudeville programmes, just

like a singer or an acrobat.' E.L. Fouquet, 'L'Attraction,' *L'Echo du Cinéma* 11, 28 June 1912.

37. Sean Cubitt, *The Cinema Effect* (London: The MIT Press Cambridge, 2004) p.41.

38. Charles Musser 'Rethinking Early Cinema: Cinema of Attractions and Narrativity' (1994) in: *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (ed.), Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006) p.205.

39. For Eisenstein the central role of attractions is to lead the spectator to a better understanding of political, historical and their social condition. The link between attraction and political shock value remains indeterminate in Gunning's essay. We do not discover if the political shock value is a necessary condition for the definition of an attraction.

40. This symposium was held as part of the 34th congress of the International Federation of Film Archives (FIAF), organised by David Francis and Eileen Bowser. Both Gunning and Gaudreault credit the importance of this Conference. See André Gaudreault ed., *Cinema 1900-1906: An Analytical Study, Volume Filmographie/Filmography* (Bruxelles: FIAF, 1982).

41. See Jean Mitry, *Histoire du cinéma* (Paris: Editions Universitaires, 1967) p.26.

42. This phrase 'early cinema' was introduced by Charles Musser in his writings on Edison. Musser's choice of word 'early' revealed the paradigmatic choices indicative of his attitude toward that phenomenon.

43. Primitive as an adjective, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word has no fewer than twelve accepted meanings, of which two are clearly pejorative. The first and thereby principal meaning given by the OED is 'of or belonging to the first age, period, or stage; pertaining to early times; earliest, original; early, ancient.' 'Primitive' also refers to 'a group, or to persons comprising such a group, whose

culture, through isolation, has remained at a simple level' and to art 'executed by one who has not been trained in a formal manner.'

44. Tom Gunning, 'Non-Continuity, Continuity, Discontinuity: A Theory of Genres in Early Films,' In: *Early cinema: space, frame, narrative* (ed.), Thomas Elsaesser (London: British Film Institute, 1990) p.57.

45. This large demarcation in time has been criticised by Charles Musser. Musser pleaded for a more detailed periodisation of early cinema, in which the novelty period (i.e. the period of cinema of attractions) is delimited to the very first theatrical season, 'from late 1895 to early 1897.' Musser 'Rethinking Early Cinema: Cinema of Attractions and Narrativity' pp.389-417.

46. See Gunning, 'Non-Continuity, Continuity, Discontinuity: A Theory of Genres in Early Films,' p.56.

47. Gunning, 'The Whole Town's Gawking: Early Cinema and the Visual Experience of Modernity,' p.189.

48. Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attraction[s]: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde,' p.57.

49. The classical film has posed the voyeuristic spectator as the central position available to the viewer. The viewer watches the spectacle in secret, seeing without being seen, either by those on screen or by other members of the audience

50. Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attraction[s]: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde,' p.58.

51. Quoted in Gaudreault, *Film and Attraction: from Kinematography to Cinema*, p.161.

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52. The first cinema exhibitors were showmen who often combined films, magic lantern projections and other 'curiosities' in the same show.
53. Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attraction[s]: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde,' p.59.
54. See Gunning, 'An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the [In]Credulous Spectator,' pp.31-45.
55. Tom Gunning, *D. W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film: The Early Years at Biograph* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994) p.43.
56. See André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning, 'Early Cinema as a Challenge to Film History' (1989) in: *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (ed.), Wanda Strauven (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006) pp.365-380.
57. Jean-Louis Baudry, 'The Apparatus,' in: *Cinematic Apparatus, Selected Writings* (ed.), Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (New York: Tanam Press, 1981) p.104.
58. E.L. Fouquet, 'L'Attraction,' in: *L'Echo du Cinéma* 11 (28 June 1912) p.1.

2

Attractional Addresses: Encounters Between Avant-Garde Film Practices and Early Cinema

In a 1979 lecture at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Tom Gunning described the relation between the avant-garde film and early cinema as ‘pseudomorphic’, that is, a phenomenon closely resembling another phenomenon, without truly being related.¹ The stimulus for the observation came from avant-garde filmmakers themselves, such as Ken Jacobs, Ernie Gehr, Hollis Frampton and Malcolm Le Grice, who not only looked carefully at films from the period of early cinema, but also parasitically included the use of found footage in their own work.² Jacobs’s *Tom, Tom, the Piper’s Son* (1969), for example, reworked a 1905 chase film by the American Mutoscope and Biograph Company shot by Billy Bitzer.



Figure 17: *Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son* (1969) Ken Jacobs

Although I believe the avant-garde retrospections of very early films can help produce a new contextual understanding of film history, the relation of early cinema to avant-garde films is not simple. There is an immense divide separating the technical, economic and ideological aims of the pioneers of cinema from those of the avant-garde filmmakers. Separated by a century, they both belong to two profoundly different cultural eras and involve quite different problematics. However, I believe that this divide can be bridged, not by focusing on the similarities avant-garde films bear to the images of early film, but rather by comparing two distinctions that are common to both early cinema and the avant-garde practices. The first is the mode of spectator address and how this was constructed. The second is the heterogeneous relation to the classical mode of narrative integration.

To address the relationship between both early cinema and the avant-garde filmmakers' approach to narrative, we must interrogate the technical and filmic structures that constructed the relationship between spectator and the screen in early cinema. These structures were all contained within the single shot film and incorporated the mode of a direct address to the audience through point of view framing, camera movement and a specific mode of temporality. In my opinion the role of the spectator is key to unlocking the relation between the two traditions. It is perhaps through an analysis of the way early cinema restructure both the relations of the audience to the spectacle, and undermine the hegemony of narrative films, that we may find a relation to avant-garde films' practice that is more than pseudomorphic.

Part One - Spectator Address

The first films to be shown at the beginning of motion pictures in 1895 explore a fascination with visual experiences, scenic views, forms of motion, topical events and vaudeville sketches. These films are rarely longer than a minute and they present the totality of an action unfolding in a homogeneous space. They are framed rather than plotted and explore a unity of point of view, where the composition within the frame remains primary. As the filmmaker prepares for shooting, the minimal action-segments are scheduled to appear in a continuous time sequence and in a continuous visual field. The films' maintenance of a single uninterrupted point of view, independent of and unsubordinated to the demands of editing, relates more to a particular mode of spectator address than to a passive or 'primitive' approach to filmmaking. It is this mode of address that defines attractions and its difference from the classically constructed spectatorial address of later narrative cinema and it is precisely this mode of spectatorial address that can begin to connect the avant-garde and early cinema.

Direct Address Versus Diegetic Immersion

The cinema of attractions, in its emphasis on display, is opposed to the diegetic absorption of classical cinema, that is, the temporal, spatial and linguistic situatedness of the cinematic event.³ Rather than being invested with narrative action or empathy with character psychology, the cinema of attractions solicits a conscious awareness of the film image engaging the viewer's curiosity. The

spectator does not get lost in a fictional world and its drama, but remains aware of the act of looking.⁴

Narrative cinema, on the other hand, invokes the spectator's attention by posing an enigma. The narrative then delays the resolution of that enigma until its final unfolding as an anticipated pleasure. Further, in classical narrative cinema the enigma happens within a detailed diegesis, a fictional world of places and characters in which the action of the narrative inhabit. From a spectatorial point of view, the classical diegesis depends on the lack of acknowledgment of the spectator. The film is watched but the spectator is rarely addressed. This approach is exemplified by the exclusion of the actor's look or gestures at the camera/spectator. Cinematic spectatorship becomes aligned with voyeurism when the figures on screen no longer (seem to) return the spectator's gaze, and when the structures of storytelling preclude an acknowledgement of the presence of the camera. As Christian Metz says, the classical spectator becomes modeled on the voyeur, who watches in secret, without the scene he watches acknowledging his presence.⁵

Attractions pose a very different relation to the spectator. Attractions fundamental hold on spectators depends on arousing and satisfying visual curiosity, through a direct and acknowledged act of display, rather than following a narrative enigma within a diegetic site into which the spectator peers invisibly. Its energy moves outward to an acknowledged spectator rather than inward towards the character-based situations essential to classical narrative. The spectator is not positioned as a voyeur, spying on an enclosed narrative world, but rather is knowingly addressed and provided with a series of views.⁶

Attractions managed to ‘activate’ rather than ‘absorb’ audiences. Through a variety of devices, the images of the cinema of attractions rush forward to meet their viewers. These encounters range from the nod and gesture at the camera by the actors in performance films to an aggressive encounter where the attraction confronts and shocks audiences, as with the implied collision of the early railroad films. Two examples of this are Lumière’s *L’arrivée d’un train en gare de La Ciotat* (*The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station*, 1895) and Edison’s *The Black Diamond Express* (1900). In *The Black Diamond Express* a train is seen rapidly approaching in the distance. As it approaches, a group of workers pull back from the rails. The train rushes towards the camera, only to swing past the position of the spectator. The spectator experiences a vivid sensation, as though the image is engaging with them and extending beyond the frame of the action, and beyond the site of the screen. The swing motion of the train creates a sense of relief, as though the spectators have avoided a collision. It is a confrontational film, emphasizing shock and surprise.⁷ Similarly *L’arrivée d’un train en gare de La Ciotat* shows the entry of a steam locomotive into a train station in the French town of La Ciotat. The Lumière brothers clearly knew that the effect would be dramatic if they placed the camera on the platform very close to the arriving train. Describing *The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station* in 1896 Maxim Gorky senses its impending threat:

A train appears on the screen. It speeds straight at you-watch out! It seems as though it will plunge into the darkness in which you sit, turning you into a ripped sack full of lacerated flesh and splintered bones.⁸



Figure 18: *L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat* (1895)
Auguste and Louis Lumière

The contrast between an encounter of a direct confrontation and the voyeuristic engagement through narrative integration is clearly evident in Edwin S. Porter's *The Great Train Robbery* (1903). The film told a simple story of a group of western criminals who steal money from a train. The film's fourteen scenes follow a narrative story with multiple plot lines. However, in one scene the leader of the bandits peers out from the screen raises his gun and fires point blank towards the camera/audience. This shot stood out from the rest of the film and did not sit comfortably within the body of the film. The shot was usually placed at the end although Porter stated that the scene could be played either at the beginning or the end of the projection. The close-up of the outlaw firing the pistol at the camera functions as a fairly autonomous attraction while most of the film strives for a sort of linear narrative. The scene demonstrates how difficult is to integrate a direct address within the world of a fiction. As Noël Burch has phrased it, this shot 'seems to hover on the fringe of a diegesis which cannot assimilate it.'⁹

The acknowledgement of the spectator can be perceived as undermining the realistic illusion of the classical cinema model, and is also widespread in avant-garde films. The relation of the avant-garde film to the enclosed fictive space of classical cinema has always been one of divergence. The term avant-garde describes a range of filmmaking styles that are generally opposed to the practices of mainstream commercial filmmaking. These filmmakers were aware that film was, until then, used as a representation of the reality and they chose to make this the subject of their films. The goal of these filmmakers is often to place the viewer in a more active and more thoughtful relationship to the film. These films are almost always conceptual artworks where the experience is the process of thinking about the film



Figure 19: *The Great Train Robbery* (1903) Edwin S. Porter

and not just consuming what is on the screen. The effect these films have on their audiences is namely the questioning of the medium itself. The viewers are constantly reminded that the content of the image is no more than an illusion. As Ernie Gehr wrote:

In representational films sometimes the image affirms its own presence as image, graphic entity, but most often it serves as vehicle to a photo-recorded event. Traditional and established avant-garde film teaches film to be an image, a representing. But film is a real thing and as a real thing it is not imitation. It does not reflect on life, it embodies the life of the mind. It is not a vehicle for ideas or portrayals of emotion outside of its own existence as emoted idea. Film is a variable intensity of light, an internal balance of time, a movement within a given space.¹⁰

Of course there is a difference between early cinema before the imposition of the taboo of looking at the camera and the conscious violation of that taboo by later avant-garde filmmakers. However, the similarities are intriguing.

Artists, such as Stan Brakhage and John Smith, aimed to expand the screen beyond the proscenium arch towards the viewer, and to create a mode of address that included them as part of the action. In these films the spectator is bound into the film by a unity of framing and viewpoint, which affirms the primary act of filmmaking as one of display, of showing, of showmanship. Brakhage's *Blue Moses* (1962), addresses itself directly to the audience. The film features the artist in confrontation with the camera as he presents a philosophical investigation of the



Figure 20: *Blue Moses* (1962) Stan Brakhage

nature of the medium. *Blue Moses* attacks the dramatic film as an untenable convention. The film posits that there can be no cinematic image without a filmmaker to take it and that the presence of the filmmaker transforms what he films. 'Don't be afraid. We're not alone. There's the cameraman ... or was ... once.' This polemic pits an actor against an unseen audience. 'Look,' he says, 'this is ridiculous. I'm an actor. You see what I mean? ... You're my audience, my captive audience. I'm your entertainment, your player. This whole film is about us.'¹¹

Similarly in Smith's *The Girl Chewing Gum* (1976), the spectator is addressed through an authoritative voice-over that appears to direct people, cars, moving objects and camera movements within the screen. The process of film making and the practice of film viewing become interlinked, involving an acknowledgement of the spectator, mediated through the view of the camera. The act of self-perception and the conscious awareness of the viewer become the core means of confrontation in these works. The effect of the direct address in these films makes the spectator a material and structural component of the film.

Confrontational Address Versus Contemplative Absorption

Early films mobilized the sophisticated viewing habits of spectators who already possessed a fluency in the realms of visual, literary and theatrical culture. Although the theatrical tableau presented one model of framing for filmmakers in the 1890s, the unity of viewpoint was not solely a form of theatrical framing.¹² Since early films generally involved a single camera set up and a single shot the analogies between a



Figure 21: *Girl Chewing Gum* (1976) John Smith

motion picture and a painting were often evoked. Early motion picture posters even depict a film being projected onto a canvas enclosed by an elaborate gold picture frame.¹³ In addition, filmmakers looking for moving imagery that might appeal to audiences also explored forms of nature painting. Scenes of landscapes, city views, and any number of moving pictures showing domestic scenes were built on a variety of popular compositions in painting.

It was equally thought that one way that early audiences were meant to look at and relate to films was similar to the way they were meant to look at paintings. For example, two of the numerous earliest nature films are *Passaic Falls* (1896) and *Waterfall in the Catskills* (1897), both by the Edison studio, and both of them single shots. These films provide a directness that escapes theatricality. According to the 1898 catalogue, *Waterfall in the Catskills* taken at Haines Falls, presented ‘water effects against a dark background’ and ‘encouraged the kind of sublime reverie that was appropriate to nature and landscape painting.’¹⁴ According to Katherine Manthorne such films evoke a long and rich genre of American painting and mobilized a new medium for a similar spectatorial response.¹⁵

Nineteenth-century landscape painting generally aspired to absorb spectators. For Michael Fried these paintings create a relation to the viewer through a self-contained hermetic world that makes no acknowledgement of the beholder's presence. Fried argues that the viewer metaphorically enters the world of the painting, which is to say that the beholder crosses over from his/her space into the world of the painting.¹⁶ As Fried remarks:



Figure 22: Vitascope poster (1896)



Figure 23: *Passaic Falls* (1896) James H. White

An essential object of paintings belonging to those genres was to induce in the beholder a particular psycho-physical condition, equivalent in kind and intensity to a profound experience of nature, which for the sake of brevity might be characterized as one of existential reverie or repos délicieux. In that state of mind and body a wholly passive receptivity becomes a vehicle of an apprehension of the fundamental beneficence of the natural world; the subject's awareness of the passage of time and, on occasion, of his very surroundings may be abolished; and he comes to experience a pure and intense sensation of the sweetness and as it were the self-sufficiency of his own existence.¹⁷

Attractions, however, totally ignores this construction of the viewer. The cinema of attractions stands at the antithesis to the absorbing experience Fried argues for in his discussion of eighteenth-century painting. Gunning advocates a different spectatorial position for early cinema, that in which the filmed subject plays to and acknowledges the beholder. For Gunning the aesthetic of attractions developed in fairly conscious opposition to an orthodox identification of viewing pleasure with the contemplation of beauty.¹⁸ The cinema of attractions is a cinema of astonishing moments of visual shocks and uncanny effects where astonishment blocks contemplative absorption. As Edmund Burke describes:

Astonishment is that state of the soul in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. The mind is so entirely filled with its object that it cannot entertain any other, nor reason on that object which fills it.¹⁹

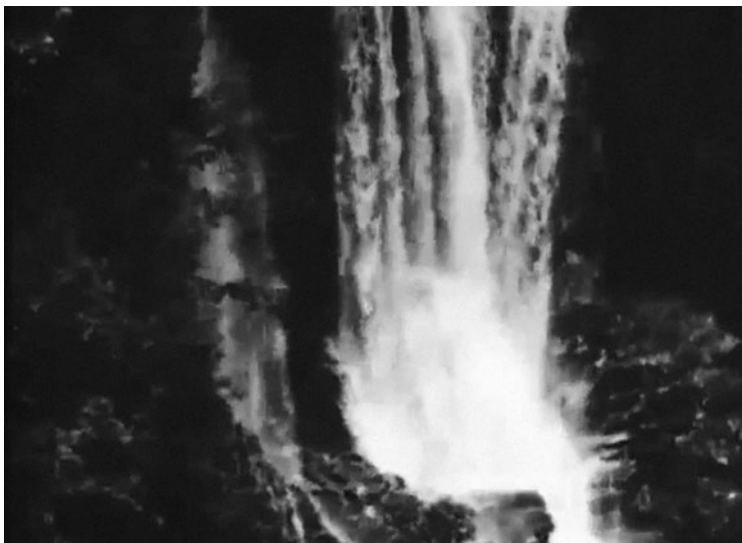


Figure 24: *Waterfall in the Catskills* (1897) James H. White

Rather than mistaking the image for reality, the spectators of films like *The Black Diamond Express* are astonished by its transformation through the new illusion of projected motion. Far from credulity, it is the incredible nature of the illusion itself that renders the viewer speechless. The audience's sense of astonishment comes less from a naive belief that they are threatened by an actual locomotive, than from an unbelievable visual transformation occurring before their eyes. What is displayed before the audience is less the impending speed of the train than the force of the cinematic apparatus.

As we have seen not all the attractions of early cinema express the violence of an on-rushing train. However, even a filmed landscape panorama does not lend itself to pure aesthetic contemplation. The desire to film waterfalls may well have been inspired by painterly representations of waterfalls during the previous century, but filming a waterfall and presenting the result to audiences seems likely to create an impact opposite to the absorption sought by the painters. On one level, a film image of a waterfall with the motion of the water might be a fuller representation of the essence of the scene to that of a painting, and yet the experience of only a few seconds of moving water could hardly be expected to create anything like the moment of serenity or absorption expected when engaging with landscape painting.

In addition, waterfall views were only a small portion of larger presentations, and these films would likely have been presented as just one short film among a series of several attractions. Therefore contemplative absorption would be impossible. As Siegfried Kracauer explains: 'the stimulations of the senses succeed each other with



Figure 25: *The Black Diamond Express* (1900) James H. White

such rapidity that there is no room left for even the slightest contemplation to squeeze in between them.’²⁰

The incorporation of nature within larger technological systems was more concerned with representing the spread of technology than with depicting the natural wonders mentioned in their titles. A sense of wonder or surprise dominates these films even if it is only wonder at the illusion of motion.²¹ The viewer is fully aware of the machine that mediates the view.

Movement of Attractions

Other early films that seemed designed for the viewer to encounter the natural world include the phantom ride films. In these films the spectator was drawn into space by the camera placed in a variety of vehicles, cars, trains and aerial balloons. The landscape panorama films, that were shot from the front or back of trains, invoke not only the motion picture machine but the locomotive which pulls the seated viewer through the landscape. The sense of penetration through a virtual space by the camera gives the spectator an exhilarating feeling. The camera pans across panoramic views of mountain ranges but the function of these pans is less an evocation of the beauties of the landscape than an attempt to create a thrill for the spectator. Lumière, Gaumont, Edison and Biograph all subjected their spectators to these unusual visual experiments.

According to Lynne Kirby, railway and cinema converge most precisely in the modes of perception of spectator and traveller: both create a tourist, a visual consumer, a panoramic observer.²² This is how an early reviewer for the *New York Mail and Express* described Biograph's moving camera film *The Haverstraw Tunnel* (1907): 'The way in which the unseen energy swallows up space and flings itself into the distances is as mysterious and impressive almost as an allegory.'²³ As Jean Mitry has said: 'It is not the spectator who was introduced into the space of the film, but rather the space which comes forward to present itself to the spectator within a uniformity of theatrical framing.'²⁴ The experience in these films was the thrill of motion and its transformation of space. The fascination of these single shot films lies in the constant, often highly complex, encounter with the moving image outside dramatic structures, an exploration that transforms the spectator into both tourist and filmmaker.²⁵

The unfolding of a landscape may imply a different spectator reception than the shock of display found in many typical films of the cinema of attractions. However, as constantly changing views they still possess the essential emphasis on display that defines the cinema of attractions. Such train films might turn the on-rushing *Black Diamond Express* inside out, but still provoked viewer amazement through a technologically mediated experience of space and movement. These films relied on the desires, identification and almost physical participation of the viewer, as if he or she were in an amusement park and were entering the image through the screen. For Noël Burch, this address in early cinema acts out the process of centering a spectator within a diegesis through camera identification, rather than through the development of narrative.²⁶

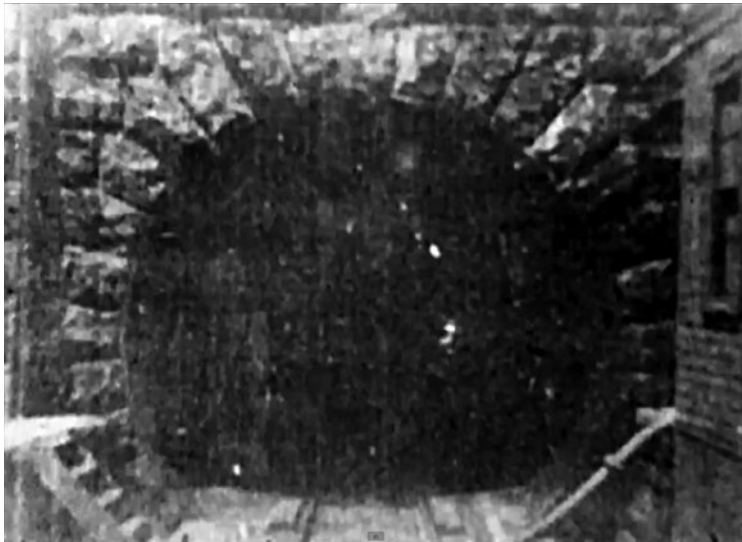


Figure 26: *The Haverstraw Tunnel* (1887) The Biograph Company

S.S. Coptic, Running against the Storm, produced by Thomas Edison (1898), is a single shot film taken from the deck of an ocean vessel as it ploughs into one billowing wave after another. In this film we can find no recognisable moment of change or progression. The waves are no different at the end of *S.S. Coptic* than at the beginning. The spectator becomes a surrogate passenger pursuing pleasure and enjoyment through the camera's 'point of view'. Writing the history of camera movement from the perspective of later narrative cinema, one might suppose that it began as a subsidiary to narrative action, the camera moves when something in the shot moves however, according to Gilles Deleuze, the 'primitive' cinema does not extract movement 'for itself', but leaves it attached to 'elements, characters and things which serve as its moving body or vehicle'.²⁷

The interest in films that provoke strong sensations of movement and space through camera identification are well known today. The motif of the journey criss-crosses the phantom rides of early cinema and becomes for the avant-garde one of the primary structures, one which, more than almost any other, allows us to engage with the modern experience of the moving image. These early films display representation of movement that the camera made possible. The avant-garde rediscovered these possibilities but this rediscovery took the form of a re-creation. Ken Jacobs *The Georgetown Loop*, for example, is based on an archival phantom ride film from 1903, rearranged by Jacobs in 1996. It is literally a loop, a railway loop around the city of Georgetown, Colorado. The two-minute long train journey was filmed by an operator who fixed his camera to the front of the locomotive, which frames a panoramic journey through the Colorado Rocky Mountains. Jacobs uses the early film as found material, pairs it with its mirror double to produce a



Figure 27: *S.S. Coptic, Running against the Storm* (1898) Thomas Edison

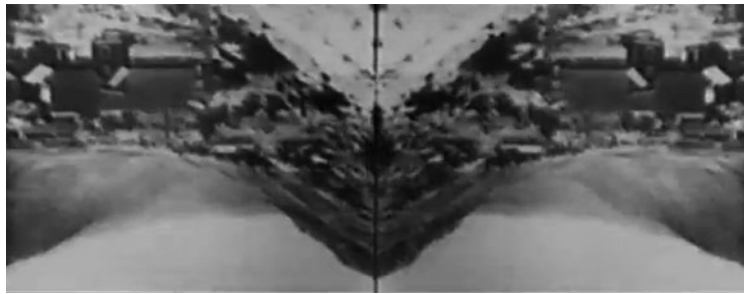
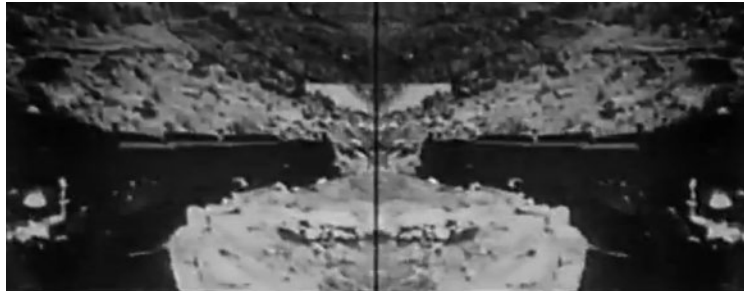
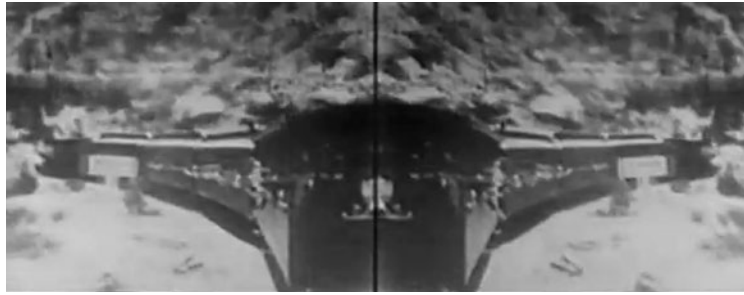


Figure 28: *The Georgetown Loop* (1996) Ken Jacobs

kaleidoscopic two-screen projection. He creates a structure of visual permutations using the conventions of varied repetition, doubling and mirroring. Although the body of the initial film is not changed or cut it is still restructured. According to Jacobs this hypnotic new form, through the rapid concentration of alternating images, suggests the movement of consciousness itself.

