
*Mag.art. Gebhard Sengmüller:
Lecture "Media Archeology"*

Unlike conventional media history, this class is intended to reveal a hidden history of media. This "secret" or "forgotten" media history deals with parallel, presumably lost, little regarded, perhaps even merely fictive strands in the development of today's media apparatuses.

In an age of the rapid development of constantly new technologies, which become more and more quickly obsolete, it is interesting to create archeologies of individual media. For example, this could be an archeology of mobile media (as suggested by Erkki Huhtamo), an archeology of operating systems (Neal Stephenson), or even an archeology of dead media, as Bruce Sterling calls for in his "Dead Media Manifesto": "Plenty of wild wired promises are already being made for all the infant media. What we need is a somber, thoughtful, thorough, hype-free, even lugubrious book that honors the dead and resuscitates the spiritual ancestors of today's mediated frenzy. A book to give its readership a deeper, paleontological perspective right in the dizzy midst of the digital revolution. We need a book about the failures of media, the collapses of media, the supercessions of media, the strangulations of media, a book detailing all the freakish and hideous media mistakes that we should know enough now not to repeat, a book about media that have died on the barbed wire of technological advance, media that didn't make it, martyred media, dead media. The handbook of dead media. A naturalist's field guide for the communications paleontologist."

I will show how artists interested in media archeology (these include, for instance, Paul DeMarinis ["Firebirds"], Perry Hobermann ["Faraday's Garden"], Vuk Cosic ["ascii history of moving images"]) purposely use artefacts from media machines and media technologies "the wrong way" in their practice, developing them into previously unplanned hybrids, opening unknown back doors and thus often turning what were originally defects into strengths.

Paul DeMarinis writes about his installation series "The Edison Effect", in which old-fashioned phonograph records are scanned with lasers: "It is often the case that a new medium's first major flaw or contradiction is destined to become its dominant metaphor. The disembodied upside-downness of Della Porta's camera obscura, the shadows created by light falling on Niepce's photographic emulsion producing a "negative" image, the montage necessitated by the frailty and shortness of early celluloid film - these have become the mechanophors which convey the richness and complexity of our experience. "

The class deals with unexpected paths of the history of technology, abstruse media machines, Sumerian PDAs, strange analogies in the development of television, singing flames, or the consequences of a blind faith in technology.

In "Spectres of the Spectrum" the filmmaker Craig Baldwin says that the development of electromagnetic waves actually served to create a medium for making contact with the dead. On this rededication of newly invented technologies, Friedrich Kittler also remarks in "Gramophone Film Typewriter": "The invention of the Morse alphabet in 1837 was promptly followed by the tapping specters of spiritistic seances sending their messages from the realm of the dead. Promptly as well, photographic plates - even and especially those taken with the camera shutter closed - furnished reproductions of ghosts or specters."

My class tells of artist communities that shun progress by purposely using obsolete hardware and software generations, who prefer low tech not only for aesthetic reasons, but also because of the associated economic implications.

In his essay "Missing Links", Timothy Druckrey proposes: "So instead of "variable media" how about viable media, media not drowned by artistically useless demands for upgradable usability, not hounded by domineering state-of-the-art implementations, not "normalized" by institutional imperatives for stable performance, not limited by demands that they be on the web or not in line,

on the screen or out of sight, or not "reduced", as Kittler notes, "to surface effects, known to consumers as interface.""

The class also offers an overview of the previous and current discourse on this theme. This includes authors such as Siegfried Zielinsky and his theory that television is an older medium than film. There will also be some discussion of notions that writers have of a future technologically changed by the past, such as those described in William Gibson's "Gernsback Continuum", for instance.

The ideas described here have a very important position in my own artistic work. My project "VinylVideo", which I call a piece of fake media archeology, constructs a home movie medium as a missing link in the history of image recording. VinylVideo is a "forgotten" invention for storing television signals on vinyl LPs (www.vinylvideo.com). My current project "VSSTV – Very Slow Scan Television" (www.vsstv.com) deals with a parallel TV universe reaching back into the time of television monopolies and showing us a historical predecessor of current streaming and netcasting technologies: VSSTV is a new TV format based on SSTV, an image transmission system used by ham radio operators. VSSTV uses this historical public domain television together with ordinary bubble wrap as the basis for forming an analogy: just as the cathode ray tubes use a shadow mask to represent color values from a mixture of the three primary colors, VSSTV constructs a plotter-like system that fills the bubble wrap, one air bubble at a time, with dye in the three primary colors, thus transforming them into single pixels on the VSSTV "screen".

In the second semester, in addition to conveying the content described above and supported by my own practice, I will develop artistic works on media archeology together with the participants.

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*Mag.art. Gebhard Sengmüller:
Lehrveranstaltung "Medienarchäologie"*

Im Gegensatz zur konventionellen Mediengeschichte soll diese Lehrveranstaltung eine versteckte Geschichte der Medien enthüllen. Diese "geheime" oder "vergessene" Mediengeschichte behandelt parallele, verloren geglaubte, wenig beachtete, vielleicht sogar nur fiktive Stränge in der Entwicklung heutiger Medienapparaturen.

