

TESTE FOUNDATION



ALIAS YEDERBECK

EXHIBITION AND CINEMATOGRAPHIC INSTALLATION
KUNSTRAUM AND SCHINKELHALLE POTSDAM

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ALIAS YEDERBECK is a cinematographic installation in a panoramic projection format. It interlocks elements of "expanded cinema" and "animated film" in a spatially immersive presentation. This evokes a new genre demanding fresh concepts and descriptions. The author Frank Geßner, the initiator, artist, and protagonist, who multiplies himself in several dimensions and functions in this work, appears in the artistic-aesthetic presence – like all the others of his painted, recorded, and reanimated figures – in the mode of a re-mediatized repetition. "Figure" here means original copy without origin, a multiplicity of real/virtual aliases, de-individualized but prototypical. From this hybrid

production perspective, tantamount to an encyclopedic wandering through media-historical and authorial-biographical events and in this way interactively tying together extremely disparate material qualities, like canvas, celluloid, electronic signal processes, and the computing operations of the technical simulation of digital matrix images, Geßner calls his installational presentation "Expanded Animation Cinema".

What that is, is twelve panoramically arranged film sequences, proceeding clockwise in linear linkage and in a precise temporal course. The arrangement in a circle results in a formal aesthetic continuum, but not in any semiotic closure. Unlike in the usual painted, cinematographic, or virtual/computer-animated 360° room image form, no visual-narrative coherence results. Rather, difference and discontinuity stand in the foreground of the twelve cinematically animated image positions, which follow each other abruptly and thereby also communicate the gap or interval in the passage from one block of images to the next. These blocks, each comprising 21 image positions, each start from a respectively central portrait, an image position that arises as a central alias figure also for the virtual forms of appearance of the multiple self, which means "I are many". Image positions then play out cinematically, presenting various experimental studies: for example through panel painting, seriality, horizontal and vertical layering and condensation of temporal and spatial levels in a moving picture, through animated sculpture, tableau vivant, and the transition from analog to digital compositing. Ultimately, the artistic-creative research conducts an aesthetic discourse on the potential for interaction between the simulation space of painting in the panorama, on the one hand, and temporal succession in the projection of film, on the other. In the condensed pictorial spaces with accelerated and decelerated depictions of motion, this form of interaction and dialog quotation creates an interplay between the core positions of painting and film and configures them anew in the digital mode of animation. This results in hybrid, crisscrossing connections of real/virtual and fictional-simulated image fields and narrative spaces, which, like building blocks from a digital archive, can be quite differently quoted, processed, mixed, and interlinked.

This creates a network that simultaneously tests pre- and post-cinematographic perceptions and experiences of immersively designed pictorial spaces. Unlike the baroque or three-dimensional aesthetic of the overwhelming that is found in virtual reality, here the viewers, who are positioned to be mobile in the midst of the image of the depiction of motion, are offered a sensory-illustrative discourse on the respective material and media specifics. And this proximity results in powerful media frictions when the media forms employed – drawing, painting, photo, film including Super-8, video, and computer graphics – as well as references to various picture formats are subjected to a systematic structural analysis in a renewed tour of the archive of Western-artistic forms of images and perception. To be mentioned are the re-mediatization and extensions of sculpture, here in relation to the relief of the “Pergamon Altar”; of painting, for example Claude Monet’s broad-surface painting “Nymphéas”; and of film, for example Abel Gance’s multiple projections and Paul Sharit’s and Kurt Kren’s picture editing and double exposures in structural film as film. Recognizable are also modalities of depiction from the medium of video and its open apparatus structure, for example in the fusion of relations between sides and in the dissolution of before-after and interior-exterior relations, prominently carried out in a form based on Peter Campus’ video performances. Re-mediatization, after all, means expansions of all of these structural references in computer animation, when elastic pictorial spaces are created from pre-existing static and dynamic image templates.

This creative practice wears down the media-specific structures of the given individual medium as well as the inter-media intermediate forms that we have gotten to know in recent media history in many places where painting and photography come into contact with film or where film contacts video. For now, in the expansive and excessive re-staging of given images, plural and multiple mixings arise. They carry their references with them like a permeable foil, but they stretch the cinematographically organized image field in which the Alias author has condensed his and, more generally, our cultural experiences with image perception and media form into new dimensions and directions. For this

reason, Frank Geßner's "Expanded Animation Cinema" requires a corresponding, hybrid site of presentation.