Similarly Michael Snow's films frequently exhibit a transformation of space by camera movement. Filmed on a barren plateau in the Canadian wilderness, *La Région Centrale* (1971) was made using a mechanical device that could be programmed to control all of the camera's functions and movements. For over three hours it spins, spirals and pans in all directions, zooms in on details on the ground, and zooms out to reveal the distant horizon. Anchored to a tripod, the camera turns a complete 360 degrees, cranes itself skyward, and circles in all directions. The robotic arm never moves in exactly the same way twice, so that each camera movement is slightly different. The film destroys the traditional theatrical relationship between the camera and what it records. The experience of Snow's gyrating camera devouring space in *La Région Centrale*, strongly resembles the relation between form and camera movement typified by the early phantom ride films.

Temporality of Attractions Versus Narrative Temporality

Just as the frame constitutes a spatial limit of early cinema, it is the cut and its interruption to the forward movement of the filmstrip that constitutes the temporal limit. The use of camera stoppage allowed the film to construct its own temporality



Figure 29: *La Région Centrale* (1971) Michael Snow

and present the spectator with an impression of time. The moving image engages multiple temporalities, there is the temporality of the apparatus, linear, irreversible, mechanical, there is the temporality of the narrative, the way in which time is represented by the image, through diegesis, and there is the temporality of the attraction, which reveals itself in the present moment by erupting on a monstrative level.

First let us consider the temporality of narrative. In addition to simple temporal progression and change, narrative implies a development in time. The world unfolded by a narrative work is always a temporal world, or as Paul Ricœur says: "Time becomes human time to the extent that it is organized after the manner of a narrative; narrative, in turn, is meaningful to the extent that it portrays the features of temporal experience."²⁸

The development of the 'subjective' camera, the insert shot, the point-of-view shot and cross cutting all redirected spectators from presentational addresses to representational perspectives and from monstration to narrative integration.²⁹ This is a different configuration of movement and time. Filmic time no longer matches, in a one to one correspondence as it does in the single shot film. In the multi shot film spectatorial time is emptied and replaced by the cinematic articulation of a temporality, diegetic time. This entails what Ricœur has called a configuration of time, time assuming a shape through the interacting logic of events. As Ricoeur argues, it is through this configuration that events become a story and narrative moves beyond the simply chronological.³⁰ Time in narrative, therefore, is never just linear progression, it is also the gathering of successive moments into a pattern, a

trajectory, a sense. Narrative creates a series of events in which what occurs is connected by a sequence of causes and effects, which take place in the necessary order of a unique temporal trajectory. Time proceeds only as dictated by action, the action of narrative, of rationality.³¹

Attractions, on the other hand, work with time in a very different manner. They do not build up events into the form with which a story makes its individual moments connect. The act of display on which the cinema of attractions is founded presents itself as a temporal irruption rather than a temporal development. While narrative temporality moves through a logic of character motivation, the attraction is not absorbed into a diegetic world of cause and effect, it has no relation to the fate of characters or the course of events. Rather, we are simply absorbed in the act of viewing. Attractions do show a temporal structure, but the structure consists more of framing a momentary appearance than an actual development and transformation in time. However, rather than a purely passive recording of theatrical acts or slices of life, the act of display in early film also carries the possibility of an experience of a time of pure instance.

Restricted to the presentation of a view or a central action, the cinema of attractions tends naturally toward brevity rather than extension. The one-shot film, with its own sense of flowing time, is a temporality of the instant. This temporality is not based on the impression of memory or other psychological states, but on an intense interaction between the spectator and the cinematic experience of the instant. While narrative stretches out an action and delays its resolution, attractions exist in an unfolding moment that is experienced as the present for the film spectator. The

film spectacle, an act of showing, can be summarised in the idea of sudden bursts of presentations, which are created for the pleasure of an immediate and fleeting vision-appearance rather than duration, where the time and space of the image correspond with the time and space of the referent. The moving images are 'here' and 'now'. The spectator always experiences the film in the present tense.

While attractions can have a temporal unfolding of their own, these temporal developments are secondary to the sudden appearance and then disappearance of the view itself. For instance an action with a clear trajectory like an acrobatic act, an onrushing train or a phantom ride journey could unfold without creating the structuring expectations that narrative implies. For example the Biograph 1904 film *Interior New York Subway, 14th Street to 42nd Street*, follows the path of a train as it illuminates the dark New York subway tunnels. The film unfolds through the change of light and shadow. The appearance of stations, structures and subway supports and the twists and turns in the track make the film frame a location of seemingly endless visual patterns of appearance and then disappearance. Here, filmic representation produces the spectatorial experience of presence and the viewer is positioned as an onlooker, with a stable spatial viewpoint. It is this different temporal configuration that determines attractions unique spectatorial address as much as its acknowledgment of the spectator's gaze.

Despite the dominance of attraction in the first decade of the cinema, despite the fascination with the camera's relation to present tense, narrative very quickly becomes its dominant method of structuring time. Commercial cinema is dominated by the aim of creating convincing illusory time space, from scripting,



Figure 30: *Interior New York Subway, 14th St. to 42nd St.* (1905) G.W. Bitzer

through shooting, editing, printing, promotion to projection.³² However, experimentation with present-time has been widespread within the avant-garde at the margins of mainstream cinema. It is partly this different form of temporality that explains the enthusiasm the avant-garde have for the aesthetic of attractions in early cinema. For the avant-garde this experience of time in attractions is seen as an ideal form of early cinema's 'difference' from later classical narrative.

Avant-garde filmmakers consciously employ a present-time aspect, 'real time', that is, time present as it is for the avant-garde filmmakers, is shown in clearly defined segments or in the film as a whole. If the physical film is not cut and its projection speed equals its shooting speed (usually somewhere between sixteen and twenty-four frames per second), the movement on the screen will unfold in a time that is isomorphic with profilmic time, or what is generally thought to be our everyday lived experience of time, hence the term 'real'. Commonly, 'real time' is presented in single takes or film segments used for their actual duration, thus breaking from illusionistic time, structured according to codes of narrativity.³³

Michael Snow's *Wavelength* (1967), Robert Nelson's *Bleu Shut* (1970) and Annabel Nicolson's *Reel Time* (1973) all draw on temporal equivalence as a starting point. These works are also aware of the projection event and are conscious of the audience behavior in assimilating the film's information within this temporal structure. These artists incorporated 'real time' equivalence within the film's construction and projection to produce three different approaches to 'real time'.



Figure 31: *Wavelength* (1967) Michael Snow

Snow's film *Wavelength* replicates a sense of 'real time' temporality that featured in the early cinema of attractions. The film uses the construction of the frame and the device of the 'zoom' to generate a tension for a quasi-narrative structure. *Wavelength* is a forty-five minute zoom from one end of a loft to the far wall. At the start of the film you see a large interior space with four windows at the far end. By the end, the camera tightly frames a photograph pinned on the wall between two of the windows. The film demonstrates attractional aspects such as a fixed, perpetual stare through its framing, its movement within and through the space, and its use of 'real time' temporality.³⁴ Although the film is not shot in one take, or one camera set-up, the shooting time is constructed in order for the experience at projection to be analogous with real time.³⁵ As Snow stated 'I was thinking of, planning for a time monument in which the beauty and sadness of equivalence would be celebrated, thinking of trying to make a definitive statement of pure film space and time.'³⁶

Robert Nelson's *Bleu Shut* (1970) is concerned primarily with the structural meditation on cinematic time. The film combines pop culture artifacts creating a game show atmosphere that comments on the search for pleasure. Screen time is affirmed by a small clock that appears in the upper right-hand corner of the screen, measuring the minutes and seconds throughout the film. The film pokes fun at spectators' impatience with experimental cinema by having the clock count down the film's running time.³⁷ In contrast to narrative films that ask the spectator to submit to an illusionistic time, here the experience of 'real time' is played with.



Figure 32: *Bleu Shut* (1971) Robert Nelson

Annabel Nicolson's *Reel Time* (1973)³⁸ epitomises the 'Structural' filmmaking interest in foregrounding the 'real time' event of the film projection process. *Reel Time* explores the material physicality of the filmstrip in relation to the film projector. Seated at the centre of the room, Nicolson guides a filmstrip through the unthreaded needle of a sewing machine, which punctures the film. The sewing machine slowly begins to destroy the filmstrip, which depicts an image filmed earlier of Nicolson at the sewing machine. At the same time another projector projects a beam of pure light onto Nicolson so that her shadow is cast as a large silhouette on the adjacent wall. The disintegrating filmstrip passes in a circular journey between the sewing machine and a film projector, showing the projected image of Nicolson as it is slowly obliterated by the needle punctures. The performance ends when the film breaks and can no longer be threaded through the projector.³⁹ Sharing the formalist, or 'structural' concerns and practices of the avant-garde filmmakers, Nicolson's work demonstrates an elegant interplay between these two temporal states of 'real time' and recorded time.

Early cinema offered a number of 'roads not taken' and different approaches not absorbed in commercial narrative cinema. These approaches to space and attitudes toward the spectator were either eliminated or greatly transformed by the development of narrative cinema in the decades after 1908. For the avant-garde, these were not blind alleys but were seeds for different understandings and for new films. Early filmmakers did not anticipate a project like that of the avant-garde filmmaker; but early films did present interesting modes of exhibitionism through the representation of space, movement, temporality and spectator address. It is

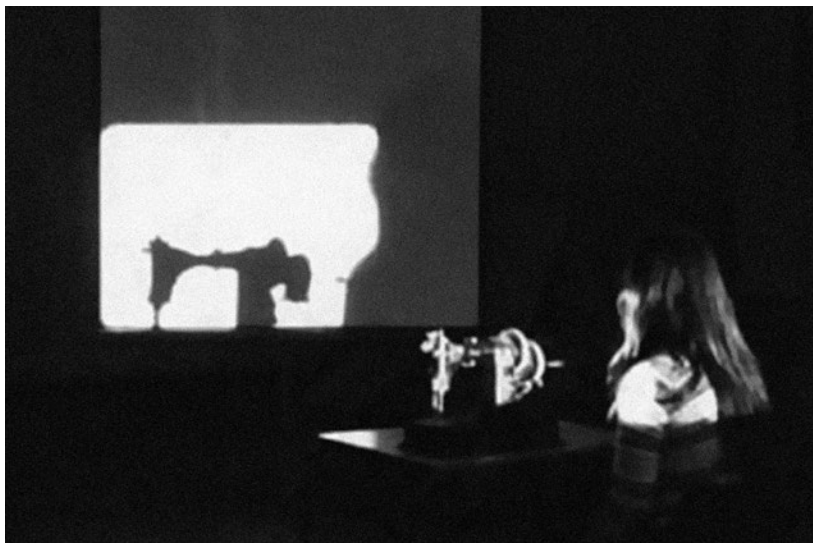
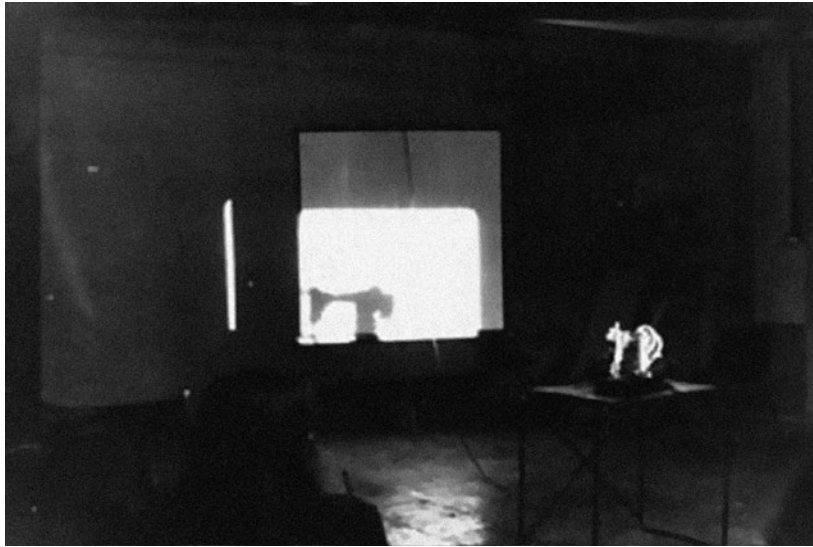


Figure 33: *Reel Time* (1973) Annabel Nicolson

precisely these exhibitionist possibilities that were rediscovered by the international practices of the avant-garde in the second half of the twentieth century, a rediscovery that took the form of a re-conception. In addition, avant-garde films have further analogies with early cinema in that both diverged from the fictive space of classical narrative cinema. However, the important issue is not the aesthetic similarity these later films bear to the images of early film. Rather the important issue here is the relation to the spectator and the disparity both film practices' share from that of classical narrative film. This relation between a film practice that predates narrative integration, and a film practice that consciously deviates from a system of narrative, is worth further examination.

Part Two - Narrative

Operating outside the stricture of narrative integration, attractions are exhibitionistic by nature and aimed to astonish.⁴⁰ They are essentially considered to be 'non-narrative' in the classical sense, even though they provide moments of display, shock or pleasure. However, this distinction between 'narrative' and 'non-narrative' as terms to describe moving images has proved problematic for the narratologist. Standard film history is predominantly written according to these two categorisations, and it posits a clear divide by which early films like Lumière's are defined negatively as 'non-narrative'. Avant-garde works, which deliberately avoid the conventions of narrative, are likewise described as 'anti-narrative'.

There is, however, a problem when all alternatives to classical narrative cinema are defined solely in terms of an absence or avoidance of narrative. A crucial question, which must be addressed if any progress is to be made in the study of the relationship between attraction and so-called 'pre' and 'post' narrative film, is whether or not these works can be characterized as narrative in a broader sense. I believe there should be a wider debate around what constitutes narrative and 'non'-narrative experimentation, as I believe that the definition 'non'-narrative has developed without being fully qualified.⁴¹ A careful scrutiny, therefore, of the origins of film narrative is necessary; in order to provide the means for distinguishing what in film is or is not narrative.

Narrative in Early Cinema

So what exactly are the parameters of filmic narrative? As prevalent as the term 'narrative' may be, there is disagreement as to how to define it. Barthes declared that there must be at least two consecutive events to constitute narrative.⁴² According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* narrative is 'an account of a series of events, facts, etc., given in order and with the establishing of connections between them, a narration, a story, an account.'⁴³ The word derives from the Latin verb '*narrare*', to 'tell'.

The traditional view suggests that the aim and pleasure of the first projected films consisted of the simple depiction of motion for its own sake and that this was a 'pre' narrative phase of the moving image. The camera is not thought to serve a narrative function, rather, its presence in each location is justified by the pro-filmic event. Karel Reisz claims that the Lumières set up their cameras and 'went on shooting until the stock ran out'.⁴⁴ The assertion that the Lumière films simply reflect reality is echoed by Louis D. Giannetti, who declares these films to be 'plotless', devoid of any narrative concerns:

From a strictly historical point of view, the plotless film can be dated almost to the inception of the movies at the turn of the century. The earliest films of the Lumière brothers in France, for example, were not concerned with narrative but with capturing the variety and flux of everyday life. Anything that moved was fascinating for its own sake.⁴⁵

However, more care was involved in their construction than this would imply. The Lumières' films aspired to an 'aesthetic of astonishment,' which went beyond a mere interest in the reproduction of motion. They were concerned with the 'logics of sensations'.⁴⁶ In the case of the Lumières' films, what could appear to be pure flux and process can appear to others, like Marshall Deutelbaum, as organised patterning. Most of the Lumière films draw their structure from the processes that they have selected to film that is, processes of sequential actions, or processes in which a series of related events move toward a denouement, or recur without reaching closure.

While the Lumière films present actions as they might be found in reality, the completeness with which they are presented strongly argues against them being simple 'motion picture snapshots'. In many of the films the beginning coincides with the beginning of the event depicted, or the event seems to have been arranged in such a way that a sense of a beginning is imparted to the material. In 'Structural Patterning in the Lumière Films', Marshall Deutelbaum argues that *Sortie d'usine* (1895), *Arrivée d'un train* (1895), *Demolition d'un mur* (1896), *Barque sortant du port* (1895) and other well known single scene films are not, as traditional film history has it, 'plotless' or 'the recording of unadjusted, unmodified reality', but are highly structured wholes 'reflecting a number of carefully chosen decisions about sequential spectacle and even narrative'.⁴⁷ Deutelbaum is able to show that most Lumière films record actions and events in which the end either rejoins or inversely mirrors the beginning.



Figure 34: *Barque sortant du port* (1895) Auguste and Louis Lumière

Narrative defined as beginning, continuation and conclusion can, of course, be contained in a single shot, as in *L'arroseur arrosé* (*The Waterer Watered*, 1895). Several aspects of the film's structure are especially noteworthy, and perhaps what is most so is that the event depicted is not discovered but created, not recorded but acted. The film moves from an initial state of equilibrium, with a gardener quietly getting on with his work, to one of disequilibrium, when the young rogue disrupts the gardener, and then finally returns to a state of equilibrium, when the gardener goes back to work. There can be no doubt that this is a complete, if minimal, plot.

Alternatively, the Lumière films enact working processes such as *Démolition d'un mur* (*The Falling Wall*, 1896). This film begins with the first stage of the process of toppling a wall, and ends with the final stage completed. In each of these cases, the film's temporal and spatial organisation foregrounds the causal or functional logic of the event, making the beginning of the action coincide with the beginning of the film. While the effect of beginning is relatively easily controlled in the camera, the end of the filmstrip is not a function of the closure of an action. In *Démolition d'un mur* the end of the film is produced by the end of the event being filmed.

Furthermore, Deutelbaum argues that the scope and duration of the actions are signalled in the films themselves, providing a form of narrative suspense and anticipation which generate active spectatorial involvement. Far from being a record of motion for its own sake, the films reflect a number of carefully-chosen decisions about sequential narrative.⁴⁸ These films begin, present one action through to its conclusion, and then end. The location of these linear actions within a single frame,



Figure 35: *L'Arroseur Arrosé* (1895) Auguste and Louis Lumière



Figure 36: *Démolition d'un mur* (1896) Auguste and Louis Lumière

and the use of additional actions to mark the beginning and end of the action, both reveal a subtlety of construction that is usually associated with later edited films.

Micro and Macro-Narration

So are these single shot films ‘narrative’? In my view, some form of narrative occurs. What is told in them? Not much, admittedly, but a sequence of events taking place in a short period of time surely constitutes a complete and fully-signifying narrative.

The quality and character of these early film narratives, however, do differ from the classical narrative model. In *Film, Narrative, Narration*, Andre Gaudreault asserts that there are two modes of narration: a primary ‘micro-narration’ at the level of the shot and a secondary level ‘macro-narration’. It is this secondary level that defines the classical narrative model of cinema, which is created through the articulation and sequencing of shots. Gaudreault suggests that we should distinguish between ‘narrative fragments’, on the one hand, and complete (though short) narratives, such as *L’arroseur arrosé*, on the other.⁴⁹

The classical model of ‘narrative cinema’ allows the coherence of story and storytelling to fashion a unity from a proliferation of viewpoints. Ben Brewster asserts the importance of a narrative point of view over simple camera identification in the forming of the classical style.⁵⁰ The continuity of classical cinema is based on the coherence of story, and the spectator’s identification with the camera is

mediated through an engagement with the unfolding of this story. The spectator is absorbed into a fictional world through linear narrative, creating a diegesis.

According to Gaudreault's assertion, a film made in one shot comprises a single narrative layer, and despite the symmetry in its action it does not have a second level of narrativity. To draw further the distinction between what is classical cinematic narrative and what is not, it is only on a second 'macro-narration' level that a film can be said to have a narrator or that its story is told. As Gaudreault explains:

The dominant feature of the system of narrative integration is that an element of cinematic signification is chosen and given an integrational role: that of telling the story. The narrator chooses the various elements of discourse as a function of the story, and it is also through the story that the viewer is led to interpret the various forms of cinematic discourse. [...]

When the system of narrative integration was taking shape, a being was born whose existence is only theoretical but whose task is to modulate and direct cinematic discourse: the narrator, whose 'voice' is heard from the beginning of the film to the end, by means of the way it structures, at one and the same time, the profilmic, the camera work and editing.⁵¹

The Lumière films show no signs of any intervention by a narrator, as it is the characters in the action who tell the story. The narrative presented is attributed to the discourse of monstration (showing), resulting from the articulation between one image and the next. Where classical cinema is a narrative cinema, and thus requires a

narrator, the 'cinema' of attractions needs no such narrator. Rather early films are the products of a monstrator, a showman or an implied subject-producer of the exhibition. The positioning of the camera, the framing, the decision to show a given moment and not another, all imply the presence of a showman or monstrator, who is showing us what to see, what to look for and from what perspective.

Monstrative Attraction

The dynamism of these monstrated, rather than narrated, events induces its spectators not to anchor themselves as the narrated objects of a screen performance, but to mobilise themselves as hectic and excited participants. Certainly, one can assemble cinematic events into a narrative, but it is important to recognise that narrative is not primary to cinema and that it forms no part of any putative essence of the medium. Narrative is not an essential criterion of cinema, but only a potential and secondary quality arising from the production of time in the differentiation within and between frames.

As we have seen, what determines the action in early cinema is not narrative but spectacle, whose purpose is to create an effect on the spectator. The difference is not so much between narrative and non-narrative, but rather between narration and the act of showing. Attractions as exhibitionistic views, motivated by the act of showing, sketch an alternative approach to narrative than that of the classical model, and as such it could be argued that narrative has been present since film's inception. It can be claimed that any film comprising one shot is a narrative,

whatever its level of narrative development. According to Jacques Aumont, 'if a statement relates an event, a real or fictitious action, even if the event is of secondary importance, then it falls within the category of narrative.'⁵² A corollary of this would be that each shot of a film, taken in isolation, constitutes a narrative. Whether or not the narrative is complete is not important; nor does it matter, at this level of analysis, whether the shots were devised to articulate with others and form part of a series. So does this mean that every shot must always, of necessity, be a narrative? From the point of view being developed here, I think this is the case. As Christian Metz contends, every shot presents a story, merely by means of iconic analogy.⁵³ Therefore labelling early cinematic works 'pre-narrative' is an essentially flawed form of categorisation.

This re-evaluation of early cinema has repercussions for our understanding of the relation between narrative and the 'post' or 'anti' narrative approaches of the avant-garde.

Narrative Avant-Garde

The classical narrative approach became dominant after 1907. Early cinema differed from classical cinema, but its differences do not easily correlate with those between the avant-garde and commercial cinema. While attractions went underground within commercial cinema, the avant-garde appeared to engage actively with, and indeed to foreground, these different modes of presentation and spectacle.

Works by Snow, Gidal, Le Grice, Frampton or Jacobs were insistently 'oppositional'. These filmmakers rejected the theatrical 'illusions' of the cinema, condemned the passive consumption of filmic illusion and called for a practice that would inspire a conscious and critically-aware audience. None of these filmmakers aspired to a commercial breakthrough film, nor did they manifest a desire to supplant dominant cinema. Rather, by working in film, they were seeking to give film status within fine art practice.