In einer Zeit der rasanten Entwicklung ständig neuer Technologien und immer schnelleren Wieder-Überholt-Seins selbiger wird es interessant, Archäologien einzelner Medien zu erstellen. Das kann zum Beispiel eine Archäologie mobiler Medien (wie von Erkki Huhtamo vorgeschlagen) sein, eine Archäologie von Computerbetriebssystemen (Neal Stephenson), oder sogar eine Archäologie toter Medien, wie von Bruce Sterling in seinem "Dead Media Manifesto" gefordert: "Plenty of wild wired promises are already being made for all the infant media. What we need is a somber, thoughtful, thorough, hype-free, even lugubrious book that honors the dead and resuscitates the spiritual ancestors of today's mediated frenzy. A book to give its readership a deeper, paleontological perspective right in the dizzy midst of the digital revolution. We need a book about the failures of media, the collapses of media, the supercessions of media, the strangulations of media, a book detailing all the freakish and hideous media mistakes that we should know enough now not to repeat, a book about media that have died on the barbed wire of technological advance, media that didn't make it, martyred media, dead media. The handbook of dead media. A naturalist's field guide for the communications paleontologist."

Ich möchte zeigen, wie medienarchäologisch interessierte Künstler (dazu zählen etwa Paul DeMarinis ("Firebirds"), Perry Hoberman ("Faraday's Garden"), Vuk Cosic ("ascii history of moving images")) in ihrer Praxis Artefakte von Medienmaschinen und Medientechnologien bewusst "falsch" einsetzen, zu bisher nicht vorgesehenen Hybriden verarbeiten, unbekannte Hintertüren öffnen und so oft ursprüngliche Fehler zu Stärken machen.

Paul DeMarinis schreibt zu seiner Installationsserie "The Edison Effect", in der altertümliche Phonographenplatten mit Lasern abgetastet werden: "It is often the case that a new medium's first major flaw or contradiction is destined to become its dominant metaphor. The disembodiment upside-downness of Della Porta's camera obscura, the shadows created by light falling on Niepce's photographic emulsion producing a "negative" image, the montage necessitated by the frailty and shortness of early celluloid film - these have become the mechanophors which convey the richness and complexity of our experience. "

Die Lehrveranstaltung berichtet von unerwarteten Wegen der Technikgeschichte, abstrusen Medienmaschinen, sumerischen PDA-s, seltsamen Analogien in der Entwicklung des Fernsehens, singenden Flammen, oder den Folgen blinder Technikgläubigkeit.

Der Filmemacher Craig Baldwin erzählt in "Spectres of the Spectrum", dass die Entdeckung elektromagnetischer Wellen eigentlich auch dazu diene, ein Medium zum Kontakt mit dem Jenseits zu schaffen. Zu dieser Umwidmung gerade erst erfundener Technologien bemerkt auch Friedrich Kittler in "Gramophone Film Typewriter": "The invention of the Morse alphabet in 1837 was promptly followed by the tapping specters of spiritistic seances sending their messages from the realm of the dead. Promptly as well, photographic plates - even and especially those taken with the camera shutter closed - furnished reproductions of ghosts or specters."

Meine Lehrveranstaltung berichtet von Künstlercommunities, die sich dem Fortschritt durch bewussten Einsatz veralteter Hard- und Softwaregenerationen entziehen, die Lowtech nicht aus ästhetischen Gründen sondern auch wegen den damit verbundenen ökonomischen Implikationen bevorzugen.

Timothy Druckrey schlägt in seinem Essay "Missing Links" vor: "So instead of "variable media" how about viable media, media not drowned by artistically useless demands for upgradable

usability, not hounded by domineering state-of-the-art implementations, not "normalized" by institutional imperatives for stable performance, not limited by demands that they be on the web or not in line, on the screen or out of sight, or not "reduced", as Kittler notes, "to surface effects, known to consumers as interface.""

Die Lehrveranstaltung bietet auch einen Überblick über den bisherigen und aktuellen Diskurs zu diesem Thema. Dazu gehören Autoren wie Siegfried Zielinsky und seine Theorie, dass Fernsehen ein älteres Medium als Film ist. Erwähnt werden auch Vorstellungen, die Schriftsteller von einer durch die Vergangenheit technologisch veränderten Zukunft haben, wie das etwa in William Gibson's "Gernsback Continuum" beschrieben wird.

In meiner eigenen künstlerischen Arbeit nehmen die hier beschriebenen Überlegungen einen sehr wichtigen Platz ein: Mein Projekt "VinylVideo", das ich als ein Stück Fake-Medienarchäologie bezeichne, konstruiert ein Homemovie-Medium als missing-link in der Geschichte der Bildaufzeichnung. VinylVideo ist eine "vergessene" Erfindung zur Speicherung von Fernsehsignalen auf Vinyl-Langspielplatten (www.vinylvideo.com). Mein aktuelles Projekt "VSSTV – Very Slow Scan Television" (www.vsstv.com), behandelt ein paralleles TV Universum, das in die Zeit der Fernsehmonopole zurückreicht und uns einen historischen Vorläufer zu aktuellen Streaming- und Netcastingtechnologien zeigt: VSSTV ist ein neues Fernsehformat, das auf SSTV, einem von Funkamateuren benutzten Bildübertragungsverfahren, aufbaut. VSSTV benutzt dieses historische Public Domain-Fernsehen zusammen mit normaler Luftpolsterfolie als Grundlage einer Analogiebildung: Genauso wie die Fernsehbildröhre mit ihrer Lochmaske Tonwerte aus der Mischung der drei Grundfarben darstellt, konstruiert VSSTV eine Plotter-ähnliche Vorrichtung, die Luftbläschen für Luftbläschen der Luftpolsterfolie mit Farbstoff in den drei Grundfarben füllt und diese so in einzelne Bildpunkte auf dem VSSTV „Bildschirm“ verwandelt.

Im zweiten Semester werde ich mit den Teilnehmern, zusätzlich zur Vermittlung der oben erwähnten Inhalte und unterstützt durch meine eigene Praxis, künstlerische Arbeiten zur Medienarchäologie erarbeiten.

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