Geßner has created this conceptual site by shifting the cinematographic principle, which is based on linear narrative development, into a nonlinear order. It (and this is the decisive factor) can stage the spatio-temporally condensed "material" of the twelve dynamic narrative positions in a circularly bound fashion. The idea of presenting twelve films, each of which can stand on its own, in formally bound fashion leads necessarily to the form of a panorama installation. What is special about the "Expanded Animation" is that each screening in the angularly round panorama is assigned a different starting position on the horizontal temporal axis, and this singularity diffuses at the same time in the twelve-fold multiplied projection of the same sequence. Multiplication manifests itself in the synchronization of the horizontal repetition, which makes full use of the cinematographic principle of multiple projections in the digital production aesthetic of endless duplication. Drawing this procedure together generates the structure of "Expanded Animation Cinema", starting out from the idea of choosing a site of cinematographic performance and reflection outside of tested media.

From a film-historical perspective, the new genre concept of "Expanded Animation Cinema" relates to the original context of the cinematographic moving picture as "living, ensouled image". Here, animation is referred back to "anima", the puff of air as the breath of the soul and the driving force of the enlivening of figures that seem as if actually living in their restaging on the two-dimensional projection screen. In the media context, the design of animation has experienced an expansive acceleration with computer animation, has started its own genre in Japanese anime, and has developed into a central building block in fictional narrative cinema. Structurally-conceptually, the reconfiguration of the animated film ALIAS YEDERBECK undertakes a re-dimensioning and updating of the "Expanded Cinema" that Gene Youngblood recognized in 1970 as a new type of film practice starting out from experimental film's spatio-temporal exceeding of film's limits in regard to apparatus and depiction. It

works with mixed media, includes computer programming, stages film without film, integrates the audience's participation in spatial projection and action with film, and finally expansively and immersingly shifts the standardized givens of the institution of cinema.

Frank Geßner's "Expanded Animation Cinema" creates connections with boundary-crossing cinema when he combines animation with narration in the linear presentation framework of the temporally sequenced twelve individual narratives and at the same time conceives the narrative dramaturgy of such an episodic drama in nonlinear fashion. The conceptual framework for the events, which stand in discontinuous relation to each other in the twelve loosely connected films, is provided by the set of rules of an arbitrary system of counting. Alluding to historical interfaces between science and art, for example the Golden Section of painting and of linear perspective, Geßner involves a systematic level of correlation and uses the base-twelve numerical system of our division of time, in order to suggest a structural association in the clock's unit of measurement: it runs from the measurability of cinematic frame speed to the digital clock. The reference to the clock as a measuring instrument points beyond the counting of individual film frames, which is essential in experimental film, to the localization and re-localization of digital image positions. For in the history of media, it is the clock, as digital building block, that first makes the electronic-digital image controllably manipulable and that makes guided expansion accessible.

In this conceptual-systematic framework, horizontal-vertical standardizations of various media images and their image formats are adduced to set pictorial fields into flowing motion and to make them appear like drifting pictorial volumes in the almost floating architecture of the installation. In this, the media and the animated depictees and actors appear as if on a multiple stage in theatrical space. The actor is one form of portrait among many and the portrayed series shows a spectrum of possible aliases. One could say that a self-referential circle arises, an endless passage from figure to figuration to figure and multiplying further. Another level of reflection is integrated, because the play of forms in

the depiction corresponds with the exhibited self-reflection of the media used and their conditions of presentation. They form an expanded field of association that is condensed by means of the interlocking of references and re-articulations of the components of the media languages of painting, sculpture, film, video, and computer graphics. Put another way: with Geßner, animation means a high degree of condensation, which results essentially from drawing together the simultaneous space of painting and the successive image of film.

ALIAS YEDERBECK, Frank Geßner's "Expanded Animation Cinema", is a cinematographic installation with various facets, points of friction, media and material overlayings, condensations, deepenings, and dealings with his own artistic experiences, theoretical positions, and today's media landscape in the mirror of its genealogy. To be emphasized are the core filmic-cinematographic points. These are, first, film's self-thematization: film as film, film in film, and explorations of the relation between film and event, i.e., the distance and the loss of distance between the viewer and the pictorial space. The viewer's involvement in the pictorial space, i.e., the interior-exterior relations and the perspective taken, play a central role in this. Another aspect is thereby the central question of liveliness, i.e., on the one hand "live" as direct transmission and, on the other, "life" as enlivenment. In this context, the medium of video, which is a live medium in its genesis, has an important position because in video the digital media forms and the historically preceding media forms are brought together. Thus, in the eleventh sequence, "Reminder", video is the fusion medium for all media forms and materialities, which are brought together here in rapid sequence. This is interesting also because, in the discussion about media, video is often seen as an intermediate medium, a not fully matured medium between film and the computer. Countering this notion, Geßner's work shows that each medium has its own site and its own position. This characterizes the work as a cinematographic installation. It evokes site-determinations of the cinematographic, the installational, the analog, the digital, of interior space, of exterior space, of the linear and the successive image and of its nonlinear possibilities of staging, which presents various positions to be reflected upon and also sensorally-perceptually experienced.

Film is always an illusion, as the invented and found stories of Jedermann's (Everyman's) aliases attest. I wish everyone lots of fun in the space-time of this exhibition.

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