By the late 1970s avant-garde film had become an 'international' approach, with the filmmaking of Snow, Frampton, Gehr and Jacobs becoming a mode of practice. In the UK, Malcolm Le Grice and Peter Gidal led the development of a philosophy of filmmaking, called 'structural materialist', that came to be associated with the London Filmmakers Co-operative. The London Co-op started in the late 1960s and was partly inspired by the New York Filmmakers Co-op, which was a distribution house for independent, underground and avant-garde film. The London filmmakers extended this idea to encompass film production and exhibition, as well as distribution.⁵⁴ Opposed to 'identification-fixated' narrative cinema, their approach emphasised process and materiality. The films were characterised by the development of temporal structures based on repetition, and by a concern with the role and conceptual experience of the spectator, a concern which had more resonances with early cinema than with classical narrative cinema.⁵⁵

The consensus within avant-garde practices and discussions has been one of opposition to narrative continuity. The focus has been on work that can be

interpreted as ‘anti-narrative’, or as P. Adams Sitney put it, ‘liberated’ from the ‘demands of narrative continuity’.⁵⁶ Within the short academic history of artists’ film and video, however, there has been a tendency to categorise practices as either ‘narrative’ or ‘non-narrative’. This polarising approach has been compounded in writings that sought to define experimental film and video and which have generally been opposed to narrative.

One such text is Peter Wollen’s *The Two Avant-Gardes*, published in 1975. In this text, Wollen proposes specific distinctions in avant-garde practices. He establishes a lineage from abstract painting for what he names the ‘first avant-garde’, which he defines as an absence of verbal language and narrative. (The second avant-garde, by contrast, critically engaged with narrative cinema and focused on filmmakers such as Godard, Straub and Huillet, Hanoun and Jancso.) The tendency of modernist painting to be self-reflexive and to foreground its own materiality and signification has been translated into specifically cinematic terms and concerns. Wollen argues that to be included within the first avant-garde a work has to be non-narrative and anti-illusionist.⁵⁷

This position is epitomised in Peter Gidal’s influential book *Theory and Definition of Structural / Materialist Film* (1976). Here Gidal states that ‘an avant-garde film defined by its development towards increased materialism and Materialist function does not represent, or document, anything.’⁵⁸ Gidal’s stance can be seen as representative of ideas that characterised avant-garde moving image debates in the 1960s and 1970s, which were based on a clear demarcation between dramatic narrative and experimental film, this latter understood to be anti-narrative. The

rejection of any alternative languages of cinema that did not fit this prescribed view has led to the perception that avant-garde artists have been oppositional to narrative in the widest sense.⁵⁹

Wollen's categorisations and Gidal's anti-narrative stance, however, were not reflected so dogmatically in the actual work of artists either in the UK or US. While theorists were preoccupied with the anti-narrative stance, artists like Malcolm Le Grice were often seemingly both pro- and anti-narrative. Le Grice played a key role in the institutional promotion of avant-garde moving image and authored many key texts.⁶⁰ Gidal refers to Le Grice's *Yes No Maybe Maybe Not* (1967) as 'an example of anti-narrative work that does not reproduce myriad possibilities for the integration of narrative and identity.'⁶¹ Le Grice's film consists primarily of a fifty-second sequence of the water, and a forty-second sequence of Battersea power station. The film concentrates on the continually shifting tone and texture of water and smoke, which is achieved by printing positive into negative. Le Grice states: 'There is no thematic or narrative aspect to this film...it is almost entirely a present visual-movement experience.'⁶²

Despite this anti-narrative stance, however, Le Grice made many works that pursued a narrative direction. An early example of these is *After Lumière, L'arroseur arrosé* (1974). Shot with four cameras and shown on four screens, *After Lumière* is an investigation into narration which adapts Lumière's simple story and foregrounds the process of narration itself. According to Le Grice:

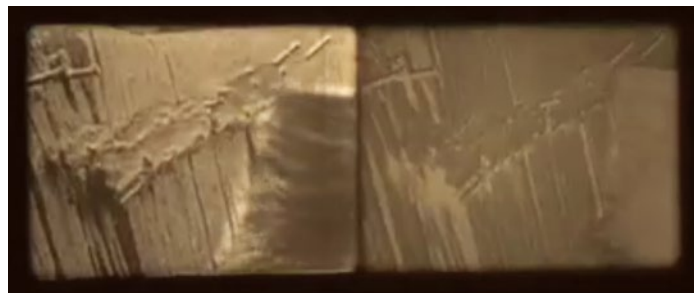
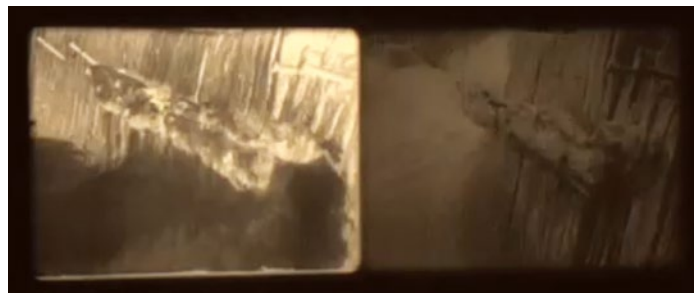


Figure 37: *Yes No Maybe Maybe Not* (1967) Malcolm LeGrice



Figure 38: *After Lumière - L'Arroseur Arrosé* (1974) Malcolm LeGrice

‘it is an investigation into consequentiality, or at least the significance of sequentiality in the construction of meaning and concept. As such, the film encroaches on ‘narrative’ cinema, but in a way which treats narrativization as problematic, not transparent.’⁶³

Le Grice went on to make the trilogy *Blackbird Descending* (1977), *Emily* (1978) and *Finnegans Chin* (1981). These elaborated a critical kind of storytelling in which both the formal aspects of cinema and the very structures of narrative were explored in relation to each other. *Blackbird Descending* is a feature length work. What we see is a simple domestic scene: A woman typing. Through the window a man prunes a tree and a woman hangs out different coloured sheets. A phone rings. This scene is repeated again and again from different viewpoints and time points but always slightly altered. The film investigates experiences of different phenomena, using the techniques of repetition and shifting to transform the banality of everyday life into a mysterious drama of potentially possible occurrences.

As Le Grice states: ‘During this period I explored issues of the language of film, its semiology, the notion of its grammar and tense formation, identification with represented characters and with camera viewpoint.’⁶⁴ Le Grice is tiptoeing delicately into that forbidden area for the ‘Structural’ filmmaker that is known as narrative. Le Grice, of course, is not alone in his endeavour. It is not a question of a ‘return’ to narrative; it is more a new approach made possible by the investigation and foregrounding of cinematic procedures, characteristic of Le Grice’s work and that of other avant-garde filmmakers.

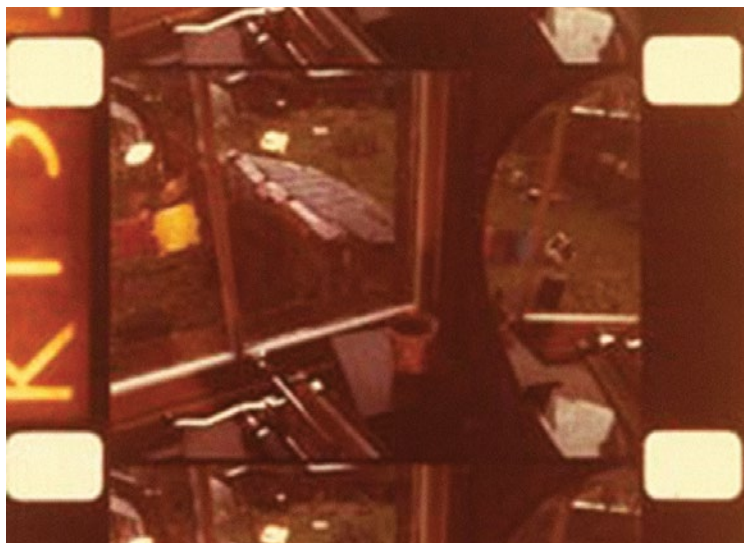


Figure 39: *Blackbird Descending - tense alignment* (1977) Malcolm Le Grice

The anti-narrative position was further challenged by works such as John Smith's aforementioned *The Girl Chewing Gum* (1976), in which an authoritative voice-over appears to direct the action in a London street. As the commands become more absurd and fantasised, we recognise that the director is fictional. The voice-over only describes, not prescribes, the actions that occur before him. As A.L. Rees says, 'Smith embraced the spectre of narrative (suppressed by structural film), to play word against picture and chance against order.'⁶⁵ Smith states, 'I always had an interest in narrative. Narrative in a very broad sense.'⁶⁶

Likewise, in Hollis Frampton's *Nostalgia* (1971) a voice-over plays the critic, explicating, narrating and mythologising Frampton's earlier art and earlier life during the time it takes for a photograph to burn. A calm voice tells a story about an image, but the story is about the following image, not the one shown. Both the images and the words used to describe the images are forms of representation and the fact that they do not complement each other helps the viewer recognize the fact that they are representations. The film is an examination of narrative and vision, past and future, memory and temporality, where Frampton over turns the conventional narrative roles of words and images.

Lynn Hershman Leeson's *Lorna* (1984), is one of the earliest interactive video laser disc works by an artist, and enabled the audience to navigate multiple strands of narrative.⁶⁷ Viewers interact with and make narrative choices for the protagonist, Lorna, an agoraphobic woman. Every object in Lorna's tiny apartment has a number that when pressed, access information about Lorna's fears and dreams as



Figure 41: *Lorna* (1984) Lynn Hershman Leeson

well as her personal history, conflicts and future. The narrative has multiple variations that can be seen backwards, forwards, at increased or decreased speeds, and from several points of view. Viewers have the option of directing her life into several possible plots. There are thirty-six chapters which, when sequenced differently, shift meanings as they are recontextualized. There are three endings: Lorna shoots her television set, commits suicide, or moves to Los Angeles.

What I am attempting to illustrate by discussing these works is that despite the emphasis on a non-narrative lineage, many avant-garde works were not without some narrative dimension. Many diverse practices have been squeezed into the anti-narrative canon. Furthermore, I believe that this antithetical stance to narrative has not yet been adequately defined, nor has its lines of distinction been made clear.⁶⁸

The notion of a recurrent opposition to narrative is perhaps too polemical, if we really want to re-evaluate moving image spectatorship and break with the dominance of what we currently understand by a 'post-classical moving image'. My concern is that the continuation of such restrictive discourses will perpetuate the 'non' and 'anti-narrative' canon and thereby continue to ignore an enormous body of narrative inquiries that do not fit into the prescribed categories.⁶⁹ I feel that the historical uncertainties around the relationship between narrative and the so called 'non-narrative' have constrained the discussion of contemporary experimentation with moving image and divided it into two antithetical practices.

I also take issue with the term 'non-narrative' because 'non' is a negative prefix. It presupposes narrative to be the prescriptive norm from which early cinema and

avant-garde practice deviate. By contrast, 'attraction' is a positive classification of early cinema or avant-garde practices, which allow them to be judged on their own terms and as distinct systems of spectator address.

I propose three reasons why 'non-narrative' as a definition for these diverse practices is and has been an inaccurate categorisation and thus requires reconsideration. First, many practices are described as 'non-narrative' despite containing what I believe to be a first level of narrative. Any narrative content in these works is ignored, even though this narrative may be minimal. Second, this method of distinction creates an opposition between so called 'non-narrative' and 'narrative', whereby contemporary moving image practices are separated and canonised into two polarised practices. And third, the classification 'non-narrative' produces a negative characterisation.

I do not believe we can distinguish between 'narrative' and 'non-narrative' moving image. Consequently, I feel that prefix 'anti', 'non', 'pre' or 'post' narrative as a definition for avant-garde practices or early cinema has been a historically flawed form of classification. It is my opinion that the discourses which described early cinema as pre narrative and avant-garde practice as non-narrative have been riddled with contradiction and ambiguity, the potential consequences of which can lead to anodyne restrictions rather than inclusive approaches to experimentation. Thus, rather than proposing a moving image that is prefixed relative to narrative we should explore a different form of analysis. I feel that attractions could replace the old classification and help to determine a historical trajectory within which to include overlooked engagements with spectator address.

An understanding of new forms of contemporary moving image depends on a confrontation with some of the dogmatic theoretical debates of its past. Such an understanding might involve alternative interpretations of the debates of late modernism and a reconsideration of modes of practice attributable to early cinema, attraction being one aspect of this diverse and complex history.

The re-evaluation of early films as formally autonomous allowed us to re-establish early cinema as a field of investigation in its own right, rather than as the infancy of an art form. The fact that this difference has been an inspiration to a number of avant-garde films is a part of the history of that difference. Paradoxically, the fact that these same early films are also the ancestors of the later dominant practice is another part of the history of that difference. Reassessing avant-garde practices through this new perspective of attractions and exhibitionism forces us to re-evaluate these practices to include spectator address. We can thereby break down the strong anti-narrative stand that has permeated the writing on this movement until now. We would do more justice to the film avant-garde if we were to consider it to be a wide-ranging initiative, with one of its aims being the transformation of the relationship of the spectator to the screen, transformation inspired by what attractions did in early cinema.

NOTES

1. Tom Gunning on November 15, 1979, speaking at 'Researches and Investigations into Film: Its Origins and the Avant-garde,' conference organised by John G. Hanhardt, at the Whitney Museum of American Art.

2. During the 1970s there was a re-evaluation of early moving image works. This was the result of much greater opportunity to view and access early cinema at the archive of early films in the US Library of Congress, the Museum of Modern Art screenings in New York and the National Film and Television Archive at the British Film Institute London.

3. See Noël Burch, 'Narrative/Diegesis-Thresholds, Limits', in *Screen* 2.2 (July-August 1982) pp. 16-33.

4. Tom Gunning, 'An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the [In]Credulous Spectator', in *Art and Text* (Fall 1989) p. 121.

5. Christian Metz, *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975) pp. 61-66,91-97.

6. See Tom Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attraction[s]: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde' (1986), in: Wanda Strauven (ed.), *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006) p. 57.

7. Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (Harvard University Press, 2003) p. 24.

8. Maxim Gorky viewed a program of Lumière films at a Russian fair and published this article a few days later on July 4, 1896. Gorky's account is included as an appendix in Jay Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973) pp. 407-409.

9. Noel Burch, 'Film's Institutional Mode of Representation and the Soviet Response', *October* 11 (Winter 1979) p. 79.

10. Ernie Gehr, 'Program Notes by Ernie Gehr for a Film Showing at the Museum of Modern Art', in: *Film Culture* no. 53–55 (Spring 1972) pp. 36–37. Quoted in P. Adams Sitney *Eyes Upside Down: Visionary Filmmakers and the Heritage of Emerson*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) P. 201.

11. Quoted in P. Adams Sitney *Visionary Film: The American Avant-garde 1943-1978* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979) p. 180.

12. The role of the frame in the various pre-cinematic toys as well as the compositional framing of nineteenth-century landscape painting all exerted as much influence on early filmmakers as the proscenium arch did.

13. This can be seen in an early 1896 Vitascope poster, such frames continued to be a part of cinema's iconography into the early 1900's, one even appears in *Josh at the Moving Picture Show* (Porter, Edison, 1902).

14. F.Z. Maguire & Co., *Catalogue* (March 1898) p. 30. Quoted in Musser, 'A Cinema of Contemplation, A Cinema of Discernment: Spectatorship, Intertextuality and Attractions in the 1890s', in: Wanda Strauven (ed.), *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, p. 163.

15. Katherine Manthorne, 'Experiencing Nature in Early Film: Dialogues with Church's Niagara and Homer's Seascapes,' in Mathews, Nancy Mowll, and Charles Musser (eds.), *Moving Pictures: American Art and Early Film, 1890–1910 Volume 1*, (New York: Hudson Hills, 2005) pp. 55-60.

16. Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and the Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (California: University of California Press, 1980) p. 108.

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17. Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and the Beholder in the Age of Diderot*, pp. 130-31.
18. Gunning, 'An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the [In] Credulous Spectator', p. 124.
19. Edmund Burke *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: Oxford University Press, 2015) p.47.
20. Siegfried Kracauer, 'The Cult of Distraction', *New German Critique* 40 (Winter 1987) p. 94.
21. In addition, the fact that waterfalls are continually in motion made them one of the few natural subjects that a motion picture camera could capture.
22. Lynne Kirby, *Parallel Tracks: The Railroad and Silent Cinema* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997) p. 250.
23. Robert C. Allen, *Vaudeville and Film, 1895-1915: A Study in Media Interaction* (New York: Arno Press, 1980). Quoted in Tom Gunning, 'An Unseen Energy Swallows Space: The Space in Early Film and Its Relation to American Avant-Garde Film,' in: John L Fell (ed.), *Film before Griffith* (California, University of California Press, 1983) p. 363.
24. Jean Mitry, 'Le montage dans les films de Melies', in: Madeleine Malthete-Melies (ed.), *Melies et la Naissance du Spectacle Cinematographique* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1984) p.151.
25. See Tom Gunning, 'Before Documentary: Early Nonfiction Films and the "View" Aesthetic', in: Daan Hertogs and Nico De Klerk (eds.), *Uncharted Territory, Essays on Early Nonfiction Film* (Amsterdam: Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum, 1997) pp. 9-24.

26. Noël Burch, 'How We Got into Pictures: Notes Accompanying Correction Please', in: Simon Field and Guy L'éclair (eds.), *Afterimage* (London: Afterimage Publishing, 1981) pp. 24-38.

27. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. H. Tomlinson and B. Habberjam, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) p. 24.

28. Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 1 (London: University Of Chicago Press) p.3.

29. This is a syntactic shift where the hierarchy of narrative supersedes the succession of views.

30. See Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 1 pp. 66-77.

31. Deleuze calls this 'the movement-image', which is exemplified by classical narrative cinema. For Deleuze, temporality in the movement-image is governed by the 'sensory-motor schema'. All movements are determined by linear causality and the characters are bent toward actions, which respond to the situations of the present. The movement-image is structured, not only by narrative, but by rationality: closed framings, reasonable progressions and continuous juxtapositions. Deleuze develops his concept of the sensory-motor schema to describe structures and transitions that are governed by a linear, cause-and-effect logic. Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*.

32. See Malcolm le Grice, 'Real TIME/SPACE', in: Malcolm le Grice *Experimental Cinema in the Digital Age*, (London: British Film Institute, 2001) pp.155-164.

33. Illusionistic time is a time made to seem what it is not, such as in conventional editing. See Peter Gidal, 'Theory and Definition of Structural/Materialist Film' (1976), in: Michael O'Pray (ed.), *The British Avant-garde Film 1926-1995: An Anthology of Writings* (London: University of Luton Press, 1996) p. 145.

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34. Fixed camera position is one of the formal characteristics P.A. Sitney identified as common in Structural films.
35. See Malcolm le Grice, 'Real TIME/SPACE', in: Malcolm le Grice *Experimental Cinema in the Digital Age*, (London: British Film Institute, 2001) pp.155-164.
36. Michael Snow, *Fourth International Experimental Film Competition*, catalogue (Brussels, Cinémathèque Royale de Belgique, 1967) p. 80.
37. Ben Sachs, *To play's the thing: talking about experimental filmmaker Robert Nelson* (Chicago Reader 19th September 2012) Online. Available <http://www.chicagoreader.com/Bleader/archives/2012/09/19/to-plays-the-thing-talking-about-experimental-filmmaker-robert-nelson>
38. Annabel Nicolson first performed her seminal film performance *Reel Time* at the London Filmmakers' Co-operative in 1973.
39. See Michael O'Pray (ed.), *The British Avant-garde Film 1926-1995: An Anthology of Writings* (London: University of Luton Press, 1996) p213.
40. Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attraction[s]: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde', p. 57.
41. Jackie Hatfield has also made this point regarding the lack of a clear definition of the 'non-narrative'. See Jackie Hatfield, 'Some Reasons for a Review of the Avant-garde Debates Around Narrativity,' in Jackie Hatfield (ed.), *Art In-Sight, A Review of Artists' Film, Video and Installation*, Issue 10 (March, 2005) pp. 11-14.
42. Roland Barthes, 'An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative', in: *The Semiotic Challenge* (California: University of California Press, 1995) pp. 95-135.
43. Narrative as defined by *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (2003).

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44. Karel Reisz, *Technique of Film Editing* (New York: Focal Press, 1974) p.16.
45. Louis. D. Giannetti, *Godard and Others: Essays on Film Form* (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1975) p. 137.
46. Gunning, 'An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the [In] Credulous Spectator', p.119.
47. Marshall Deutelbaum, 'Structural Patterning in the Lumière Films', in: John L. Fell (ed.), *Film before Griffith* (California, University of California Press, 1983) p. 30.
48. Deutelbaum, 'Structural Patterning in the Lumière Films', p. 30.
49. André Gaudreault 'Film, Narrative, Narration: The Cinema of the Lumière Brothers' (1984), in: Thomas Elsaesser (ed.), *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (London: British Film Institute, 1990) p. 73.
50. Ben Brewster, 'A Scene at the 'Movies'', in *Screen 23* (July-August, 1982) pp. 4-15.
51. André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning, 'Early Cinema as a Challenge to Film History' (1989), in: Wanda Strauven (ed.), *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, p. 374.
52. Jacques Aumont, *L'Esthétique du film* (Paris: Fernand Nathan, 1983) p. 77.
53. Christian Metz, *Film Language: A Semiotics of the Cinema*, trans. Michael Taylor (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974) p. 118.
54. The London Filmmakers Co-op housed a cinema, a workshop and a film lab under one roof.

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55. See Malcome Le Grice, 'Reflections on My Practice and Media Specificity', in: Jackie Hatfield (ed.), *Experimental Film and Video: An Anthology* (London: John Libbey Publishing, 2006) p. 221.
56. Sitney *Visionary Film: The American Avant-garde 1943-1978*, p. 4.
57. Peter Wollen, 'The Two Avant-Gardes,' in *Studio International* 190 (Nov/Dec 1975).
58. Peter Gidal, 'Theory and Definition of Structural/Materialist Film' (1976), in: Michael O'Pray (ed.), *The British Avant-garde Film 1926-1995: An Anthology of Writings* (London: University of Luton Press, 1996) p. 145.
59. Jackie Hatfield also discusses the relationship between avant-garde and narrative. See Hatfield, 'Some Reasons for a Review of the Avant-garde Debates around Definitions of Narrativity', pp. 11-14.
60. Examples being Malcolm Le Grice, *Abstract Film and Beyond* (1977); *Experimental Cinema in the Digital Age* (2001).
61. Peter Gidal, *Materialist Film* (London: Routledge, 1989) p. 124.
62. Malcom Le Grice, *Visionary film: circa '67* (London: no.w.here, 2007) Online. Available
<http://www.no-w-here.org.uk/index.php?cat=1&subCat=docdetail&id=43>.
63. David Curtis and Deke Dusinberre, *A Perspective on English Avant-garde Film: A Touring Exhibition* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1978) p. 69.
64. Le Grice, 'Reflections on My Practice and Media Specificity', p. 221.

65. A.L. Rees in David Curtis (ed.) *A Directory of British Film & Video Artists* (London: University of Luton Press, 1995) p. 174.

66. Brian Frye, *Interview with John Smith*, *Millennium Film Journal*, Issue 39/40 (Winter 2003) Online. Available
<http://www.mfj-online.org/journalPages/MFJ39/JohnSmith.html>.

67. As technology changed, the piece was migrated to a DVD platform in 2004.

68. See Hatfield, 'Some Reasons for a Review of the Avant-garde Debates Around Narrativity', pp. 11-14.

69. See Hatfield, 'Some Reasons for a Review of the Avant-garde Debates around Definitions of Narrativity', pp. 11-14.

3

Attraction Machines: Devices of Attractions

A moving train can be called to mind by speech and text, but thanks to the camera and the projector it can be recorded and shown. This showing has become a technical operation achievable by machines. The world revealed to the viewer through the eye of the camera is a different world than that which the human eye perceives. Cinematographe images are the product of a knowledge that is neither metaphysical nor empirical, but physical and objective. The possibility of observing motion, of slowing it down or speeding it up, offers unseen ways of shaping time and of producing new models of thought. Attractions were invented by the circus long before the cinema, but unlike a sword swallower or a strongman the kinetograph and cinematographe were technological attractions.

The invention of the 'basic devices' for cinema in the 1890s by Edison and the Lumière brothers was certainly a turning point in the evolution of moving image technology. We must, however, ask ourselves whether the inventions in question brought about a new state of affairs. Was the appearance of the kinetograph or cinematographe a true break with the past? Did the sudden availability of a new technology revolutionise behaviour and practices? Did these devices impose a way of conceiving the subject and actions they depicted?

