

PAPER NAME

**When the Kino Eyes turn.docx**

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WORD COUNT

**1185 Words**

CHARACTER COUNT

**6681 Characters**

PAGE COUNT

**4 Pages**

FILE SIZE

**17.5KB**

SUBMISSION DATE

**Aug 29, 2023 7:01 AM GMT+7**

REPORT DATE

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- **The digital image and its status in today's digital cultures:  
When a 'kino-eye becomes a kino-brush', what happens to the digital performing arts?**
- G.M. Adhyanggono
- Celt International Conference
- August 12, 2021

### **Let the story unfold...**

- **Prologue**

As a media technology, the role of cinema was in the first place to record, store, and project visible reality.

Therefore, the difficulty in modifying images once they were recorded was precisely what gave cinema its value as a document (assuring its authenticity).

- **Yet, in our today's digital culture...**

The mutability of digital data impairs the value of cinema recordings as documents of reality.

In retrospect, the twentieth century cinema's regime of visual realism, the result of automatically recording visual reality, was only an exception. It was an isolated accident in the history of visual representation. Why? Because visual realism always involved, and now again involves, the manual construction of images.

- **Kino-eye and kino-brush? What are they?**
- **Why is cinema no longer a kino-eye, but a kino-brush?**
- Cinema is digitally made nowadays.
- Yet, the filmmakers of digital cinema ironically still involve features of manual construction in their production (Manovich as cited in Mirzoeff, 2002: p. 406).
- **The traditional indexicality of a cinema is challenged by the digitized image.**  
"Once live action footage is digitized (or directly recorded in a digital format), it loses its privileged indexical relationship to pro-filmic reality. The computer does not distinguish between an image obtained through the photographic lens, an image created in a paint program, or an image synthesized in a 3D graphics package, since they are made from the same material – pixels. And pixels, regardless of their origin, can be easily altered, substituted one for another, and so on. Live action footage is reduced to just another graphic, no different from images created manually" (Manovich as cited in Mirzoeff, 2002: p. 409).
- **A new kind of realism emerges from the digitized image**  
Frame from *Transformers: Age of Extinction* (Bay, 2014)

Digital compositing – combining digital animation with live-action images – *World War Z* (Forster, 2013)

- A new kind of realism: Digital colour correction/grading

*O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (Coen, 2000)

Uncorrected image (top) and ‘corrected’ or ‘graded’ image (bottom)

- **The (globally distributed) manual labor of digital image production**

“We usually think of computerization as automation [see also Gere, 2002: 11-12], but here the result is the reverse: what was previously automatically recorded by a camera now has to be painted one frame at a time. But not just a dozen images, as in the nineteenth century, but thousands and thousands. We can draw another parallel with the practice, common in the early days of silent cinema, of manually tinting film frames in different colours according to a scene’s mood” (Manovich as cited in Mirzoeff , 2002: p. 411).

Tinted and hand-stencilled frames from (top) *The Pleasure Garden* (Hitchcock, 1925) and (bottom) *Voyage to the Moon* (Méliès, 1902)

- **So, what’s the issue now?**

**The status of the digital image**

- **A Hint from Jean Baudrillard**

A French sociologist, philosopher, and cultural theorist

- **Jean Baudrillard**

“Simulation is no longer that of a territory, the double the mirror or the concept. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal [...] It is no longer a question of imitation, nor of reduplication, nor even of parody. It is rather a question of substituting signs of the real for the real itself; that is, an operation to deter every real process by its operational double, a metastable, programmatic, perfect descriptive machine which provides all the signs of the real and short-circuits all its vicissitudes. Never again will the real have to be produced” (Baudrillard as cited in Mirzoeff 2002: pp. 145-6).

- **The question now is...**

When a cinema’s digital image can be challenged for its indexicality and also hyperreality, then what about that of the digital performing arts?

- **Digital Performing Arts**

The digital performing arts that are captured, framed and exhibited digitally in the forms of recorded filming or live streaming, may not be hastily concluded subject to this indexicality and hyperreality issue on their digital images.

**Why?**

- **Although Manovich once said...**

- “Once live action footage is digitized (or directly recorded in a digital format), it loses its privileged indexical relationship to pro-filmic reality [...] because of] – pixels. And pixels, regardless of their origin, can be easily altered, substituted one for another, and so on.” (Manovich as cited in Mirzoeff , 2002: p. 409).

- The degree of digital interruption or manipulation in the documented or live-streamed performing arts that may further determine the status of their images, being more indexical to reality or a hyperreal one.
- The performing arts (theatre, dance, and music ) traditionally have their own environments to produce and exhibit their artforms with the spirit of retaining 'authenticity/originality' of their performances.
- The rise of virtual performance in this pandemic situation seems to be a logical breakthrough for both the artists and the audience, especially in the context of traditional performing arts in Indonesia to survive.
- On the part of the artist/performers, when the methods of art production and exhibition still highly lean on the conventional idea of their natural environments (physical stage indoor or outdoor), then the contemporary situation of the digital performing arts can be seen as the self-negotiation and reinterpretation of the artists/performers to develop their performance in creative ways.
- On the part of the audience, certainly nothing can substitute the warm, live, and inclusive atmosphere of the performing arts. Yet, the documented/recorded and live-streamed performance may also bring a new sense of 'intimacy' and privacy between the performance on the screen and the viewer.
- **Epilogue**
- As regards the transformation of kino-eye to kino-brush in filmmaking, the tendency is growing fast, inevitable and powerful for it is commonly part of the filmmaking process today (see also Chandler, 1995, on technological or media determinism).
- The status (indexicality and hyperreality) of the digital image produced in cinema is easily questioned (similar to that of digital art performance).
- And yet, for the digital performing arts such a kino-eye to kino-brush transformation cannot be easily and quickly identified in the meantime.
- Therefore, the status of the digital performing arts' image is temporarily less challenged.
- **References**
- Baudrillard, Jean (2002) "Simulacra and Simulations" in Nicholas Mirzoeff, ed. *The Visual Culture Reader*. London and New York: Routledge. pp. 145-146
- Chandler, Daniel (1995). "Technological or Media Determinism" <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/tecdet/tecdet.html> [Accessed 8/2/2021]
- Gere, Charlie (2008) *Digital Culture*. London: Reaktion Books
- Hartley, Barbara & Rowe, Emily (2021). "The performing arts and the pandemic" <https://www.insideindonesia.org/the-performing-arts-and-the-pandemic> [Accessed 8/2/2021]
- Manovich, Lev (2002) 'What is Digital Cinema?' in Nicholas Mirzoeff, ed. *The Visual Culture Reader*. London and New York: Routledge. pp. 405-416

- McCarthy , Kevin F. and Ondaatje, Elizabeth Heneghan. 2002. From Celluloid to Cyberspace: The Media Arts and the Changing Arts World. RAND: Santa Monica

### ***Filmography***

- *Mr. Bean's Holiday* (Steve Bendelack, 2007)
- *Perempuan Tanah Jahanam* (Joko Anwar, 2019)
- *The Lost World: Jurassic Park* (Steven Spielberg, 1997)
- *Transformers: Age of Extinction* (Michael Bay, 2014)
- *World War Z* (Marc Forster, 2013)
- *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* (Ethan Coen and Joel Coen, 2000)
- *The Pleasure Garden* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1925)
- *Voyage to the Moon* (Georges Méliès, 1902)

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