Despite a continuity in the naming of a given medium (film, video, digital), its functions and its functioning can vary so much over time that it might be more accurate to describe the different spectatorial engagements rather than to look for the material specificities of the medium. I believe that attractions could prove to be entirely apposite to the study of a vast range of moving image media and devices. Is there not something to be gained by examining attractions in the light of other historical and technical models which do not necessarily pertain to early cinema, or even to cinema at all? I believe that the mode of attraction transcends its material parameters and is not merely a historical phenomenon; it is, rather, a structuring principle, which constructs visual experience and has the potential to emerge from every new material development within the field of moving images.

So how can we incorporate the insights of the cinema of attractions while beginning cautiously to revise the historical lineage it presumes to have developed? How can we displace the periodisations and the technological and structural framework on which it has built its foundations? And how can we expand the designated brief that the cinema of attractions gives itself, especially when it sets itself off against the

implied norm of narrative integration? To explore these questions I believe we must approach attraction as a structuring principle and expand the parameters of the term to include the earliest moving image devices and optical toys. We must trace a historical trajectory that resituates attraction before 1895. I believe that examining optical toys can enable us to see certain latent features in the notion of attraction. I also believe that these features can expand our understanding of the modes of address that are inherent in contemporary moving image.

Pre-Cinema

The traditional distinction between pre-cinema and early cinema supposes that a break took place around 1895, with the first Auguste and Louis Lumière screening on 22 March of that year. The term 'pre'-cinema, like 'early' cinema, reinforces a teleological approach that views moving image toys as an imperfect precursor to a later classical cinema, as if this were the final goal or aim of these devices. This is an example of dissecting history after the fact in a way that does not respect the integrity of the object under study. As we have seen, it was this teleological perspective that motivated Gunning and Gaudreault's reassessment of 'early cinema'.

It appears to me that defining as 'pre' cinematic the forms of twentieth century moving images and optical toys that came before classical cinema is to remove the object under study from its historical context. Once this perspective is established, it becomes difficult to recognise the attractional moving image features that first

originated within this so-called 'pre'-cinema. However, it is my view that the workings of the 'pre-cinematic' devices, based as they are essentially on rotation and repetition, established the form of moving image attractions, and that this mode of attraction dominated throughout the period and created the roots for the attractional mode that characterises early cinema.

Optical Toys

Between 1825 and 1895 there were numerous scientific experiments that attempted to explain the nature of various visual phenomena. These experiments made it possible to devise a number of optical instruments, which were soon taken up as a form of popular entertainment.¹ One of the first of these devices was the thaumatrope (1825) in which a disk with an image on each side was rapidly rotated by twirling the strings attached to it. This was, in its essence, a loop in minimal form: two illustrated images flicker and replace one another in succession.² Common pictures would include a bare tree on one side of the disk and its leaves on the other, or a monkey on one side and a cage on the other.

After the thaumatrope came the phenakistoscope (1829), which was a cardboard disk upon which a dozen illustrated figures were arranged in a circle around its edge. Cut through the disk were a series of equally-spaced slits. Only one person could use the device at a time. The user would spin the disc and look through the moving slits at the disc's reflection in a mirror. The user would see a rapid succession of images that appeared to be a single moving picture. The limitations of the device

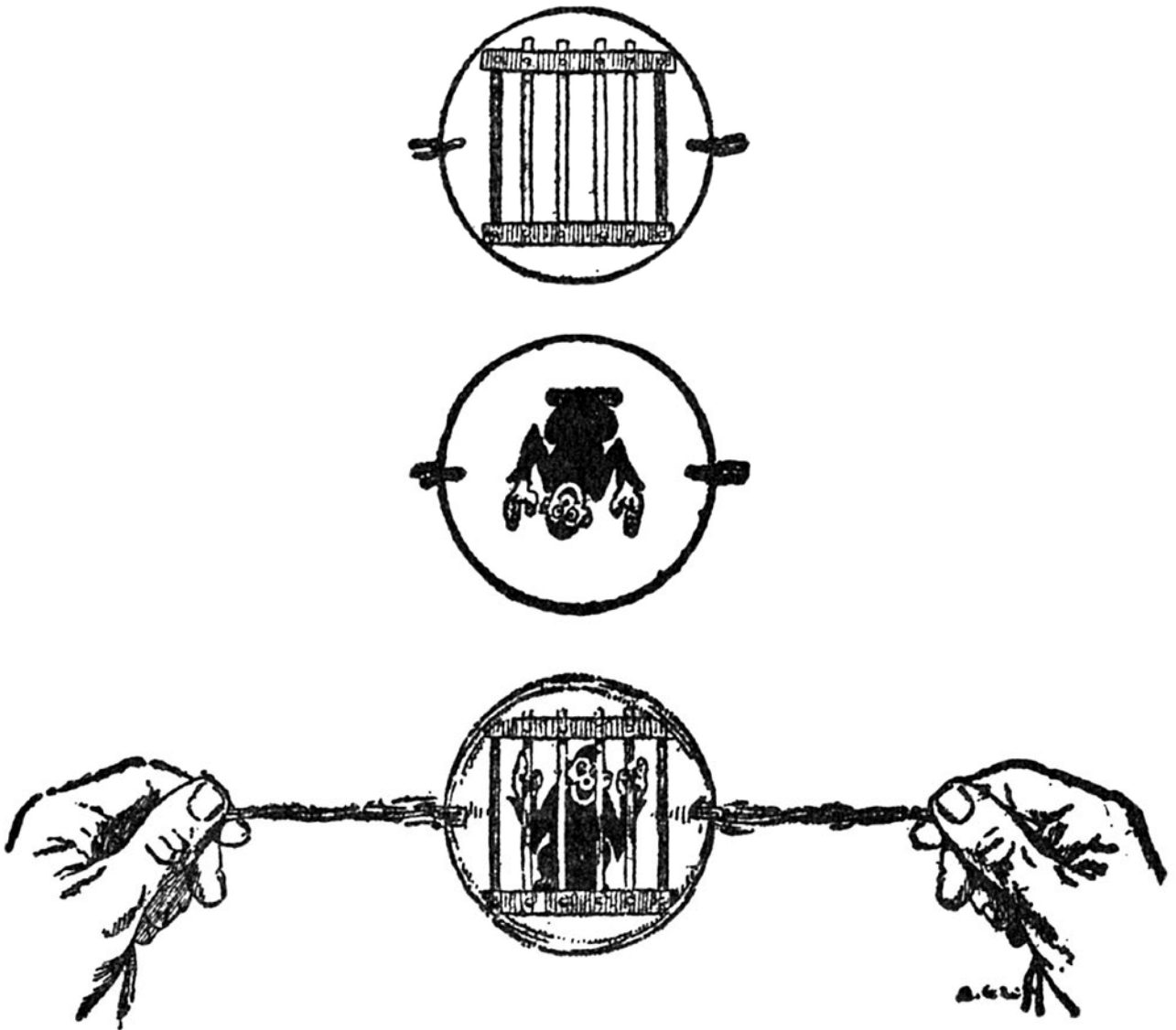


Figure 42: Thaumatrope (1825) John Ayrton Paris



Figure 43: Phenakistoscope (1829) Joseph Plateau

determined that the images were condemned to a repetitive and unalterable series of figures forming a loop: dancers turning on themselves, a girl skipping, a bird flying or a tightrope walker balancing. Its very design meant that the thresholds of 'beginning' and 'end' were absent. No gaps in the images were possible, since the start and finish had to join up and match. Its images were measured to give the impression of a gradual moving forward of the action, making it impossible to identify which of these images was the very first in the series. Set in motion by the rapid turning of the disk, which brought about an unalterable flow of images, the succession of figures was free of any disjunction.

The zoetrope invented by William Horner (1834) worked on the same principles as the phenakistiscope, but the pictures were drawn on a strip which could be set around the bottom of a metal drum, with the slits cut in the upper section of the drum. The drum was mounted on a spindle so that it could be spun, and viewers looking through the slits would see the cartoon strip form the moving image. Its name came from the Greek words *zoe* life and *tropos* turn. The faster the cylinder was spun, the smoother the images' movement.

With the zoetrope the principle underlying the perception of movement remained circular, and as long as its cylinder remained of modest size the number of images possible was as reduced as the phenakistiscope. Although the zoetrope strips came with a physical beginning and an end, in order to set the figures into motion the user had to place the strip inside the drum and create a loop. As with the phenakistiscope, the beginning and the end of the strip had to match, thereby undoing the distinction between beginning and ending.

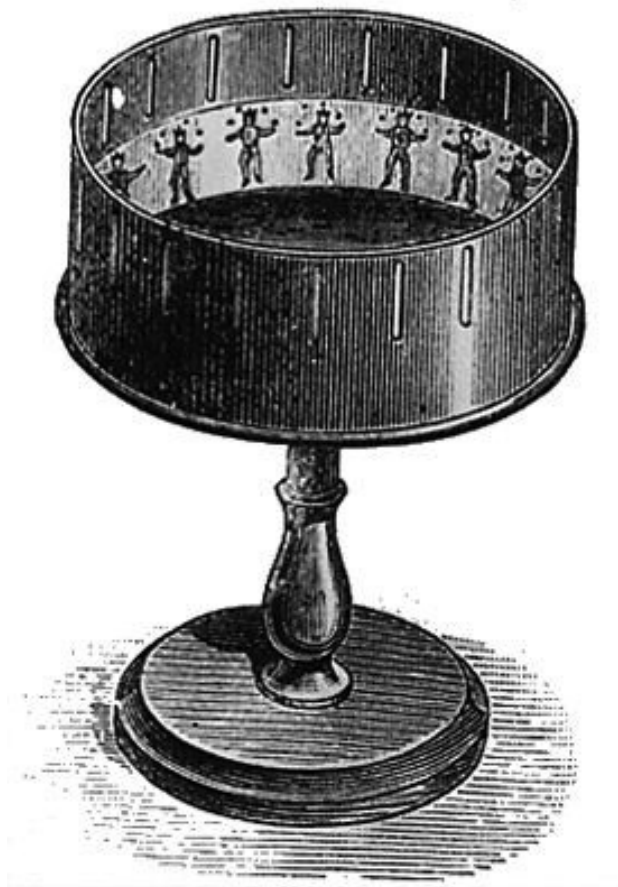


Figure 44: Zoetrope (1867) Ting Huan

Because of their very material, the phenakisticope's disk and the zoetrope's flexible strip determined the way in which the systems of repetition held sway over narrative integration. In keeping with these toys, the zoopraxiscope (1879) also worked on the loop structure. Created by the photographic pioneer Eadweard Muybridge, it was the first moving image device to use the photograph, involving over seven hundred plates of human and animal locomotion. It can also be considered the first form of projector, as it projected photographs in rapid succession to give the impression of motion.

Muybridge's projection device exemplified the 19th century interest in the phenomena of vision itself. As Rebecca Solnit has pointed out, the zoopraxiscope served to amalgamate three existing visual technologies popular in the 19th century: photography, the zoetrope and the magic lantern.³ Although the phenakisticope and the zoetrope had already produced a pictorial animation, the resultant moving image could not be projected. What Muybridge did was to borrow the animated illusion of movement from moving image toys and combine this with the capacity for projection embodied in the magic lantern. He then adapted his motion photography, and created a device that for the first time could project sequences of rapid movement informed by the camera onto a screen. The zoopraxiscope therefore represents a pivotal moment in the history of the moving image, arguably constituting a missing link between slide projection and cinema. Dancing women, horses and leapfrogging boys were all variously animated. The zoopraxiscope reflects the beginning of a paradigm shift in the way modern time was being experienced and negotiated, both by artist and audience.



Figure 45: Movement of the hand, drawing a circle (1887) Eadweard Muybridge

The photographic analysis of movement was adapted to take the form of the series of visual toys, which had reproduced animated motion since the 1830s. The predilection of the earliest animated pictures for agitation, trepidation and the ephemeral is a good indication that photography toys and animated views were part of the same cultural series. Men, women, children and animals were seen in motion, with each figure referring to those beside it. As long as the figure was seen alongside two or three other images it could not become part of a narrative temporality, and functioned essentially as an attraction.

As well as restricting narrative integration, cinema's most immediate predecessors share something else. All of them were based on loops, that is, sequences of images featuring complete actions, which could be played repeatedly. The way these toys functioned suggested a world in which everything was governed by circularity and repetition, a world without temporal progression. The animated figures were condemned *ad infinitum* to turn about, jump and dance, machine-like, untiring and unalterable. The lack of interruption in the sequence of images was essential to the creation of the effect of perpetual movement. This was a temporality within which beings and things could turn about forever. The rotation did not allow the action to start up again in narrative terms, nor to start a new chapter.

With the phenakisticope, zoetrope and zoopraxiscope the 'beginning' and 'end' were incidental mobile thresholds, subject to the wishes of the viewer, or user, and to the chance elements of the device. The reason why the devices were known as toys was that people interacted with them; they stopped and started them and changed the strips. I propose that it was this 'interactive' aspect that was central to

the attractional quality of the optical toys. They did not absorb the spectator in narrative diegesis, so the viewer did not become a passive voyeur spying on a story, but rather took the role of an active operator engaging with the very device itself.

The actions did develop in the series of images, and it can be argued that the attempt to develop a minimal narrative sequence does succeed in the continuity of the action. The systems of attraction and narration give form to the figures, which move about in their respective ways. However, the beginnings and endings were not capable of punctuating the action. The ‘befores’ and ‘afters’ were not, to use Umberto Eco’s expression, essential ‘befores’ and ‘afters’ capable of encompassing the action effectually and of enabling it to reach the status of anything other than a minimal first-degree narrative sequence.⁴ Attraction took precedence over narration, and the repetition inherent to the device’s function accentuated this purely monstrative value.

The optical devices were defined by their technical limitations. Their rotation, repetition and short duration established the form of attraction which dominated throughout the period. It was a question of showing rather than of telling; of monstrating rather than narrating. As Frank Kermode demonstrates in *The Sense of an Ending*, endings are privileged moments of narrative structure.⁵ In the absence of satisfaction provided by an ending, however, it is the pleasure of duration that the viewer experiences. What emerges is the allure of attraction, a way of presenting a series of views to an audience that, through the looped structure, fascinate strictly because of their illusory power.

Looped devices continuously orientate the viewer to the past content of the film, creating an almost perpetual present tense. As Tom Gunning has remarked: ‘The temporality of the attraction [...] is limited to the pure present tense of its appearance.’⁶ The visual experience that the optical devices provide depends not only on the impression of movement, but also on a ceaseless circular temporality. Therefore it would appear that the ideal model for attraction is the endless loop.

Early Cinema

The first cinematic device for viewing animated photographic images continued to arrange images in a circle. Thomas Edison’s kinetoscope (1891) and the vitascope (1896) were the first cinematic machines to employ film. The kinetoscope’s name was derived from the Greek words *kineto* meaning ‘movement’ and *scopos* meaning ‘to watch’. Edison described it as ‘an instrument which does for the eye what the phonograph has done for the ear, which is the recording and reproduction of things in motion.’

The first public demonstration of the kinetoscope was held at the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences on 9 May 1893. The device was both a camera and a viewer. It consisted of an upright wooden cabinet, 18 x 27 inches x 4 feet high, with a peephole in the top. Inside the box, the film was arranged in a continuous loop, around a series of spools. Beneath the film was an electric lamp, and between the lamp and the film was a revolving shutter. The viewer would look into a peep-hole at the top of the cabinet in order to see the image move. As each frame passed

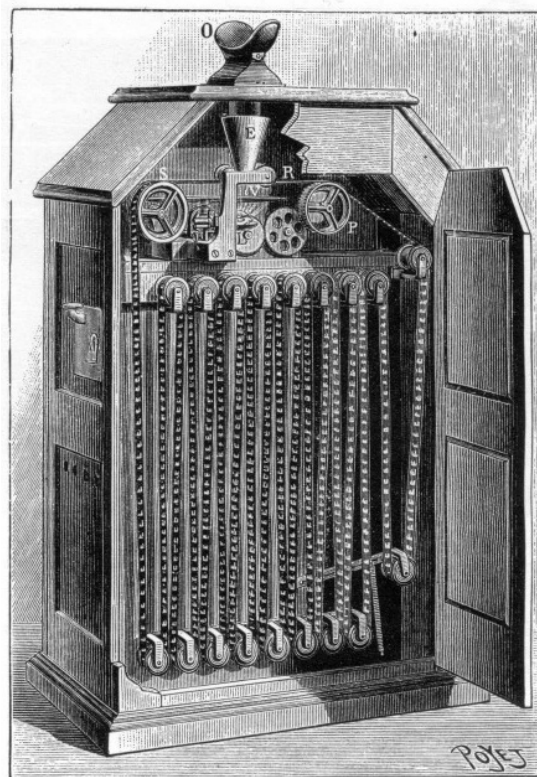


Figure 46: Kinetoscope (1891) Thomas Edison

under the lens, the shutter permitted a flash of light so brief that the frame appeared. This rapid series of still frames appeared as a moving image. Fifty feet of film converted to an approximately twenty second long display. The kinetoscope strips shared many features with optical toys. It was an individual viewing-box that viewers operated by inserting a coin. The kinetoscope mechanism was designed so that the viewer could begin watching the strip of film at any point, without concern for the beginning or end of the action depicted.⁷

There are limits to a comparison between optical toys and the kinetoscope, however. Inevitably, the filmstrip had a starting point, and it ended by stopping at another point. These thresholds were not first-degree thresholds which truly delineated the action and what it depicted. Rather, they were abrupt and direct. The action began and ended 'in the middle'. Its subjects were framed against a plain background, thus retaining a certain degree of abstraction that brought these short animated scenes closer to the illustrated image. The device functioned as a loop, although the photographs did not make it possible to create a perfect match between the first and last image in the same way that the devices that used illustrated images could. The action depicted was, therefore, extremely simple, and relied heavily on the agitation of the figures and repetitive outbursts of action. The minimalist actions were sufficiently repetitive for the disjunction to go unnoticed and for the transition from the end to the beginning to produce the effect of continuity, thus allowing a sense of circularity.

The vitascope took the moving image out of a box and established projection as a means of exhibiting animated pictures. The vitascope was adopted by Edison to

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SUNDAY MORNING, NOV. 7, 1897.

VITASCOPE **ELLICOTT SQ.**
THEATRE.. **BUILDING,**
 305 Main Street

CONTINUOUS EXHIBITION
 From 10 A. M. to 11 P. M.
EVERY DAY. EVERY SUNDAY.
ONE NO
PRICE 10c. HIGHER

Come any time and see Edison's Latest Wonders

The IMPROVED
VITASCOPE 

The most perfect Animated Picture
Machine ever produced

Pictures changed every Sunday and Thursday.
 See "Trotting Race at Charter Oak Park,"
 "The Bathers" and twenty other
 life-like views.

FREE ADMISSION TO PHONOGRAPH PARLORS.

Figure 47: Vitascope advertisement (1897) Thomas Edison

project his kinoscope films, leading first to the nickelodeon theatre and soon to the full-length motion picture. In the vitascope a sprocketed loop of film operated with a mechanism that stopped each frame briefly before the lens and cast the images via electric light onto a wall or screen. Other competitors soon displayed their own projection systems in theatres, including the eidoloscope, Birt Acres' kineopticon and the biograph, which was marketed by the American Mutoscope Company. The vitascope, along with many of its competing projectors, became a popular attraction in variety and vaudeville theaters. Exhibitors could choose the films they wanted from the Edison inventory and sequence them in whatever order they wished.

The Optical Theatre

The cinematographe (1892) was a film camera that also served as a film projector and developer. The device was first invented and patented by French inventor Léon Bouly but in 1893 the patent was bought by Auguste and Louis Lumière. When the cinematographe emerged it established projection as the standard for exhibiting animated pictures. It has been pointed out that the cinematographe shared the appeal of other nineteenth-century machines, with their harnessing of energy in an unrelenting movement that was seemingly independent of human labour.⁸ Previously, the viewing time had been controlled by the viewer, allowing for contemplation at leisure. The mechanical and technological basis of projected film, however, echoed the regimentation of time in modernity. The landscape was irredeemably altered as a result, and yet attraction still remained the primary

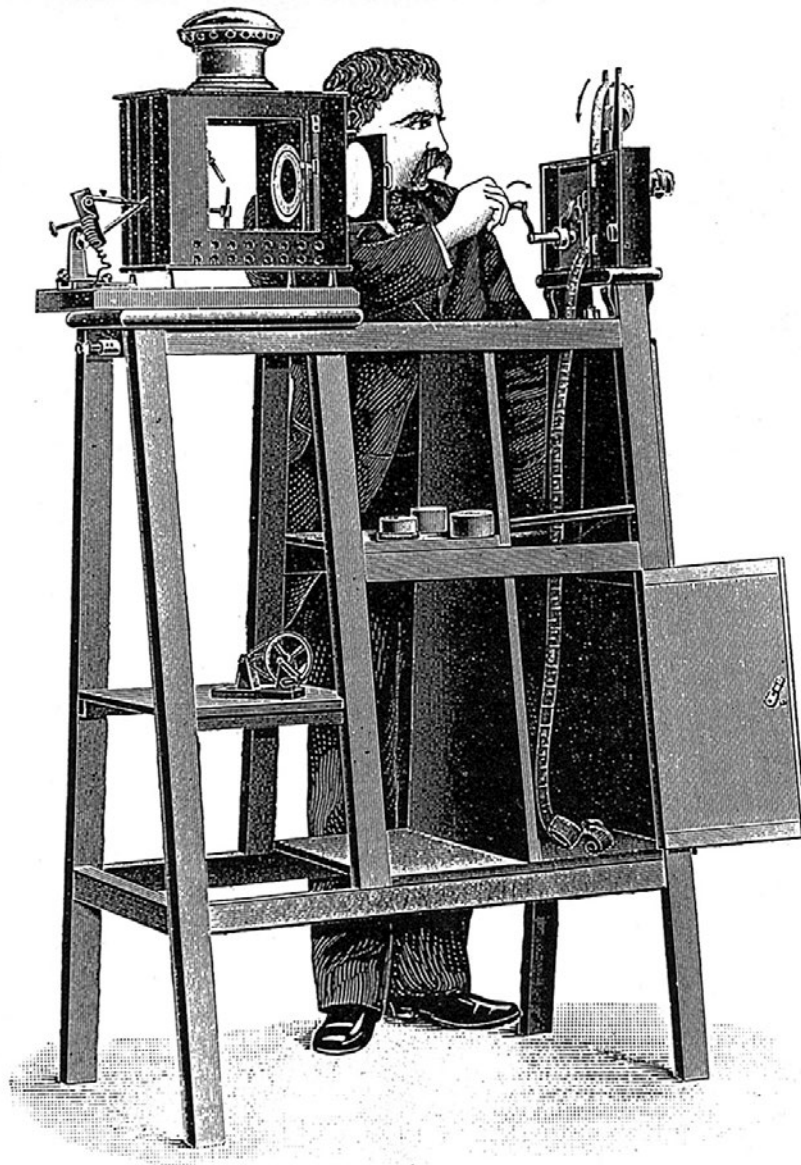


Figure 48: Cinématographe Lumière (1895)

structuring principle, even if the cinematographe could no longer be considered a toy. The viewer was cast beyond the grasp of the device, no longer having anything to operate. In favouring the 'viewer mode of attraction', the optical theatre effected a crucial change in the position of the spectator, who went from the status of a 'player' to that of a 'viewer.'

Motion

The interest these views exercised rested almost entirely on the cinematographe's ability to capture and recreate movement. To heighten the anticipation in the viewer, the earliest Lumière films initially presented a projection of a still photograph. The projector would then begin cranking and the photograph would be propelled into motion. The sudden transformation from still image to moving illusion startled audiences, as Maxim Gorky described it, 'suddenly a strange flicker passes through the screen and the picture stirs to life.'⁹ By delaying its appearance, the showman generated a moment of astonishment, which accentuated the extraordinary nature of the device itself. The appearance of motion transformed the viewers into a state of shock. While such a transformation would be capable of causing a reflex, the viewers remained aware that the film is merely a projection, the initial still image demonstrated that irrefutably. This relationship between the still and the moving in cinema was not simply a play with forms, but a way of demonstrating the abilities of a new medium.

Wonder and The Sublime

The projection of the first moving images, in the optical theatre, stands at the climax of a period of intense development in visual entertainments, a tradition in which realism was valued largely for its uncanny effects. The cinematographe, did not waste time drawing and fascinating its own share of astounded spectators.¹⁰ The first projections caused shock and astonishment, an excitement pushed to the point of terror. These projections would produce sublime encounters where sensation consumed the spectator with an overwhelming and profound intensity. As Edmund Burke describes ‘Astonishment is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree.’¹¹

The agitation of these experiences of shock can be understood as part of the attraction of the new invention. The Lumière brothers understood that their films, which directed physical action out at the audience, added a vital energy alongside the scientific curiosity addressed by their reproduction of motion and daily life. The on-rushing train in films like *L'arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat* (1895), produced the particularly modern entertainment form of the thrill, embodied elsewhere in the attractions of the amusement parks, which combined sensations of acceleration with a security guaranteed by modern technology. The power of the visual illusion to produce that mixture of pleasure and anxiety led to the device being designated as a new sensation and thrill.

Astonishment and familiarity

The first encounter with the thrills of the cinematographe surprises its viewers, causing them to wonder and to be astonished at it. This state of wonder draws the viewer's attention to the new technology, not simply as a tool, but precisely as a spectacle, less as something that performs a useful task than as something that astounds. However many viewers were returning again and again to see the moving pictures for a second and third time on the screen. The initial thrill would have abated for these audiences after they had watched the same action repeatedly. Astonishment acts as a sort of entry experience. Once within, once past the entrance, this initial reaction of astonishment gradually gives way to an acceptance of the new technology as second nature. As Gunning emphasises, 'Astonishment is inherently an unstable and temporary experience. One finds it difficult to be continually astonished by the same thing. Astonishment gives way to familiarity.'¹² Ultimately, wonder becomes subsumed in the diametric opposite of wonder, familiarity.¹³ Astonishment and familiarity might contrast strongly, but they form successive stages within modern experience and are therefore interrelated.¹⁴

Loop

Most often Edison and Lumière's animated views were without truly effective first-degree temporal thresholds. The strip had a beginning and an end, but they were as such simply material thresholds. According to Thomas Elsaesser, the Lumière films display a closed structure because they were intended to be repeatable, and the films

were often repeated a number of times in a row.¹⁵ Marshall Deutelbaum argues that various early Lumière films operate through either linear or circular narrative processes. By attending especially to the beginning and the ending, most Lumière films record actions and events in which the beginning and end can be joined to form a loop.¹⁶ This is evident in the first film that the Lumières made on the cinematographe, *Sortie d'usine (Workers Leaving The Factory)*, 1895). The film begins with the opening of factory gates and ends with the closing of the gates, which provides a very effective narrative closure. Both at the beginning and at the end the cinematic image offers only the outside perspective of the factory, seen from the same viewpoint. The way in which the film returns the composition at the end, to the same composition as appeared at the beginning, meant that if the film was looped, the action would therefore appear to be a continuous reoccurring event. Several of the cinematographe films display this overall structure.¹⁷

A scene shown on a vitascope would be repeated at least six times. A film could last only twenty seconds, but it would take three minutes to replace a film and thread on a new reel. Repetition was required to create a continuous show, and the films were composed to create this endless visual spectacle.¹⁸ Such repetitious spectacles tended to obliterate narrative integration. Individual shots of travel views, street scenes, waterfalls and dances, like the 1894 *Annabelle Butterfly Dance*, did not provide a clear beginning, middle or end. The programme for the first night of the vitascope at Koster & Bial's Music Hall on 23 April 1895 began with the Leigh Sisters *Umbrella Dance* (1895), a crossover from stage to screen. According to one writer from the *New York Herald*: 'It seemed as though they were actually on the stage, so natural was the dance, with its many and graceful motions.'¹⁹ This film generated a



Figure 49: *Sortie d'usine* (1895) Auguste and Louis Lumière



Figure 50: *Annabelle Butterfly Dance* (1894) William K.L. Dickson

wide array of responses as the looped film was presented over and over again. As Charles Musser points out: 'projecting one-shot films in an endless band [...] emphasised movement and lifelike images at the expense of narrative.'²⁰ In this regard, these moving images mirrored the temporal principles of the many optical devices that had come before.

Rough Sea at Dover (1895) filmed by Birt Acres was also shown over and over. The wave, as it was also called, was shot so that it would confront the spectator by presenting heavy waves that crashed against Admiralty Pier in Dover. It is often remarked that people in the front row seats had a strong visceral reaction to this film. Feeling assaulted by the cinematic wave, they instinctively feared that they would get wet, and involuntarily flinched as they started to leave their seats. One commentator described it like this:

Then came the waves, showing a scene at Dover Pier after a stiff blow. This was by far the best view shown, and had to be repeated many times. [...] One could look far out to sea and pick out a particular wave swelling and undulating and growing bigger and bigger until it struck the end of the pier. Its edge then would be fringed with foam, and finally, in a cloud of spray, the wave would dash upon the beach. One could imagine the people running away.²¹

Although this description suggests itself as a quintessential embodiment of the cinema of attractions paradigm, assaulting the spectator with a direct address, we still need to ask: what happened to the spectator as the film was shown, again and



Figure 51: *Rough Sea at Dover* (1895) Birt Acres

again as a loop? It would seem that the initial visceral reaction would have abated and astonishment would give way to familiarity.²² Through the constant reiteration the spectator would settle back into his or her seat and enter a serene state. The spectator became free to explore the recurrent imagery and savour the tumbling waters. Although this ran counter to the shocks and jolts most associated with cinema of attractions, a non-stop succession of shocks would be virtually impossible. The viewer could explore the recurring imagery and savour the water effects. In this instance, attraction generates an almost visual absorption rather than a narrative one.

Disjunctions

After 1907, cinema followed a logic of industrial production and replaced all modes of presentation with a sequential narrative, an assembly line of irreversible shots which appeared on the screen one at a time. As the initial astonishment with the device abated the cinematographe looked to new modes to entice viewers. The images depicted in the initial years of early cinema resisted breaks and interruptions, and adopted a fluidity similar to that of optical toys. For narration to impose itself as the primary structuring principle, however, viewers had to learn to adapt to breaks in the film's continuity, which occurred after 1907 with the development of match editing. The initial introduction of thresholds still made it possible for attraction and narrative to co-exist within the films. But this was a short-lived genre that was cut short when cinema obtained a much longer narrative form.

The focus on nature and performers quickly moved into the background as film itself industrialized, and developed increasingly popular narrative forms. Gradually, cinema banished the loop to the low-art realms of the 'primitive'. By contrast, narrative cinema avoided repetition, presenting in its stead an image of human existence as a linear progression through numerous unique events. Viewers had to accommodate the presence of multiple thresholds, thresholds of a beginning and a conclusion, and thresholds of the action which were cut through multiple shots. These punctuations contained the action and, ultimately, replaced attraction's propensity to continuously provide something to look at, even if that continuity only followed the principle of the 'eternal return of the same'.

Irreversible Temporality

Narrative constructed its own coherent and linear time, enhancing the autonomy of the film and the apparent self-sufficiency of the spectator. By 1908, many films emphasised story elements that were tied to this linear temporality. The cinema subjected its spectator to the time of its own forward movement. Previously, the time of viewing had been in the control of the subject, allowing for viewing at leisure. The temporal irreversibility in cinema is, however, a mechanical one, that of the cinematic device. As Mary Ann Doane has put it, 'it is not narrative irreversibility, although it is arguable that narrative as a temporal form tends, overall, to corroborate the directionality, linearity and irreversibility of time.'²³

The technological basis of the cinema embodied the regimentation and irreversibility of time in modernity.²⁴ By the 1920s, the organisation of theatre space, as well as the form of the films, ensured the dominance of projected films' irreversible temporality. The earlier kinoscope and the vitascope had encouraged spectators to enter in the middle of a show, a practice that was progressively undermined with the advent of the movie theatre in the late 1910s and early 1920s. Now trained ushers managed and directed an audience in the auditorium, while the next audiences waited outside for the subsequent show. The regulation of ushers, and the accelerating tendency to view a feature film as a self-contained unit, both reinforced the association between film and temporal irreversibility, and as a result, as Douglas Gomery has pointed out, sequential narrative came to dominate the majority of twentieth-century cinema.²⁵

Digital

In the second half of the twentieth century electronic, video and digital media began to bring about a transformation. New moving image forms emerged which were not tied to linear narratives, and which were exhibited on a monitor or on a computer screen in a gallery rather than in a movie theatre. These, as such, gave up cinematic realism and linear narrative integration. This new form of moving image was incorporeal. It did not have the tangibility even of celluloid film, which you could hold to the light and view frame by frame. It was, instead, a stream of electronic information on a tape.

The intrinsic property of video was its immediacy, both in the editing and in transmission process. This spontaneity was a complete revelation. Filmmakers no longer had to struggle with the film-roll developing process or the subsequent delayed vision of film editing. Video could be reviewed repeatedly, it could be rewound and fast-forwarded. The technical flexibility of video made it possible to manage time and space, leading the way for subsequent developments in interactive media and the participatory moving image. It lent itself to looping, and to combining recording and playback interactive technologies as gallery artefacts.

Looped Artworks

Video artworks shown in a loop became a common and almost standard mode of gallery presentation. These loops interrupted the linear forward movement of the moving image and presented a rethinking of time as malleable. As a self-enclosed circle, the video loop could represent the potential of infinity. Once the video was over, it could start again immediately, and it could run continuously throughout the day. Spectators could therefore enter the room at different moments during the video's unfolding, and could choose for how long they would observe. Some would come and leave after a few moments, while others might see it through until it returned to the point at which they had entered the room.

Decisions as to when to come, how to approach the work, and how long to remain, thus rested with the individual. This bypassed the economic organisation of the film industry, where conventional start times had been introduced to process the large

number of paying spectators, and returned to a mode of spectatorship first seen with the optical toys.

Many artists explored video that extended the artwork beyond the screen into the gallery. Monitor-based works were (until the late 1980s) more widespread than projections and, further, resembled the characteristics of optical devices such as the phenakistiscope and the zoetrope, in that the audience would look in on the image individually. Key to this premise was also the monitor's location outside the cinema theatre and its exhibition within the gallery space, where the audience would walk around the work and engage with it much like the early attractions. In the gallery environment or monitor-based installation, unlike the front-facing configurations of the movie theatre, the act of viewing and the audience's physical engagement could be actively orchestrated within the space, beyond the boundaries of the screen.

Monitor and playback works created an enclosed interactive system that could both generate and display the image. Dan Graham's works explore this physical engagement with the spectator. *Opposing Mirrors and Video Monitors on Time Delay* (1974) consists of two monitors, two mirrors, two cameras and a time-delay feature that switches the viewer's image suddenly from one monitor to the next. The monitors were positioned at either end of a gallery space where the viewer would walk from one end to the other to view their image as it appeared on each monitor.

Similarly in Anthony McCall's *Line Describing a Cone* (1973), there is a reversal of conventional cinematic viewing, as the spectator becomes an integral aspect of the moving image. The audience stands in a darkened empty space, watching the film



Figure 52: *Opposing Mirrors and Video Monitors on Time Delay* (1974)
Dan Graham

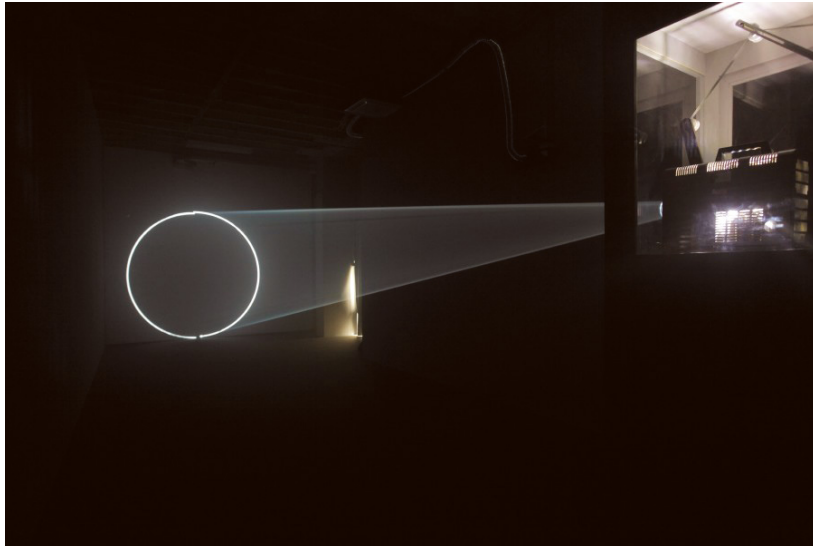


Figure 53: *Line Describing a Cone* (1973) Anthony McCall

by looking directly at the light beam as it emanates from the projector. Over a period of thirty minutes, the slim pencil of light slowly evolves, first into a curved plane of light, then into a large hollow Cone formed by the image, projected on the wall, of a circle being drawn in the darkness. The film is almost physically tangible, the projector light transformed into solid shape through the black filmstrip. Instead of the viewpoint emanating outward, for which the projector forms a surrogate, the spectators turn backward toward that viewpoint, reorienting themselves within the space of perspective.

Certainly, when watching the video and installation work of Dan Graham or Anthony McCall, it is possible to see how the artists managed to trap spectators in minor mazes and arranged to have them catch themselves in imagined loops. The works had an interactive relationship with the images, where the spectator could intervene within the space of the screen, piercing McCall's cone of light or appearing on the screen in Graham's playback monitor. Through their dynamic intervention the audience discontinued linear narration and, as such, continued the tradition of the 'attraction'.

Projection

One of the outcomes of the rapid development of new display technology was the possibility that video projection could adopt the look of cinema. No longer trapped within the tube, video could be viewed cinematically as large projections or used in installations in the gallery or in any suitable public space. Practitioners now had the

ability to reproduce the movie theatre in a gallery setting, and possessed the technologies to produce and present complex linear narratives. Many practitioners, however, chose to continue the tradition of an attractional mode of address to the spectator where the viewer was not a passive voyeur absorbing the narrative, but rather an active participant.

By concentrating less on linear narrative development, these works manage to mediate the viewer's attention to a unique form of presentation and thus encourages a special form of attention and sensory involvement. Therefore it could be argued that electronic and digital media also fall under the heading of the 'cinema of attractions', in that they encourage spectators to immerse themselves in the image as total environment, rather than to relate to the screen or monitor as a framed view or window on the world.²⁶ These interactive forms of entertainment seem to foster alluring modes of engagement through spectacular kinetic monstrosities.

Gary Hill's *Tall Ships* (1992) explores this mode of engagement using 12 channels of video, 12 monitors and projection lenses and 12 laser disc players, creating a projected environment whereby the audience's physical activity would directly affect the images.²⁷ Images of people were projected on the walls of an almost entirely unlit corridor space. The spectator's movement would trigger a computer-controlled interactive system, which activated projected figures to walk forward until they were approximately life size, then pause and directly address the spectator, and then turn away. The audience was an integral component of the work and was as much a part of the visuals as the projected image. As Hill stated: 'I wanted

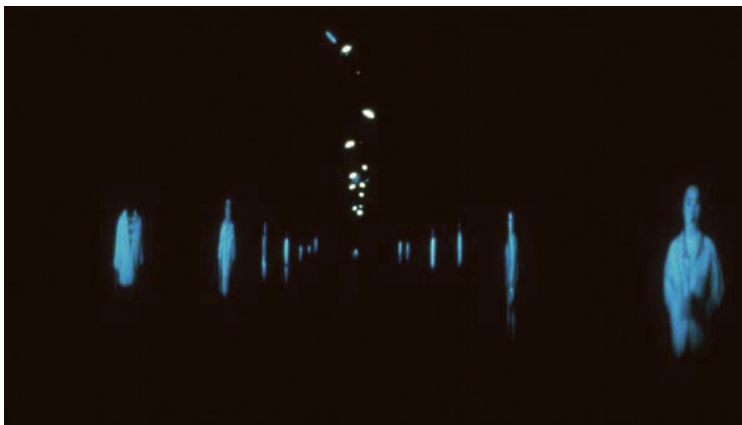


Figure 54: *Tall Ships* (1992) Gary Hill

interactivity to be virtually transparent to the point that some people would not even figure it out.²⁸ With these interactive works the audience became absorbed into a sensory and physical space.

QuickTime

When QuickTime, a multimedia framework for editing digital video, appeared in 1991, it further developed the possibilities in the digital realm for playing moving image, sound and animation. Much of film technology, belonging as it did to the nineteenth-century machine age of wheels and cogs, was increasingly eroded by the incursion of electronics and digital control systems. It has been evident in the short history of video that the specificities of one period, such as the sculptural properties of the box-like monitor, have very quickly ceased to be seen as intrinsic to the medium. In the realm of the digital, the stability of a particular historical technology has been even shorter lived.

At its base, the digital has no tactile form, it is merely a series of transient pulses of electrical voltages working at a pace and at a scale beyond human perception. It can mimic or incorporate a wide range of media forms and absorb a range of language structures. In contrast to films, QuickTime movies can be played forward, backward or looped. The loop thus creates another parallel between early cinematic and new media technology.

Digital Loop

Early digital movies shared the same limitations of storage as nineteenth century pre-cinematic devices, as the programmes were limited to the amount of technical information they could contain. Because of these initial hardware limitations, the designers had to invent a different kind of moving image language, with a range of strategies to compensate for the restrictions. The loop playback function was built into the interface to bypass the restrictions on length and to allow a clip to be played continually. As a result, the techniques of modern cinema and of nineteenth-century moving image merged into new hybrid languages of attraction. Various media players installed this replay function into the design of the programme while treating it as a temporary technological limitation, and thus the loop returned as a condition of moving images' digital rebirth.

This is also the case with GIFs (Graphics Interchange Format), an eight-bit picture file which can composite a series of stills into an infinitely loopable, silent moving image. Created in 1987, the GIF was originally designed for speedy transfer across pre-world wide web internet networks. A static format with the capacity to accommodate multiple images, it wasn't until 1994 that the GIF became an endlessly looping moving image file. GIF loops often 'repeat a single pop cultural moment from movies, TV shows, sporting events, political occasions, newscasts, cartoons, or even video games.'²⁹ The first wave of GIFs were simple graphic icons. Pioneering internet artist and theorist Olia Lialina often works with GIFs. Her classic piece, *Olia Lialina as Animated GIF Model* (2005), is a continuous looping GIF

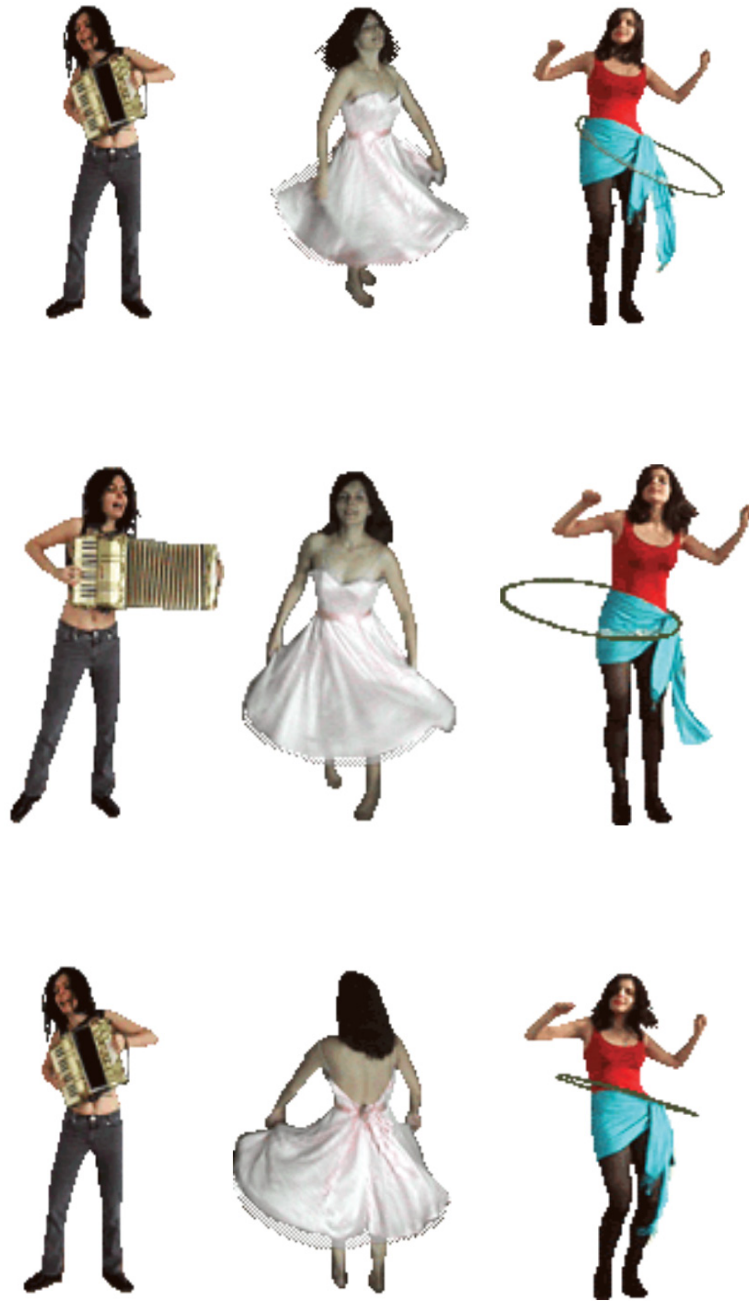


Figure 55: *Olia Lialina as Animated GIF Model (2005)* Olia Lialina

of three self-portraits. While GIFs satisfy our thirst for sensation, they're also irresistible vortices of pure spectacle.

GIFs cannot hold anything close to the length of a standard theatrical film, or anything larger than a small window display, and thus echo the technical restrictions of the pre-cinematic toys, which also obliged their designers to opt for simple designs and to limit scenes to a repetition of a minimal sequence of events. GIFs were used to present short loops and featured images approximately two by three inches in size, thus calling for private viewing rather than collective exhibition.

Both QuickTime and GIFs appear to play a similar cultural role. If, in the early 1890s, the public attended kinoscope parlours where peep-hole machines presented them with the latest marvels of tiny moving photographs arranged in short loops, exactly a hundred years later computer users were equally fascinated with tiny QuickTime and GIF moving image clips, which transformed a computer screen into a peep-hole machine.

Although the designers were eventually able to overcome these initial technological limitations, the ability to loop remained as a function of these programmes. Rather than being an archaic leftover, a reject from cinema's evolution, the use of the loop suggests a new temporal aesthetic for the computer-based moving image. As Lev Manovich has remarked, the sequential images which were first found in the digital domain, such as Flash and QuickTime, shared a number of features with the earliest animated pictures and optical toys: the images were of reduced size, of short duration and were shown in a loop.³⁰ It is significant that these same forms, whose

primary interest rests almost entirely on their powers of attraction, resurfaced with the new media. Asked if the loop could be a new narrative form appropriate for the computer age, Manovich stated that:

It is relevant to recall that the loop gave birth not only to cinema but also to computer programming. Programming involves altering the linear flow of data through control structures, such as 'if/then' and 'repeat/while'; the loop is the most elementary of these control structures. As the practice of computer programming illustrates, the loop and the sequential progression do not have to be thought as being mutually exclusive.³¹

These births took place one hundred years apart, one from the cylinder of the phenakistoscope and the other from a looped computer code. Both exemplify how a device can prescribe a way of constructing the temporality it depicts. Looped time can turn our attention upon itself and allow the spectator to experience the materiality of time beyond representation and narration. These are instants to which narrative is subordinated. Discreet shots and sequences assert the primacy of their autonomous and extended 'moment' through intense kinesis, through spectacular and exhibitionist action, through imagery, and through a sensual saturation of motion, colour and sound.

Whether standing in the gallery or sitting in front of a computer screen, we watch time whirl around itself, much like the waves in *Rough Sea at Dover* on the vitascope a hundred years earlier. The process of thought is diverted from representations of progress into smaller eddies, in which images oscillate from easily read actions to

mesmerising images and back again. These are temporal bursts of continuous presence, where the audience discontinue linear narration and, therefore, these works continue the tradition of the attraction.

Steve McQueen explored the structuring principle of the loop in his video *Prey* (1999). As McQueen states: 'I want to put people into a situation where they're sensitive to themselves watching the piece.'³² The video begins with a close-up of a reel-to-reel tape recorder with two large spools, one red and one green, lying in long grass. For roughly the first half of the film, we watch the tape recorder's reels spin around. Suddenly, the tape recorder begins to move independently, pulling away from the viewer. As the camera follows, the recorder takes off, at which point we realise that it is attached to a small balloon. The recorder retreats into the sky, slowly disappearing, audibly and visibly, for the last half of the film. At the end, the tape recorder begins to parachute back to earth, and the camera's angle drops to grass level once more. The cycle commences again as the film resumes from the start.

This simple arc, the representation of a loop, with its sudden taking off and its equally sudden return to the earth, seems a ready metaphor for our own experience of looped time. Within the representation of the loop, we enter into its temporal experience, allowing ourselves to feel like the recorder taking off, momentarily diverted from our every day temporality, before we parachute back and land on the ground. *Prey* is a compelling rhythmic work. The act of eluding and evading, however, is a device central to the film, as the title suggests, playing as it does with concepts of capture and escape. This minimalist and anti-narrative approach has



Figure 56: *Prey* (1999) Steve McQueen

been seen as a technique that underlines McQueen's exploration of both formal film language and popular cinematic convention. By breaking up the film's continuity and looping the narrative sequence McQueen blurs the boundaries between imagination and reality.

As the cases discussed in this section illustrate, directions of moving image practice, which had been marginalised at the beginning of the century by the domination of classical narrative cinema, are now again starting to be explored. Computer media redefine the very character of cinema. The digital domain absorbs, integrates and simulates whole series of past and present technologies, and is the contemporary expression of the development of cinema in its broadest sense. I would argue that digital technologies provide a flexible platform for the hybridisation of moving image practice. What was supplemental becomes its norm; what was at its boundaries comes into the centre. The challenge which computer media pose to cinema extends beyond the issue of narrative. Contemporary practitioners are articulating discourses and evolving modes of temporality within emergent moving image technologies, and are exploring their relative structures, processes of production, contexts of viewing and modes of spectator address. We can thus see how the appearance of a new moving image device, or a technological innovation within the cultural series of animated pictures, can reaffirm the image's potential for 'attraction'.

Attraction Machines

In whichever decade we consider, there was an interest in the powers and perceptual qualities of the machinery of cinema, an interest that makes the cinema, above all else, an attraction machine. 'Film' is only one constituent part of a continually evolving 'cinema of attractions'. The history of cinema incorporates a much wider array of technologies than the film camera and projector. This is why I believe attraction has 'survived' and lives on after the emergence of narrative cinema. Technological innovations have enabled experiments with modes of representation, temporality and interaction that technically and conceptually transcend traditional media boundaries. These innovations have evolved new cinematic concepts and modes of presentation, which in turn have provided an imperative to interrogate historical canons and to reconsider the under-explored histories of the divergent practices that traverse its evolution.

As I have suggested, the developments in moving image technologies can generate a series of contrasting orders of time, modes of exhibition and methods of address. I believe that moving image devices can be predisposed to particular structuring principles, whether through their mode of engagement and interaction, their form of presentation, or through their construction of temporality. Technical limitations can also determine structuring assemblages, as with the case of optical toys and the first digital moving images, which were determined, above all, to repetition and circularity.

The 'cinema of attractions' model was conceived and formulated in order to provide an account of a cinema with ties to the range of popular entertainments at the turn of the twentieth century, when cinema did not enjoy an autonomous position. If, a century after this period in which a 'system of monstrative attractions' reigned, the cinema still retains 'attractional' features, it is because the very essence of these diverse devices contains something which makes attraction possible, hence making possible its existence, and resistance, after so many decades of classical narrative practice.

While 'attractions' were initially used to distinguish early films from the subsequent practices of classical cinema, we must nonetheless assert that attractions cannot be restricted entirely to an inquiry concerning periodisation. Ultimately, there is no real historical 'transition' from attraction to narration or vice versa, but rather a fluid and constant coexistence between these two modes throughout the developments of moving image devices. It is not possible to limit attractions to a rigid historical paradigm or, for that matter, restrict attractions to a single technological medium or device. Importantly, attractions are not attached to any material conditions of a device, and thus the experience of attractions can cross media boundaries or be achieved through a range of media combinations. Attraction embodies a duality. It is a function both of a technological construction and of a presentational composition, the latter, ultimately, defined through its mode of reception.

NOTES

1. Nicolas Dulac and André Gaudreault have also explored the relationship between pre-cinematic toys and attraction. See Nicolas Dulac and André Gaudreault, 'Circularity and Repetition at the Heart of the Attraction: Optical Toys and the Emergence of a New Cultural Series', in: Wanda Strauven (ed.), *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006) pp. 227-245.
2. The invention of the thaumatrope is usually credited either to John Ayrton Paris or to Peter Mark Roget. Paris used one to demonstrate persistence of vision to the Royal College of Physicians in London in 1824.
3. Rebecca Solnit, *Motion Studies: Time, Space and Eadweard Muybridge* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004) p. 200.
4. Umberto Eco, *The Open Work*, trans. Anna Cancogni (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989) pp. 112-113.
5. Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
6. Tom Gunning, 'Now You See It, Now You Don't: The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions', in *The Velvet Light Trap* 32 (Fall 1993) p. 77.
7. See Ray Phillips, *Edison's Kinetoscope and Its Films: A History to 1896* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1997) p. 30.
8. See Mary Ann Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive* (London: Harvard University Press, 2003) p.108.
9. Gorky's account is included as an appendix in Jay Leyda, *Kino: A History of the Russian and Soviet Film* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973) pp. 407-9.
10. Early audiences went to exhibitions to see machines demonstrated, rather than to view films. It was the cinematographe, the biograph or the vitascope that were advertised on the variety bills in which they premiered, not the films.
11. Edmund Burke *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Sublime and Beautiful* (London: Oxford University Press, 2015) p.47.
12. Tom Gunning, 'Re-Newing Old Technologies: Astonishment, Second Nature, and the Uncanny in Technology from the Previous Turn-of-the-Century', in: David Thorburn, Henry Jenkins and Brad Seawell (eds.), *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition* (London: The MIT Press, 2003) p. 41.
13. Gunning, 'Re-Newing Old Technologies: Astonishment, Second Nature, and the Uncanny in Technology from the Previous Turn-of-the-Century', p. 42.

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14. Although this arc of reaction exemplifies the response to new technology in modernity, it draws on universal cognitive patterns.
15. Thomas Elsaesser, 'Louis Lumière - the Cinema's First Virtualist?' in: Kay Hoffman and Thomas Elsaesser (eds.), *Cinema Futures: Cain, Abel or Cable?* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1997) pp. 57-58.
16. Marshall Deutelbaum, 'Structural Patterning in the Lumière Films', in: John L. Fell (ed.) *Film before Griffith* (California, University of California Press, 1983) pp. 299-311.
17. The Lumiere brothers also liked to show the film backwards at screenings, to the general amusement of the audience watching. As with *Démolition d'un mur* (1896).
18. See Elsaesser, 'Louis Lumière: the Cinema's First Virtualist?' pp. 57-58.
19. 'Wonderful is the Vitascope', in *New York Herald* (24 April 1896) p. 11. Quoted in Charles Musser, '1896-1897: Movies and the Beginnings of Cinema', also in: André Gaudreault (ed.), *American Cinema 1890-1909 Themes and Variations* (London: Rutgers University Press, 2009) p. 53.
20. Charles Musser, 'The Novelty of Cinema 1896 – 1897', in: *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907*, Vol. 1 (London: University of California Press, 1990) p. 117.
21. *New York Mail and Express* (24 April 1896) p. 12. Quoted in Charles Musser, 'A Cinema of Contemplation, A Cinema of Discernment: Spectatorship, Intertextuality and Attractions in the 1890s', in: Wanda Strauven (ed.), *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (ed.), p. 167.
22. Gunning, 'Re-Newing Old Technologies: Astonishment, Second Nature, and the Uncanny in Technology from the Previous Turn-of-the-Century', p. 41.
23. Doane, *The Emergence of Cinematic Time: Modernity, Contingency, the Archive*, p. 131.
24. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, time became increasingly standardised. Wolfgang Schivelbusch has pointed out that the railroad companies, which found it difficult to maintain comprehensible schedules, originally implemented this standardisation of time. See Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) pp. 42-44.
25. The accelerating tendency to view a feature film as a self-contained unit reinforced the temporal irreversibility of film. Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A*

History of Movie Presentation in the United States (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983) p. 49.

26. For the treatment of special effects as ‘attractions’, see Vivian Sobchack, *Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film* (New York: Rutgers University Press, 1987); Scott Bukatman, *Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1983); Miriam Hansen, ‘Early Cinema, Late Cinema: Permutations of the Public Sphere’, in *Screen* 34.3 (1993) pp. 197-210. See also Dick Tomasovic, ‘The Hollywood Cobweb: New Laws of Attraction’, in: Strauven (ed.), *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded*, pp. 309-321.

27. Garry Hill has also used computer-controlled switches in other works such as *Suspension of Disbelief (for Marine)* (1992).

28. Regina Cornwell, ‘Gary Hill Interview’, in *Art Monthly* 170 (October 1993) p. 9.

29. Giampaolo Bianconi, ‘Gifability’, in *Rhizome*. Online. Available <http://rhizome.org/editorial/2012/nov/20/gifability/> (20 November 2012).

30. Lev Manovich, ‘What is Digital Cinema?’ in: *The Language of New Media* (London: The MIT Press, 2001) p. 316.

31. Manovich, ‘What is Digital Cinema?’ p. 317.

32. Steve McQueen interview by Patricia Bickers, ‘Let’s Get Physical’, in *Art Monthly* (December 1996, January 1997).

4

A Return To Primitive Attractions: We have all Become Early Cinema-Goers Again

Early cinema manages to draw the spectator's attention to a unique form of display where the spectator watches and reacts to the motion picture. It achieves this by focusing less on linear narrative progression and more on a special economy of attention and sensory involvement. This display of unique attractional views belongs most obviously to the pre 1907 cinema, to a period before the dominance of editing, when films consisting of a single shot, both actualities and fictions, made up the bulk of film production. However, despite the fact that the cinema of attractions is clearly thought of as a time specific category of film practice and more specifically of spectatorship, its real attraction consists of its applicability to other periods of film history, to other similar practices beyond early cinema and even beyond cinema. The concept of attractions seems to have something malleable, which makes it possible to enlarge its definition and widen its field of application.

I propose to further expand the attractions reach to include what I believe is two of its distinct contemporary heirs: YouTube and contemporary cinema. I believe that these digital moving images, both online and in the cinema, promote unique forms of display and spectatorship that echo many of the principles of the pre 1907 cinema. Firstly, I will focus on the parallels between early cinema and the video-sharing website YouTube and secondly, by focusing on Alfonso Cuarón's film *Gravity* (2013), I will put forth a proposal for a spectacle driven form of a contemporary cinema of attractions.

I shall address this evaluation through an analysis of the encounters and echoes that emerge out of a meeting of new and old technologies. I believe that in order to fully apprehend the potential of developing media forms, we ought to give equal attention to their cultural predecessors, which correspondingly produced their own unique means of generating, organising and distributing moving images. It is my view that in the same way new media open up new ways of seeing so-called 'primitive' cinema, we can use the principles of 'early cinema' to open up, and assist us in evaluating, the new modes of moving image that are emerging from contemporary cinema and online spectatorship. My goal is not to provide a detailed analysis of the social and cultural effects of video sharing, nor to generalize all contemporary cinema, but rather to explore the possibility that certain spectacle driven films, as well as amateur on line media practices, both extend the concept of 'attractions' in contemporary moving image.

Part One – YouTube

Considering its complete absorption into contemporary culture, it is hard to believe that YouTube is only a few years old. YouTube is often described as if it were a library, an archive or a medium, with further speculation on what its possible or probable future could be. This discussion echoes the earliest period of moving image history, when early cinema was compared to theatre and vaudeville, in an emergent and unforeseeable process that attempted to fit a new media phenomenon within a set of existing culture codes. The emphasis on the future of YouTube, however, blinds us to meaningful historical connections, which echo and reprise some of the very same concerns that occurred over a hundred years ago during the development of ‘early cinema’.

YouTube is the first mass-popular platform for user-created media content. Unregistered users can watch videos, and registered users can upload videos to their channels. Three hundred hours of new videos are uploaded to the site every minute. The site launched without knowing exactly what it was for, and it is this under-determination that explains the scale and diversity of its uses today. Examining a dynamic cultural system like YouTube requires an approach that balances the range of participants. As YouTube is still in its infancy, it can be argued that full overviews are not yet possible. Determinations about what counts as content are difficult to distinguish and require an exploration of the videos. Rather than an aerial perspective, then, I offer a glimpse grabbed in transit; a partial view that is developed through the current specificity of this mode of spectatorship.¹

Although YouTube Inc provides its underlying architecture; many different people and users produce YouTube dynamically, as an ongoing process over time and as a result of many interconnected instances of participation. It is a distribution platform of varied content. As a site of participatory culture it has been co-created by the corporate, professional, cultural institutions, artists, activists and amateur participants who upload content to the website, and the audiences who engage around that content. Each of these participants approaches YouTube with their own, frequently conflicting, purposes and aims; and they have collectively if not collaboratively shaped YouTube as a social network and a popular archive.

Amateur and professional media content, identities and motivations are not so easily separated, and amateur and commercial uses of YouTube coexist and coevolve. Media corporations including the BBC, CBS, Vevo, Hulu and other organizations offer some of their material via YouTube. However, while content produced within mainstream and commercial media industries feature, most of the content has been uploaded by amateur individuals and it is 'ordinary users,' as Patricia Lange defines them, who are most actively engaged, through their cultural activities, in experimenting with and developing the specificities of this moving image culture.² Because of this, I will focus my enquiry on the content produced by the 'ordinary users' or 'amateur participants', who is facilitated by the free web platforms and software tools, which enable individuals to share and easily access clips produced by others.³

Amateur Practice

YouTube offers new mechanisms for promotion and circulation of amateur media. The site emerged from the utopian fantasies of early cyber-advocates and from the decisions made by a range of different subcultural communities and interest groups to share their content. Many of these independent content creators have built grassroots followings at very little cost or effort.⁴ The focus on the amateur also echoes the orientation of the very first apparatus for moving image that arrived on the world market, that is, the Lumière brothers' cinematographe. As a simple photographic apparatus, the cinematographe was envisaged as a machine to record family scenes with the additional element of motion.⁵ The device derived from the innovations that the amateur market had brought to the photographic industry: economy, simplicity, ease of handling, compactness and portability. It weighed about twelve pounds and was comparable in size to a photography camera.

The Lumière's initial ambition for the device was to make it available to informed amateurs. However, this vision of an amateur machine to record family scenes did not catch on until 1965, with the release of the Super 8mm film camera. Introduced by The Eastman Kodak Company, Super 8 was the most affordable film camera on the market and was easy enough for the advanced amateur photographer to use. The camera itself weighed about seven pounds and had to be hand-cranked at two turns per second during filming. Many families purchased Super 8 cameras to document special events, such as vacations and birthday parties. The camera could only shoot for about two and a half minutes per roll. This short length of the film roll forced amateurs to frame scenes with calculation and immediacy.

Home movie making was, however, still an expensive hobby, and the widespread use of an amateur recording machine did not come into its own until a century after the Lumières, when the use of affordable digital cameras, and the development of video capture within mobile phones, enabled amateur users to participate pervasively with the moving image. This led to an explosion of user-generated content available on the web, which is gradually contributing to an institutional transformation of all moving image practices.

So far, film studies have all but ignored the public interest in the YouTube phenomenon. As yet very little comprehensive work has been carried out on the canon of moving image theory in relation to YouTube.⁶ Film studies have generally been silent on the topic, dismissing video sharing as amateur practice. The YouTube ‘user’ has generally been regarded as an individual motivated by a desire for personal expression or for a sense of community, whose content either expresses the mundane or the everyday, typified by the maligned generic ‘cat video’.

Many artists have also shared this position. Malcolm Le Grice has expressed concern that artists no longer have any kind of hierarchical specialness. As Le Grice states:

The big problem of the digital isn't the digital as a medium, as a production, it's YouTube, it's the fact that everybody every five minutes is making photographs and video [...] There's millions and millions of moments of video being made so it no longer has any kind of hierarchical specialness, that is a big problem for art, if we do not have a thing that's to do with a



Figure 57: *Charlie Schmidt's Keyboard Cat!* (2007) Chuckieart

hierarchic of meaning and symbolism [...] it's a problem for artists, I do not know how to solve the problem, its not like I have an answer to it, but there is a big problem.⁷

There is, no doubt, a recognisable mode of production and a particular style associated with much of this user-created content on YouTube, and it is clear that everyday amateur content is an essential driver of this. However, the title 'amateur' here has a pejorative tone, and implies the undeveloped production of a person inexperienced or unskilled who, rather than adding valuable contributions, threatens the professional industry or artistic community. This appears to be the core argument that has prevented, to date, a critical discussion of the impact of YouTube on the development of moving image. Still, as history tells us, developments in photography and moving image have never been easily separated into a professional history on one hand and a history of amateur practices on the other.

I believe that the perspective that labels YouTube users pejoratively as 'amateur' has a strong correlation with the film theorists of the 1960s and 1970s who viewed and labelled early filmmaking as 'primitive'. These theorists promoted a view of the early years of moving image as an undeveloped period before classical narrative cinema. Early cinema was seen as unpolished, infantile and, above all, unable to tell stories, which up to then had been believed to be the manifest destiny of the cinema as both an art form and an entertainment medium. I further believe that we can see many similarities between the mode of spectatorship involved with YouTube and the attractional mode of spectator address.

While I do acknowledge that many YouTube clips appear prototypically amateurish, it is nonetheless, as an interface, gradually transforming our modes of spectatorship whilst echoing the model of 'attractions'. Consequently, I feel that this transformation cannot be ignored or simply dismissed as the 'babblings of an amateur culture,' and I propose that we explore YouTube not from the perspective of the amateur versus the professional, but rather from the perspective of a dynamic interchange between the spectator and screen. It is precisely the role played by these 'amateur' single shot viewpoints that I wish to explore further, and, moreover, how these single points of view demonstrate the 'attractional' mode of audience address.

Domestic Settings

YouTube and amateur online clips provide a new window onto the nature of the lives of everyday people. A large proportion of the material available online is recorded in a domestic setting. 'Homecasting' (defined by José van Dijck) is the use of video-sharing websites to upload pre-recorded, rerecorded and altered, audiovisual content that has been produced within the home.⁸ In amateur videography we find a new synthesis of the technological and the domestic as new apparatuses provide the means of creating enduring images of everyday people, their families, their travels and pastimes, their home towns and their sense of a place in the world.

The everyday practices of YouTube's amateur videographers are similar to those of the early moviemakers, and especially to those of the Lumière brothers. In the same way YouTube clips represent the everyday world recorded by the amateur, the

subjects of Lumière's first films are those of a familiar, everyday world of the nineteenth century. Gerald Mast compared the Lumière films to amateur productions: 'these films were really home movies. Unedited scenery, family activity, or posed action that depended for their effect on the same source as today's home movies: the wonder of seeing something reproduced in an unfamiliar and permanent way.'⁹ The Lumière films sought out the more casual bodily postures of everyday life like games, eating and drinking, children playing, or labourers getting off work. In contrast to the performances of acrobats and vaudeville performers in the Edison kinetoscopes staged in the black artificial space of the Black Maria studio, the Lumière films presented the spectacle of the everyday and the domestic.

The Lumières' undoing of the formal poses of studio photography was made possible by shorter exposure times and the ability to remove the camera from the studio. The cinematographe was focused on the rhythms of leisure time and moments of playfulness. It was a lightweight machine with an easy operation, which made it particularly suitable for filming in exterior locations.¹⁰ It rooted its objects and people in a world that extended beyond the screen's border, where movement circulated from foreground to background and past the border of the frame. Such images created a new casual self-presentation that was opposed to the formal poses of studio portraiture.

The Lumière films displayed not only the bodily motion of Edison's kinetoscope, but also the more ephemeral motion of the natural world, the seemingly amorphous flows and eddies of water and the breezes playing in the leaves. When presented,

these motions provided a spectacle of previously unseen images. These views evoked surprise and wonder rather than suspense, and displayed a view to an audience which neither developed characters nor created a course of action.

The 1903 film *At the Foot of the Flatiron Building* recorded pedestrians passing by a windy corner in New York. The cameraman, A. E. Weed, set up his camera framing the sidewalk in front of the building so that passers-by would move through the frame. The attraction of the film lies in showing a busy urban crowd in the wind, which whips the long skirts of women, and against which men and women have to secure their hats. The film recorded a situation, not a story that had a beginning, a continuation or an ending.

Early film viewers could pick out individual moving objects that excited their attention, such as the leaves blown by the wind in the background of Lumière's *Le Déjeuner de bébé*. What most impressed the early audiences was what would now be considered the incidentals of scenes: smoke from a forge, steam from a locomotive, brick-dust from a demolished wall. Audiences were startled not only by the phenomenon of the moving photograph but also by its ability to portray spontaneities of which the theatre was not capable. The movements of people were accepted because they were perceived as performance, as simply a new mode of moving projection, but that the inanimate would agitate and move was astonishing. Similarly, it is the captured movements that you find on YouTube, like unusual sightings of weather phenomena, that can elevate this 'amateur' practice beyond mere 'naive babbling' and ultimately enable it to transform our modes of spectatorship.



Figure 58: *At the Foot of the Flatiron Building* (1903) A. E. Weed



Figure 59: *Le Déjeuner de bébé* (1895) Auguste and Louis Lumière

Single Shot

The short single scene or 'non-edited' film has been discussed extensively in recent years, especially when trying to clarify one of the most basic aspects of cinema, that is, the relation of the pro-filmic to the filmic. Rather than viewing single shot YouTube clips as a conscious choice, or an alternative to editing, the widely-held view is that they are unmodified clips without any structuring principles. The first film sequences presented by the Lumière brothers were similarly seen as nothing more than motion picture snapshots and recordings of unadjusted, unarranged, and untampered reality.¹¹ In displaying events and actions rather than narrating them, however, these films addressed spectators directly. Their units were the autonomous shot or scene, where actions and events were continuous by virtue of the action recorded.

While the Lumière films presented operational processes as they might be found in reality, the completeness with which they were depicted strongly argued against them being naive, unstructured snapshots, despite their apparently simple content.¹² Their concern for a unified viewpoint differed sharply from the classical narrative continuity system, which was based on dramatic and psychological analysis and fragmentation.

The distinction between single shot and multi-shot films also implied a difference in length between 'attractional', short, single shot films on the one hand, and 'narrative', long, multi-shot films on the other. The use of short single shots was, in

part, due to technological limitations. The early cinematographes were prone to jam or breakdown when using spliced filmstrips, thus dictating the maximum length that could be used.

In online video collections, it has been the bandwidth of both the website and the user's connection that limited the possible length of clip. Like the kinoscope and cinematographe, the YouTube clip was initially restricted to a short duration of ten minutes.¹³ This technical constraint restricted the possibility of extended narrative development in favour of attraction, spectacle and one-take shots, thus replicating many of the cinematic techniques found in early cinema. In both early film and Youtube, however, technological limitations are not the only aspect dictating the length of the clip or film, since even when limitations are removed lengths do not automatically change. The average clip length on YouTube is about three to four minutes, and the decision to keep to short lengths appears to be a conscious choice by the creators. Although it is now possible to watch a four-hour film, the essence and attraction of YouTube still lies in this short format.

The early devices for projecting film likewise quickly allowed for longer lengths, but many showmen chose to keep the presentations short. Frank R. Gammon and Norman C. Raff, who in 1896 set up the Vitascope Company, commented that 'a subject can be shown for ten or fifteen minutes although four or five minutes is better.'¹⁴ In stating this preference, they aligned themselves less with a mode of narrative integration and more with the tradition of attractional presentation.

Short-form clips of instants of interest do not require audience investment in narrative or character. They require no build up and often simply reveal the spectacle of the instant immediately. Narrative thus does not serve any purpose in the medium of attractional display, since motion is the dominant subject of the films. As attractions work with time in a very different manner to the classical narrative film, they do not build up incidents into a configuration through which a story makes its individual moments cohere. In effect, attractions have one basic temporality, that of the alternation of presence and absence as embodied in the act of display. Although narrative film has established itself as a model to follow, I believe that YouTube clips have reached further back to the temporality of ‘early cinema’, a temporality that simultaneously presents spectacular subjects and the spectacle of technology.

Loop

The attractional tendencies of YouTube are further developed through the use of repetition. Clips do not build from one to the other, but rather are short bursts of spectacle, often watched over and over. This mode of non-linear viewing is emphasised through the introduction of a replay button and an auto-replay feature, which recreate the model of the loop and the temporality of continuity that were first inaugurated with the earliest pre-cinematic devices for viewing moving images. The inherent repetition within devices like Edison’s kinetoscope and vitascope tended to obliterate narrative diegesis by presenting a series of films to an audience that continuously pointed, in their action, to the films’ past internal content. The

attraction of the first optical toys was, above all else, constructed through a perpetual present tense.¹⁵ Thus, the visual experience that the optical toys and YouTube provide rests not only on the presentation of an action, but also on a continuous temporality which determines an attractional form.

Interaction

The analogy between the kinoscope and YouTube is further reinforced through the tactile engagement the spectator has with the YouTube interface.¹⁶ The YouTube database is not limited by start times or temporal thresholds and, as with the manual action or handle of the kinoscope, the viewer stops and starts the clips themselves with the click of a button. Similarly, this new platform for media production and consumption has created a means of individual viewing that recaptures the intimate mode of address of the earliest nineteenth-century devices. The original mode of presentation for the kinoscope films, the woodwork box into which one peered through a small aperture to see the moving images, undoubtedly exaggerated the viewer's sense of an enclosed, miniaturised image displaying small, mobile figures captured and contained within the apparatus.

Through the user's tactile relationship with the presentation and their physical intervention with the screen space, the pragmatics of viewing moving images on YouTube have returned users to an original form of spectatorship first experienced with the intimate viewing of the peep-hole. YouTube is much closer in experience to the optical toys than to the movie theatre. Rather than the woodwork box,

however, contemporary spectators peer into a computer's small window environment or into the screen on their mobile phones.

Actualities

Many YouTube clips display views depicting phenomena of interest without forming a structured narrative. This desire to present 'sites of interest', I would argue, is born from the same desire that motivated the first actualities found in early cinema. Many of these earliest films were dealing in a documentary fashion with an incident, a place or an activity, and often with the stuff of everyday life. Actualities can be considered the non-fictional equivalent of the cinema of attractions as they address the viewer by displaying views, rather than by structuring them in a pre-determined mode.¹⁷ Both the fiction and non-fiction film of early cinema could be considered as attractions, emphasising the display of novel events, whether real or constructed. The idea of putting the world on display was exemplified in early cinema through these films, which brought interesting events and new places to audiences. These were films that documented a wide range of non-fiction subject matters, ranging from everyday life to political events.

Until 1904 actualities were the dominant form of presentation. All types of non-fiction film, such as travelogues, scientific films, sports films, boxing films and natural disasters were considered actualities. The original French term *actualités* implied a temporal reference, and in this narrower sense an actuality was a current event or something that had happened relatively recently. Pathé-Frères wrote in



Figure 60: *Tornado* (2007) Slair

their 1904 catalogue: 'by this we mean scenes of general and international interest, which are so important that they will be able to thrill the masses.'¹⁸ A considerable number of the Lumière productions also consisted of films depicting state visits, inaugurations, parades, processions or other events that were of interest to the public.

Georges Méliès also filmed a number of well-known topical events, such as *Divers at Work on the Wreck of The Maine* (1898), *The Dreyfus Affair* (1899) and *The Coronation of King Edward VII* (1902). The subjects of these actualities had to be spectacular enough to attract audiences. These two characteristics, that is, topicality and the spectacular, constituted the core content of actualities.

I believe that, since its inception, YouTube has functioned as a platform for contemporary actualities. As we have seen during many of the recent uprisings and incidents of political unrest around the world, there is a power inherent in the ability to share simple clips of largely unmodified photographic recordings of unfolding events.¹⁹ It could be argued that YouTube is employed to present political ideologies through shocking images of conflict in a way that echoes Eisenstein's proposed system of 'aggressive actions' that should employ shock as an aesthetic and political strategy, and should assault the senses of the audience in order to construct political ideologies.²⁰ Youtube also incorporates the temporal reference to a recent activity, as there is an almost instantaneous ability to disseminate these clips. Its immediacy means that exhibition, shock and sensationalism become everyday events.



Figure 61: *Divers at Work on the Wreck of 'The Maine'* (1898) Georges Méliès

Figure 62: *The Dreyfus Affair* (1899) Georges Méliès

Figure 63: *The Coronation of King Edward VII* (1902) Georges Méliès



Figure 64: *Free Syrian army attacks with mortars* (2012) CLIKATV

Spectator Position

Whether fictional or not, YouTube clips solicit spectator attention by inciting visual curiosity, and by supplying pleasure or interest through spectacle and unique events.²¹ Clips confront viewers with moments of novelty, curiosity, sensationalism or shock, and invite them to stop and stare. Viewers of the first cinematographe projections were similarly delighted to position themselves as spectators to be entertained, and they were ready to demand a chance to view the spectacle again, rather than to get their hands on the device itself and operate it. The following description by Gunning of early cinema's spectators could easily be applied to a YouTube viewer: 'the viewer of 'attractions' is positioned less as a spectator in the text, absorbed into a fictional world, than as a gawker who stands alongside, held for the moment by curiosity or amazement.'²²

In early cinema, attractions involve a spectatorial position that acknowledges the presence of the spectator. It is a similar spectator position that distinguishes YouTube from other platforms for viewing moving images. For me, the spectator position in YouTube strongly resembles that of the early cinemagoer, in that, far from denying the presence of the audience, the clips seek to confront them. It is the confrontational address of the attraction which is one of the main features of this 'exhibitionist' cinema.

Direct Gaze

As I have argued, direct address is the central distinction between the spectator position in classical cinema and that in attractions. The former creates a voyeuristic engagement through narrative integration, while the latter creates an encounter through a direct address.²³ A direct address was often created using interaction between the spectator and the actors, where characters on screen would wink or gesture at the audience. This address was common in films before 1907, and appeared most often in comedies when the actor let the audience ‘in’ on a joke. These films intentionally ruptured the self-enclosed fictional world through gestures that disengaged the spectator from the narrative. This form of address was particularly prevalent in short comedies, early trick films and scenes of vaudeville performances. Vaudeville and burlesque acts all had a tradition of turning to the audience and addressing them directly. The effect in film, however, was arguably somewhat different, as the actor did not acknowledge the gaze of an actually present spectator, but rather that of the camera. Likewise the spectator did not meet the eyes of an actor, but those of her/his image on the screen.

Take, for example, *The Burlesque Suicide No. 2* (1902). This film shows a man seated at a table, on which stands a decanter of whiskey, a glass and a large revolver. The man pours out a glass of whiskey and, with a despairing look, starts to drink it. Upon seeing the revolver he grabs it and places it against his temple. Pausing abruptly, he stares directly out from the screen, points his finger toward the spectator/camera, and laughs. By pointing at the spectator this film ruptures the self-enclosed fictional world and switches the mode from narrative to attractional.



Figure 65: *The Burlesque Suicide No. 2* (1902) George S. Fleming,
Edwin S. Porter

The direct look and its accompanying gesture shatter the fictional suicide, revealing it as a joke on the audience, who now occupy an area beyond the frame previously occupied by the camera. The acknowledgement of the audience by the actor creates a different sort of ambiguous spatial relation, because it indicates that the space on the screen is not a self-contained fictional world, but is one that can be linked directly to the space of the spectator.

The direct look at the camera was later seen as sabotaging the developing space of narrative cinema, and as a result it became unacceptable. An off-screen glance became one of the ways shots were linked together to create a synthetic space, and a direct look at the audience/camera was seen as undermining narrative connections. The pretended absence of the camera signified a new mode of communication between spectator and screen. As Frank Woods says: 'We the spectators are not part of the picture, nor is there supposed to be a camera there making a moving photograph of the scene.'²⁴

In a mode similar to that of early cinema, many online clips directly engage and address the spectator. Using web-cams, mobile-phone cameras or home video equipment, users record themselves performing acts of display such as gags, tricks, dances, songs and animal acts, in all of which direct address is common. Clips solicit our attention through novelty and curiosities, with the performers usually looking directly at the camera with a penetrating gaze. The very first YouTube clip in April 2005, *Me at the Zoo*,²⁵ featured the co-founder Jawed Karim in front of an elephant pen talking directly to the camera/viewer. This heralded a new era where



Figure 66: *Me at the Zoo* (2005) Jawed

the specificity of narrative cinema dissolved and other more exhibitionist and interactive relations began to emerge.

Physical Display

The element of showing oneself is even more strongly present in the YouTube clips of physical display. Jean Burgess connects this performativity to the participatory nature of YouTube.²⁶ A number of these forms of display have a connection to the vaudeville tradition. The ‘musical performance’, for example, consisting of people recording themselves performing songs, can be traced back directly to a vaudeville context.

Similarly, kinoscope films relied almost entirely on the display of bodily motion. Edison staged vaudeville acts and performers with polished routines as curiosities brought before the public. These films staged actions against an undefined background, focusing attention on the displays of bodily motion by people working, dancing or performing acrobatics. The shallow and enclosed nature of the Edison studio, given the nickname of the ‘Black Maria’, with its roof opened to let in an intense yet sharply-bounded wedge of light, situated films within an environment bereft of context. Performers included dancers as well as strongmen and boxing champions. These films appealed to the spectator’s interest in physical skills and disciplined body movement, not unlike the circus and vaudeville programmes in the context of which films were to be scheduled. The film *Eugen Sandow No.1* (Dickson, 1894) shows the German strong-man and vaudeville star in a long shot on a bare



Figure 67: *Kingdom Hearts Piano Medley* (2006) Germanseabass



Figure 68: *Eugen Sandow No.1* (1894) William K.L. Dickson

stage against a black background, wearing only tight trunks and laced sandals, flexing his muscles and assuming a variety of poses designed to highlight his physique.²⁷

I would argue that the showing of the self in YouTube demonstrates how the exhibitionist aspect of the 'cinema of attractions' is getting a new lease of life. The setting, of course, does differ. Instead of a theatrical stage, or the Black Maria studio, most of these clips are recorded in people's own homes.

Contemporary Showman

Just as the 'cinema of attractions' of early film revealed the larger cultural turn towards showing and visual consumption, YouTube attractions are symptomatic of a larger trend towards social networking and sharing predicated on an arguably similar curiosity for instants or moments. These clips are essentially presented to others in the same way as the 'cinema of attractions' were presented by a showman, one difference being that the receptions for YouTube clips are global.

Descended from the vaudeville and fairground crier, the showmen of early cinema had a particular importance during the first decade of film exhibition. They influenced the way films were experienced by selecting the programme and running order of the projections, and by furnishing the audience with off-screen commentary.

It is the YouTube users who adopt the role of contemporary showman, redistributing clips through social networking. This new 'cinema of attractions' pivots around the social sharing of clips that are spread precisely because of their amusing, shocking or sensational qualities. According to Jean Burgess and Joshua Green, it is the extensive 'spreadability' of clips that makes them important within the YouTube ecology, and thus generates interest in reciprocal exchange.²⁸ All the same, the decisions of where to start, what clip to watch next and when to stop watching are made by the audience. The new practice of distribution in YouTube means that the presentation is no longer limited to a roaming theatrical experience brought by exhibitioners or showmen. It is, rather, disseminated to any computer with internet access.

Just as the early showmen exhibitors provided off-screen supplements and spoken commentary, YouTube emphasises response and interaction within a dynamic system where spectators are invited to post comments and feedback. Responding to a clip with a new clip is a standard feature of the YouTube interface, and a particular clip can provoke a whole network of responses so that the attraction starts to take on a further interactive dimension. Comparisons were also at the heart of late nineteenth-century theatrical spectatorship in which regular vaudeville goers compared one comedy act to another or one animal show, whether dog, monkey, cat, pony, or elephant, to another. Newspaper critics routinely compared *The Black Diamond Express* to *The Empire State Express* (1902).

Early films were not shown independently but as programmes structured by the showmen or programmer. Similarly, YouTube is a media-archive interface, meaning that, instead of defined programmes, we watch databases. It is rare that users watch one clip specifically, since one clip tends to lead to another in a potentially endless string of more or less associated clips.²⁹ The display pages are typically linked to other clips, either through thematic similarities or subjective ones, when a given user's clips are gathered. Additionally, the screen in which the clip itself is presented changes, after it has completed, to a link-screen again showing related clips. The viewing system encourages the user to keep viewing, and allows the user to be led by an endlessly branching database which, arguably, functions in much the same manner as the early programmers and showmen. Just as the early showmen, however, were choosing which films to show and their appropriate running order, within the YouTube database decisions are being made for the user. YouTube database decisions are being programmed, guiding the viewer through the running order of associated clips.

Early Cinema on YouTube

Many clips uploaded to video-sharing websites bear a remarkable similarity to early films. Just like the early cinema of attractions, these websites are dominated by a sense of exhibitionism, both in the way the images address the audience directly, and in the way they put the world 'on display' by documenting significant events.

The short clips are also surprisingly similar in aesthetic composition, subject matter and structuring principles to many pre-1907 works.

The themes of the early ‘cinema of attractions’ are not so different from the YouTube themes that still enthrall viewers today. Even YouTube’s much-maligned ‘cat video’ had its precursor in Edison’s *Boxing Cats* (1894).³⁰ In this short, two trained vaudeville cats appear to spar in a miniature boxing ring while wearing miniature boxing gloves on their front paws. This was described in the Edison catalogue as: ‘A very comical and amusing subject, [...] sure to create a great laugh.’

It could be argued that one of the strongest arguments to support the proposal that YouTube illustrates a new form of attraction is the fact that it has enabled a resurfacing of these early films themselves. YouTube holds the largest repository of moving image to date, and browsing the collection one can find available many examples of films from the established canon of Edison, Lumière, Méliès and Griffith. The new generation viewing these historical works inevitably has a different relationship to them than that of their original audience. In part, this is a consequence of a convergence of media whereby digital technologies are collecting all previous media and placing them within a new stage or setting.³¹ The films do, however, feel at home in the context of this intimate viewing experience provided by YouTube. This reinforces the sense of ‘attraction’ and indeed is now becoming for many users the place of their first encounter with these seminal works. This is clearly one of the strongest demonstrations of the platform’s ability to produce the same reception conditions described by the ‘cinema of attractions’.



Figure 69: *Boxing Cats* (1894) William K.L. Dickson, William Heise

Twenty-First Century Attraction

YouTube is not a distinct apparatus like the cinematographe or the kinetoscope. It is not a physical space like a movie theatre or a gallery, nor is it a singular style of filmmaking like the Lumières' everyday scenes or Edison's vaudeville performances. YouTube is, however, gradually transforming our modes of spectatorship whilst echoing earlier cinematic modes, and I believe that it can construct and replicate the same dynamic interchange between the spectator and the screen that we find in the 'cinema of attractions'. I do not want to indicate, however, that we should react either despondently or optimistically to online technology's eclipse of narrative integration, or to the loss of public experience and discourse that this individual spectatorship may imply. Ultimately, YouTube has developed a clip-culture that outpaces all other forms and outlets of moving image. It is produced actively, as an ongoing process over time, and as a result of an interconnected participation by many different people and users.

Part Two - Contemporary Cinema

Attractions constitute a visual mode of address to the spectator not only in early cinema but also in other periods of film history. One of the reasons why Gunning's formulation has become so successful is that at the end of his essay he ventures to extend the attraction's scope by speculating that the cinema of attractions offers remarkable parallels with contemporary filmmaking, where physical spectacle seems once more to lead in importance over character plotted narrative. Gunning quotes the musical, newsreels, and even classical cinema in which attractions survive, allowing interaction between spectacle and narration. As Gunning asserts:

‘the cinema of attractions does not disappear with the dominance of narrative, but rather goes underground, both into certain avantgarde practices and as a component of narrative films, more evident in some genres (e.g. the musical) than in others.’³²

Contemporary innovators of cinema are articulating discourses and evolving 'languages' of the emergent moving image technologies, exploring contexts of viewing and processes of production including Imax, 3D and computer graphic imaging.³³ The spectator does not observe the film like a theatrical presentation, but participates in it optically.³⁴ These developments in contemporary cinema appear to have significant analogies with early cinema where the viewer becomes the privileged recipients of the spectacle and an essential part of the show. Parallels can be drawn between today's Hollywood big budget feature films and the rubric of attraction in early cinema, whose moving images similarly stimulate the senses and

emotions of their spectators. Consequently, I believe that the ‘cinema of attractions’ can help enlighten certain characteristics of this new type of blockbuster.

The Blockbuster

In the action-oriented blockbuster heroes predominate over psychologically rounded characters, heralding a performative style, again similar to early cinema practice, where spectacular set pieces are responsible for a discontinuous rather than a smooth visual experience.³⁵ The blockbuster does not have to build up the classical arch of suspense; it aims at thrills and surprises, which in the action genre is delivered with maximum impact. It could be argued that the psychological realism of classical cinema has, in the blockbuster, become subordinated to differently motivated types of fantasy and excess, again not unlike the rough-and-tumble of early chase films, the comic farces and slapstick routines. What the chase, humour and magic film were in early cinema, becomes the blockbuster: the horror, slasher or martial arts genres of contemporary cinema: skillfully mounting scenes of action and mayhem. As with early cinema, audiences expect such set pieces, which suspend or interrupt the narrative flow, and in this sense externalize the action.

During the 1970s, a series of film directors created their own style of visually aggressive films. Steven Spielberg and George Lucas proposed a playful, almost fairground cinema, entirely devoted to the pleasure of shocking images. These filmmakers rediscovered the spectacular, which had been somewhat forgotten in

classical cinema. Both Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975) and George Lucas's *Star Wars* (1977) aspired to visual shocks that would produce astonishing images.³⁶

One of the most exemplary sequences of this cinema remains the attack of the Death Star by the small star fighters of the Rebel Alliance in *Star Wars*. It is a demonstration of the subjective camera's power and fast forward tracking, which fasten the spectator in his/her seat and mesmerize them by reproducing visual sensations, very close to those offered by the spectacles of the phantom ride films of early cinema. Lucas himself even declared that his films are more closely related to amusement park rides than a play or a novel.³⁷

Gravity

Alfonso Cuarón's *Gravity* (2013) also follows in the footsteps of the spectacular blockbuster and fits within a contemporary adaptation of 'The Cinema of Attractions.' *Gravity* is a science fiction thriller film directed, co-written, and produced by Cuarón. Depicted almost in real time, the film follows two astronauts, Dr Ryan Stone and Matt Kowalski (Sandra Bullock and George Clooney), stranded in space after a catastrophic debris strike on their shuttle. Set in the blankness of space with only two characters, the pair must find a way to survive before their oxygen runs out and the debris completes its orbit and hits them again. It sounds simplistic, but this rudimentary narrative is designed to never overwhelm the focus of the film, which are its groundbreaking visuals.



Figure 70: *Star Wars* (1977) George Lucas

The film appears to fulfil the perfect return to the attraction precisely because of its exhibitionism. This is a cinema of showing rather than telling, where the spectators are assailed by stunning views and rewarded with visual pleasure. Like early cinema, *Gravity* proposes a profoundly exhibitionist system of the image-attraction,³⁸ because, after all, it is always a question of giving to see rather than of telling; moreover, the story does not have much to tell. The film uses the story as a springboard, whilst amazing the public with visual spectacle.

Computer Graphic Spectacle

‘Spectacular’ is the adjective most used not only by film critics but also by the studio to qualify the mechanics of blockbusters. It is this element of ‘spectacle’ that connects early cinema with contemporary blockbusters. These contemporary films trap the spectator's gaze through their dizzying effects, shocks of colour, speed of camera movements, editing and grandiose special effects.

The beauty and emotional engagement that comes from watching *Gravity* is not just due to being invested with the drama on screen, but by also being aware of how skillfully the filmmakers have constructed the spectacle. *Gravity* is pure cinema in its ability to turn the phenomenon of the moving image into a spectacle, into an attraction. The film appropriates a series of elements enlightened by the early cinema of attractions, like movement, real time and long takes to assail the

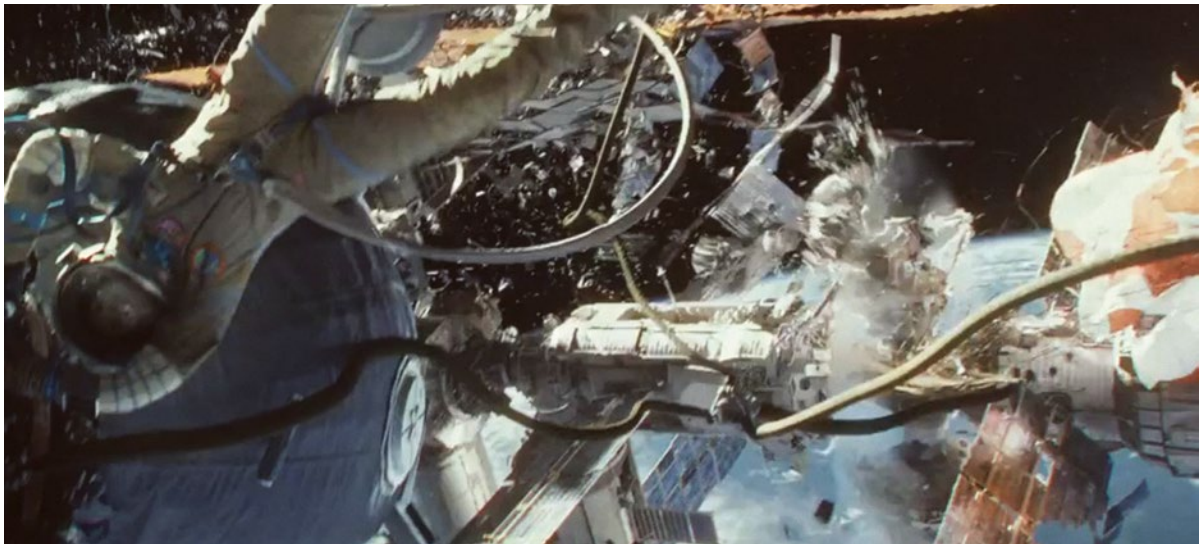


Figure 71: *Gravity* (2013) Alfonso Cuarón

Spectator. However, the long takes and movement are all created through Computer Graphic Imaging. The film delivers a display of modern technology that leaves the viewer breathless from the experience and marveling at the craftsmanship behind it. Much like early cinema, it is the sense of wonder at the marvel of the cinematic technology, and the immersion in the moment of viewing that makes the narrative incidental.

Gravity is filmed with IMAX 3D in mind and this becomes part of the storytelling as much as the sound or special effects. Whether computer generated, models, sets or a combination of several visual effect techniques, the special effects generate a plausible suspension of disbelief. The film also uses C.G.I. to generate very long uninterrupted shots that draw the audience into the action and long takes continue to run throughout the film. Unlike early cinema, the extended long takes in *Gravity* have not been filmed in a single take, but have been created through composite elements. However, the end result enthrals the viewer by holding tension and energy on-screen, and somehow also captivating them with the technical wizardry.

The film begins with the opening scene, which is an unbroken 17-minute shot. This sequence presents some striking subjective viewpoints. The fact that Cuarón makes no perceivable cuts allows the real-time temporality of the scene to replicate a sense of real time temporality that featured in the early cinema of attractions. As Cuarón notes, 'The reason I like tracking shots has to do more with a sense of real time than anything else.'³⁹

Movement

Innovators throughout cinematic history have continually found ways to convey cinema space and movement beyond the surface of the screen by using deep focus, zooms, tracking shots and more recently 3D. The first films by Lumière, Gaumont, Edison or Biograph subjected the spectators of the turn of the century to a series of assailing visual experiments by shooting on board the railway and subways. Shooting aboard a vehicle could generate powerful sensations of movement and speed that could intensify the visual pleasures of the mobile.

Movement alone is no longer an attraction in itself as it was during the days of the first Lumière screenings in Paris, but *Gravity* re-conquers the fetish of these assailing views by proposing a complete catalogue of extreme visual possibilities. The film achieves this by using point of view shots, fast forward tracking and computer-generated rides, all of which plunge the spectator into the meanders of improbable images. These views include the swirling camera representing Dr Stone's dislocated perspective, the incredible tracking shot from far beyond the space shuttle, the visualisation of space debris smashing through satellites and the re-entry pods burning through the atmosphere. These shots are completely transportative, creating an unparalleled sense of being there, suturing you into every moment.

Gravity is a theme park ride of a film, that arrests the spectator in the same manor that early cinema goers were arrested watching the Lumières' *The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat*. The use of 3D, the long shots and the cinematography all attempt to create a thrill for the spectator along the lines of the early cinematic phantom ride

films. Clearly, the effect of seeing *Gravity* in 3D works on a completely different level to the actualities and cinematic curiosities flickering on a cafe wall that Gunning's work refers to, but the end result is the same: the prioritisation of affect over concept and a concentration on the now of viewing and hearing rather than the later of reflective thought.

Diegesis

Gravity represents, with amazing clarity, the essence of contemporary cinematic spectacle. This kind of cinema attracts the spectator to the spectacle of its technology, but at the same time, aims at the fantastic element and transfers the attraction of the technology toward the diegetic. The film allows us to see the relevance of attractions to narrative. Cuarón's film encompasses both the traditions of the films by the Lumière brothers, where the marvels of the modern age were displayed on-screen, and Georges Méliès, who provided the kind of magical illusions that were only possible through cinema.⁴⁰ Gunning says in relation to Méliès's 1902 classic *A Trip to the Moon*, 'The story simply provides a frame upon which to string a demonstration of the magical possibilities of the cinema.'⁴¹ The causal narrative links in Méliès films are relatively insignificant compared to the discreet events. We experience his films as rapidly juxtaposed jolts of activity. We focus on successions of pictorial surprises that run roughshod over the conventional niceties of linear plotting. Méliès' films are a collage of immediate experiences, which require the passage of time to become complete.⁴²

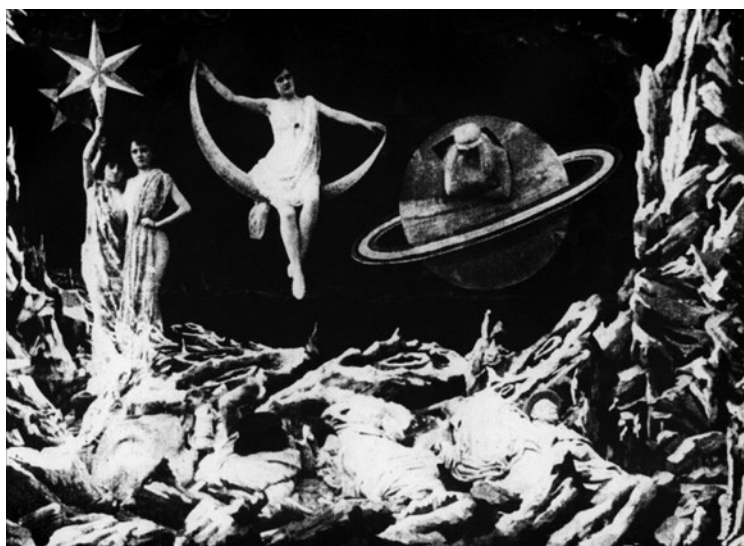
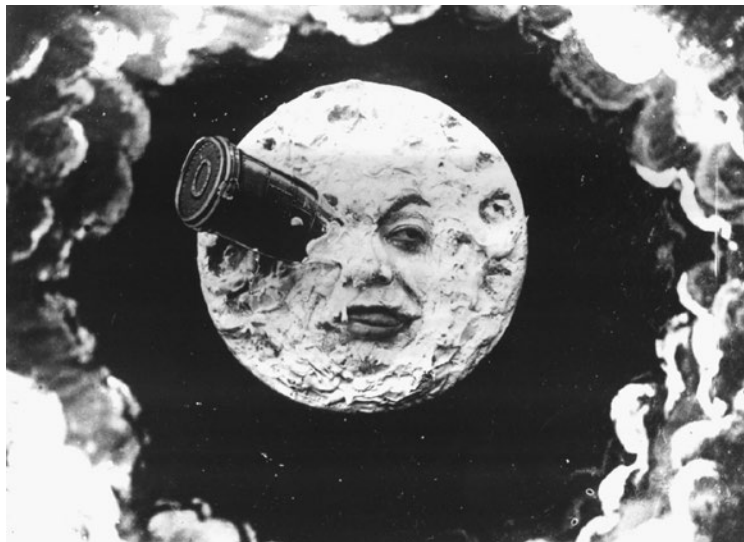
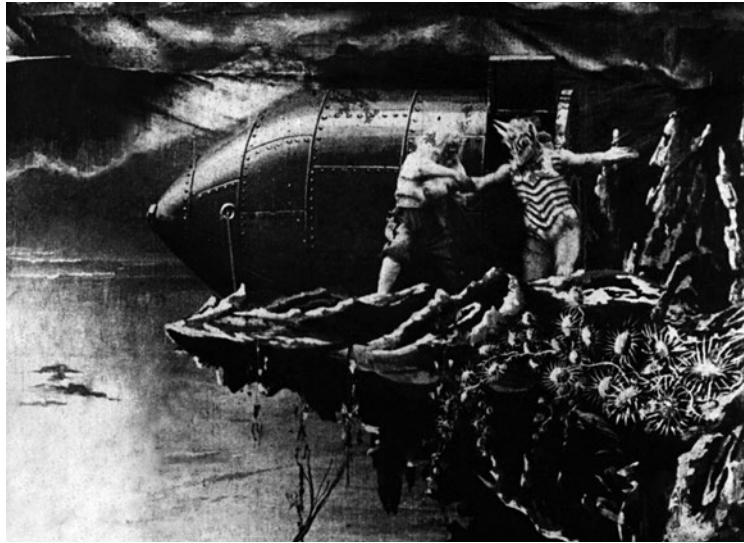


Figure 72: *Le voyage dans la lune* (1902) Georges Méliès

The basic story that is present in *Gravity* functions as a subservient element that facilitates the visual magic of the film. The narrative situation simply provides a naturalized way to move from one attraction to the next and thus, the film returns to an earlier model where attractions take precedent over the narration. It is in this way that it is the heir of Méliès and his famous 'pretext' of a story line on which he would hang his attractions.⁴³

Gravity is not a film of permanent spectacle, or of all attraction, it holds some attachment to the narrative and to the characters. However, rather than a developing configuration of narrative, the attractions offers jolts of presence, soliciting surprise, astonishment, or curiosity instead of following the enigmas on which narrative depends. Gunning himself has pointed in the direction of a 'synthesis of attractions and narrative'⁴⁴ when he states that the 'desire to display may interact with the desire to tell a story, and part of the challenge of early film analysis lies in tracing the interaction of attractions and narrative organization.'⁴⁵

The opposition between the "system of monstrative attractions" and the "system of narrative integration" is not valid any longer in *Gravity*. Without the character, there is no attraction. The attractions do not contest narrative, they aid in its execution. Therefore I think *Gravity* advances another way of thinking about attractions, where the dichotomy narration/attraction actually becomes the condition of the attraction.

Contemporary Attractions

It appears now that after a century of domination by the classical cinematic narrative, we are beginning to see a revival of early cinematic approaches in interactive art forms, with their attendant complexities, distinctions and future potential. YouTube can be considered a twenty-first-century attraction, a development that can be seen as a return to modes of spectatorship that were first encountered in the earliest days of moving images. Similarly I believe the cinema of attractions persists in later cinema, even if it rarely dominates the form of a feature film as a whole. It provides an underground current flowing beneath narrative logic and diegetic realism, producing moments of cinematic spectacle.

The media worlds we inhabit today are clearly not those of the single diegesis of classical cinema, understood as the illusory constructed sphere or world in which events and other elements occur. A large body of contemporary cinema and contemporary moving image practices in essence works against the confines of linear diegesis of classical cinema and instead, focuses the medium towards a sensorial experience or situation for the spectator similar to the preindustrial 'primitive' cinema of attractions.⁴⁶ The new fluid image-forms of digital cinema have become an important way of renegotiating the place of cinema today. These images transcend and extend the scope and potential of moving images by exploring new sensations of movement and creating breathtaking sequences.

The contemporary configuration of sound and image devices, such as mobile phones and tablet computers, make it evident how much the cinema, even after

more than a hundred years, is still in permanent flux and becoming. The gaze is even more fragmented than at the beginning of the last century, and the interactions between the different types of entertainment have multiplied. On the one hand the huge IMAX screen, on the other, the intimate computer's window environment.

Therefore, taking into account the increasing predominance of technology and special effects in providing the primary audience attraction, and considering the resurgence through the internet of performative and spectacle modes, classical cinema may yet come to be seen as itself a transitional stage in the overall history of the visual media and the technologies of mechanical recording and reproduction.

NOTES

1. YouTube has 800 million unique users a month and YouTube ranks as the third
2. Patricia Lange's ethnographic investigation of YouTube develops a typology that breaks down the notion of a singular 'ordinary' or 'casual user'. She looks at YouTube participants who might be considered: (1) former participants; (2) casual users; (3) active participants; (4) YouTubers or 'Tubers'; and (5) YouTube 'celebrities'. Lange approaches the problem of how we can understand participation in YouTube by distinguishing between different types of non-corporate, individual users. See Patricia G. Lange, 'Videos of Affinity on YouTube,' in: Pelle Snickars and Patrick Vonderau (eds.), *The YouTube Reader* (Stockholm: National Library of Sweden, 2009) pp., 70-89.
3. The distinction between professional/market and amateur/non-market culture is unhelpful to a detailed analysis of YouTube as a site of moving image culture.
4. Anthony Bruno, 'YouTube stars don't always welcome record deals' in: *Reuters* (February 25, 2007) Online. Available <http://www.reuters.com/article/2007/02/26/us-youtube-idUSN2518918320070226>
5. Vincent Pinel, *Louis Lumière, Inventeur et cineaste* (Paris: Nathan, 1994) p. 38.
6. With the notable exception of Geert Lovink's *Video Vortex Reader* and the individual research of scholars such as Teresa Rizzo, Patricia G. Lange, José van Dijk, Jean Burgess and Joshua Green. Geert Lovink and Sabine Niederer, *The Video Vortex Reader* (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2008); Teresa Rizzo, 'YouTube: the New Cinema of Attractions', in *Scan Journal* 5 (May 2008); Lange, 'Videos of Affinity on YouTube'. See also Jean Burgess and Joshua Green, 'The Entrepreneurial Vlogger: Participatory Culture Beyond the Professional-Amateur Divide', in: Snickars and Vonderau (eds.), *The YouTube Reader*.
7. Malcolm Le Grice at an artists' talk with Gill Eatherley and William Raban on 16 January 2013. This talk coincided with the exhibition *Film in Space* at Camden Arts Centre. Online. Available <http://www.thisistomorrow.info/default.aspx?webPageId=1&catId=250&MainCategory=Show&SubCategory=Camden%20Arts%20Centre>.
8. José van Dijk, 'Television 2.0: YouTube and the Emergence of Homecasting' (2007), Online. Available http://web.mit.edu/commforum/mit5/papers/vanDijk_Television2.0.article.MiT5.pdf

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9. Gerald Mast, *A Short History of the Movies* (New York: Pegasus, 1971) p. 36.
 10. Pinel, *Louis Lumière, Inventeur et cinéaste*, (Paris: Nathan, 1994) p. 50.
 11. Arthur Lennig, *The Silent Voice: A Text, The Golden Age of the Cinema* (New York: Albany Lane Press, 1969) p. 14.
 12. Marshall Deutelbaum, 'Structural Patterning in the Lumière Films', in: John L Fell (ed.), *Film before Griffith* (California, University of California Press, 1983) p. 30.
 13. When YouTube was launched in 2005, it was possible to upload long videos, but a ten-minute limit was introduced in March 2006 after YouTube found that the majority of videos exceeding this length were unauthorized uploads.
 14. Norman C. Raff and Frank R. Gammon, *The Vitascope* (New York: n.d. 1896) p. 8.
 15. Tom Gunning, 'Now You See It, Now You Don't: The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions', in *The Velvet Light Trap* 32 (Fall 1993) p. 77.
 16. An interface is the point of interaction between the website and the user.
 17. Tom Gunning, 'Before Documentary: Early Nonfiction Films and the "View" Aesthetic', in: Daan Hertogs and Nico De Klerk (eds.), *Uncharted Territory: Essays on Early Nonfiction Film* (Amsterdam: Stichting Nederlands Filmmuseum, 1997) pp. 9-24.
 18. Frank Kessler, 'Actualités', in; Richard Abel (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Early Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2005) p. 6.
 19. Describing the Arab Spring, sociologist Philip N. Howard quoted an activist's succinct description that organizing the political unrest involved using 'Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world.'
Howard, Philip N. (February 23, 2011). 'The Arab Spring's Cascading Effects', in: *Pacific Standard*. Archived from the original on January 8, 2014. Online. Available <http://www.psmag.com/politics/the-cascading-effects-of-the-arab-spring-28575>
 20. Sergei Eisenstein, 'The Montage of Attractions' (1923), in: Richard Taylor (ed.), *The Eisenstein Reader*, trans. William Powell (London: British Film Institute, 1989) p. 30.

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21. Tom Gunning, 'Non-Continuity, Continuity, Discontinuity: A Theory of Genres in Early Films', in: Thomas Elsaesser (ed.), *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (London: British Film Institute, 1990) p. 58.
22. Tom Gunning, 'The Whole Town's Gawking: Early Cinema and the Visual Experience of Modernity', in *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 7.2 (Fall, 1994) p. 190.
23. Tom Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attraction[s]: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde', in: Wanda Strauven (ed.), *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006) pp. 58-59.
24. Frank Woods, 'The Spectator', in *New York Dramatic Mirror* (25 June 1910).
25. The first video on YouTube was shot by Yakov Lapitsky at the San Diego Zoo and was uploaded at 8:27PM on Saturday 23 April 2005. Jawad, *Me at the Zoo* (YouTube, 2005), Online. Available <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNQXAC9IVRw>.
26. Burgess and Green, *The Entrepreneurial Vlogger: Participatory Culture Beyond the Professional-Amateur Divide*, pp. 101-109.
27. William K.L. Dickson, *Eugen Sandow No.1 1894* (YouTube, 2006) Online. Available http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=agvQxm_nPIw.
28. Burgess and Green, *The Entrepreneurial Vlogger: Participatory Culture Beyond the Professional-Amateur Divide*, p. 100.
29. Joost Broeren, 'Digital Attractions: Reloading Early Cinema in Online Video Collections', in: Snickars and Vonderau (eds.), *The YouTube Reader*, p. 162.
30. William K.L. Dickson and William Heise, *Boxing Cats 1894* YouTube, 2007) Online. Available <http://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=k52pLvVmmkU>.
31. Stephen Partridge, 'Video: Incorporeal, Incorporated', in: Jackie Hatfield (ed.), *Experimental Film and Video: An Anthology* (London: John Libbey Publishing, 2006) pp. 180-190.

32. Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attraction[s]: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde,' p. 57.

33. IMAX is an acronym for Image MAXimum, it is a film format that has the capacity to display images of far greater size and resolution than conventional film systems.

34. Theo Van Doesburg, 'Film as Pure Form', *Form* 1, Summer 1966.

35. Thomas Elsaesser, 'Discipline through Diegesis: The Rube Film between "Attractions" and "Narrative Integration"', in: Wanda Strauven (ed.), *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006) p. 207.

36. Gunning calls this 'the Spielberg-Lucas-Coppola cinema of effects', Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attraction[s]: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde,' p. 61.

37. *Time* 15 June 1981. Quoted by Dick Tomasovic in 'The Hollywood Cobweb : New Laws of Attraction (The Spectacular Mechanics of Blockbusters)', in: Wanda Strauven (ed.), *The Cinema of Attractions Reloaded* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006) pp. 312.

38. According to Belloï, the image-attraction is a double exhibition: it says at the same time 'Here I am' and 'This is what I show.' See Livio Belloï, *Le Regard retourné. Aspects du cinéma des premiers temps* (Paris: Nota Bene/Méridiens Klincksieck, 2001) p.84.

39. Caitlin Roper 'Why Gravity Director Alfonso Cuarón Will Never Make a Space Movie Again', in *wired* 1st October 2013, Online.
Available http://www.wired.com/2013/10/center_of_gravity/

40. Roper 'Why Gravity Director Alfonso Cuarón Will Never Make a Space Movie Again'.

41. Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attraction[s]: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant-Garde,' p. 58.

42. John Fraser, *Artificially Arranged Scenes: The Films of George Méliès* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1979) p. 124.

43. Georges Méliès, 'Importance du scénario', in: Georges Sadoul, *Georges Méliès* (Paris: Segher, 1961), p. 118.

44. Gunning, 'The Cinema of Attraction[s]: Early Film, Its Spectator and the Avant Garde', p.60.

45. Gunning, 'Now You See It, Now You Don't: The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions', p.77.

46. Jackie Hatfield 'The subject in expanded cinema', in: Sarah Pucill (eds.), *Art In-Sight, A Review of Artists' Film, Video and Installation*, Issue 11-24, May 2004.

Conclusion

Current moving image practices emanate from a broad historical trajectory. They transcend traditional media boundaries, both physically and conceptually, and are evolving new cinematic concepts that provide an imperative to reconsider and review the divergent paths in the moving image's history. They are an amalgam of nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first century moving image technologies and artistic ideas, including the technological innovations and spectator engagements, which I believe are best described as 'attractional.'

The term 'attraction' is not an account of textual features; it is a description of the dynamic interchange between the spectator and the screen. Attractions offer a tool that allows the superiority of exhibition over narration, and provides an alternative solution to talk about spectator engagement in the most various moving image practices.

Formed with rigor on the basis of a clearly defined historical body of film practice until 1908, the 'cinema of attractions' identifies a mode that is radically different from the model of classical narrative cinema. Although cinema stabilised as an industry by aligning the moving image with inherent linear narrative, attractions are not abolished by the classical paradigm, they simply find their place within it and narrative cinema is often permeated with moments of attraction.

As well as being an appropriate description of early cinema, attractions describe aspects of all moving image. It is my belief that successive phases of the moving image, from the technical apparatus of the pre-cinematic toys to online digital media, can each be mapped by analysing their distinct temporal and spatial modes of address that together constitute their particular form of attraction. I further believe that the avant-garde filmmakers, the moving image artwork and contemporary digital media can each be described as ‘attractional,’ without removing all meaning and context for the concept.

We no longer need to think of the history of the moving image as a direct advance towards only one possible mode of practice. Rather, we can now see it as comprising of distinct and expressive practices, each with their own mode of address each new practice opening up new possibilities. Once distinguished, attractions make it possible to develop a trajectory towards a more accurate reading of moving image history, not of a linear evolution, but rather a history where moments of attractions dazzle.

Narrative and Attractions

In the twenty years since ‘the cinema of attractions’ was introduced, the exact nature of the attraction's relationship to narrative remains open. In its current application the term attraction is often used as the opposite to ‘narrative integration’ in a simplistic binary model. However, the priority of display rather than storytelling in attractions should not be taken as a sweeping definition of all moving image, or

as a definition that forms an opposition with the narrative form of classical cinema. Films that precede the classical paradigm are complex works that occasionally interrelate attractions with narrative projects. Although different from the fascination in storytelling exploited by the classical cinematic narrative, attractions are not necessarily the antithesis to it. An attraction can interact with narrative structures either by dominating them or by subordinating to their dominance within a narrative logic. In classical cinema, narrative integration functions as the dominant principle but attractions can still emerge through moments of spectacle.

Furthermore, I do not want to identify narrativity singularly with the classical paradigm. There are many ways of telling a story through moving images. Although cinema before 1908 and avant-garde film have generally been defined as 'non-narrative,' I believe that they frequently contain a first degree narrative. Rather than this history being weighted towards non-narrative, the reality has been that artists and filmmakers have unavoidably engaged with narrative rather than being predominantly against it, even if this narrative has been minimal and a secondary product of a different objective.

Once we explore an extended view, it becomes clear that a division such as attractions versus narrative integration is not an opposition with narrative on one side and so-called 'non-narrative' spectacle on the other. Rather, attractions unite 'non-narrative' and narrative works through their mode of address, in a conception that sees the moving image less as a way of telling stories than a way of presenting a view to an audience. Attraction replaces a heterogeneous history of narrative and non-narrative with a homogeneous relation between narrative and attraction.

Although classical film narrative has been the subject of considerable scholarly exposition, the moving image works that pursue a different objective than that of narrative have been under explored. It is my belief that narrative categorisations of moving image artworks have become habitual definitions and thus problematic to future experimentation and discussion. I further believe that we can advance another way of thinking about attractions when we recognise the sustained appeal of visual novelty without insisting that it retain an oppositional quality in the face of narrativisation. This would allow us to see the relevance of attractions to narrative, and vice versa, in future moving image developments.

The research presented here into the articulation of moving image, into the questions of narration, into the material determinants shaping the moving image attempts to provide new answers by pointing to neglected connections, between practices of narrative, and practices of 'attraction'. While suggesting expansions and further applications to the theory of attractions, my own contribution to this ongoing project recognises the centrality of Gunning's work, and salutes its vitality and dynamism. Ultimately, I believe that for moving image experimentation to continue on a fertile ground, it is essential that the histories continue to be reviewed, in a pluralistic way, that facilitate a break with the narrative delineation and includes the debates and qualities identified as attractional.

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After Lumière - Arroseur Arrosé (1974), Malcolm LeGrice, 13 minute.

Annabelle Butterfly Dance (1894), William K.L. Dickson, 1 minute, Edison Manufacturing Company.

At the Foot of the Flatiron Building (1903), A. E. Weed, 2 minutes, American Mutoscope and Biograph Company.

Barque sortant du port (1895), Louis Lumière, 46 seconds, The Lumière Company.

Battleship Potemkin (1925), Sergei Eisenstein, 75 minutes, Goskino USSR.

Blackbird Descending - Tense Alignment (1977), Malcolm LeGrice, 120 minutes.

Bleu Shut (1970), Robert Nelson, 33 minutes.

Blue Moses (1962), Stan Brakhage, 11 minutes.

Charlie Schmidt's Keyboard Cat! (2007), Chuckieart, 54 seconds, YouTube.

Démolition d'un mur (1896), Louis Lumière, 1 minute, The Lumière Company.

Divers at Work on the Wreck of The Maine (1898), Georges Méliès, 1 minute, American Mutoscope and Biograph Company.

Electrocuting an Elephant (1903), Thomas Edison, 1 minute 20 seconds, Edison Manufacturing Company.

Emily – Third Party Speculation (1978), Malcolm LeGrice, 80 minutes.

Empire State Express (1896), William K.L. Dickson, 1 minute, Edison Manufacturing Company.

Eugen Sandow No.1 (1894), William K.L. Dickson, 40 seconds, Edison Manufacturing Company.

Eureka (1974), Ernie Gehr, 38 minute.

Finnegans Chin (1981), Malcolm LeGrice, 80 minutes.

Free Syrian army attacks with mortars (2012), CLIKATV, 6 minutes 11 seconds, YouTube.

Gravity (2013), Alfonso Cuarón, 91 minutes, Warner Brothers, Esperanto Filmoj, Heyday Films.

How It Feels to Be Run Over (1900), Cecil Hepworth, 1 minute, Hepworth Manufacturing Company.

Interior New York Subway, 14th Street to 42nd Street (1905), 6 minutes, American Mutoscope and Biograph Company.

Jaws (1975), Steven Spielberg, 130 minutes, Zanuck/Brown Productions, Universal Pictures.

Kingdom Hearts Piano Medley (2006), Germanseabass, 17 minutes 51 seconds, YouTube.

L'affaire Dreyfus (The Dreyfus Affair) (1899), Georges Méliès, 13 minutes, Star Film Company.

L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat (1895), Auguste and Louis Lumière, 1 minute, The Lumière Company.

L'Arroseur Arrosé (1895), Louis Lumière, 1 minute, The Lumière Company.

La Région Centrale (1971), Michael Snow, 240 minutes.

La Sortie de l'Usine Lumière à Lyon (1895), Auguste and Louis Lumière, 46 seconds, The Lumière Company.

Le Repas de Bébé (1895), Louis Lumière, 1 minute, The Lumière Company.

Le tour du monde d'un policier (A Detective's Trip Around the World) (1906), Charles-Lucien Lépine, 15 minutes, Pathé Frères.

Le voyage dans la lune (A Trip to the Moon) (1902), Georges Méliès 13 minutes, Star Film Company.

Line Describing a Cone (1973), Anthony McCall, 30 minutes.

Me at the Zoo (2005), Jawed, 18 seconds, YouTube.

Nostalgia (1971), Hollis Frampton, 36 minutes.

Passaic Falls (1896), James H. White, 19 seconds, Edison Manufacturing Company.

Prey (1999), Steve McQueen, 6 minutes 19 seconds.

Rough Sea at Dover (1895), Birt Acres, Robert W. Paul, 1 minute, Birt Acres.

S.S. Coptic, Running against the Storm (1898), James H. White, 1 minute, Edison Manufacturing Company.

Stachka (The Strike) (1925), Sergei Eisenstein, 82 minutes, Goskino USSR.

Star Wars (1977), George Lucas, 121 minutes, Lucasfilm, Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation.

The Black Diamond Express (1900), James H. White, 1 minute, Edison Manufacturing Company.

The Boxing Cats (Prof. Welton's), (1894), William K.L. Dickson, William Heise, 1 minute, Edison Manufacturing Company.

The Burlesque Suicide No. 2 (1902), George Fleming, Edwin S. Porter, 1 minute, Edison Manufacturing Company.

The Coronation of King Edward VII (1902), Georges Méliès, 6 minutes, Star Film Company.

The Georgetown Loop (1996), Ken Jacobs, 11 minutes.

The Girl Chewing Gum (1976), John Smith, 12 minutes.

The Great Train Robbery (1903), Edwin S Porter, 12 minutes, Edison Manufacturing Company.

The Haverstraw Tunnel (1897), Billy Bitzer, 1 minute, The American Mutoscope Company.

Tom, Tom, the Piper's Son (1969), Ken Jacobs, 115 minutes.

Tornado (2007), Slair, 2 minutes 40 seconds, YouTube.

Umbrella Dance (1896), unknown, 1 minute, Edison Manufacturing Company.

Uncle Josh at the Moving Picture Show (1902) Edwin S Porter, 12 minutes, Edison Manufacturing Company.

Waterfall in the Catskills (1897), James H. White, 30 seconds, Edison Manufacturing Company.

Wavelength (1967), Michael Snow, 45 minutes.

Yes No Maybe Maybe Not (1967), Malcolm LeGrice, 3 minutes.

OTHER MOVING IMAGE WORKS CITED

Animal Locomotion, Plate 532 (Movements of the hand, drawing a circle) (1887)

Eadweard Muybridge

Lorna (1983-1984) Lynn Hershman Leeson. Interactive computer based installation with video, screen, remote, furniture, DVD.

Olia Lialina as Animated GIF Model (2005) Olia Lialina, 2 seconds (loop).

Opposing Mirrors and Video Monitors on Time Delay (1974) Dan Graham, video installation, mirror and closed circuit video and time delay, video camera, and monitor.

Reel Time (1973) Annabel Nicolson, Variable Duration, Black and White 16mm, Performance with sewing machine and projections.

Tall Ships (1992) Gary Hill, Sixteen-channel laserdisc video installation, Sixteen modified 4-inch black and white monitors with projection lenses, pressure-sensitive switching runners, Dimensions of corridor: 10 h. x 10 w. x 90 l. feet.