Minoritarian Art Practices of Virtual Reality

"The growth of the art of cinema can be compared with the growth of a plant buried under stones. The stones are industry and commerce which impose their own ways and means upon it. Cinema, to be born again, must withdraw for a moment into solitude, silence, into the very souls of those individuals who really do need it in order to express themselves, - Cinema must be given a breath of fresh air - become disinterested."

Karol Irzykowski

According to the classical Greeks, everything that we encounter is *being*, which they defined as something that does not emerge from the present, but rather something that comes to the fore. This rise from absence to presence, or from virtual to actual per se, is known as *poiesis*. This prominence manifests itself first of all in *poiesis*, defined as the "becoming" from which the thing bursts forth and blooms from within. But while *tekhne* is also a form of this coming forward, its blooming lies not in the thing itself, but in something else. The subject's body is active in *tekhne*, just as one can see a craftsman's abilities through his displayed skills. However, Heidegger provides a deeper meaning for *tekhne*, namely, "the arts of the mind and the fine arts. Techne belongs to bringing-forth, to poiesis; it is something poetic" (Heidegger, 1977: 4). If seen as a rational game, a rebel's tool, or a cold machine dividing truth and human identity, media

technology is fundamentally a snapshot of the human condition and a gateway to comprehending the present.

In the pre-history of virtual reality (VR), many immersive technologies (especially the panorama technology) that promised a "total view" were applied to *democratize* the spectator. However, in reality these attempts created spectators who became part of capitalism, and the dominant power not only changed their relationship to the technology and the image, but also changed their subjectivity and individualization.

Those panorama and pre-cinematic technologies used for propaganda purposes and to justify colonization during the 1960s were transformed during the 1980s and 1990s into an explosion of technological developments and advancements in many disciplines that gradually coalesced into a very sophisticated digital apparatus. Monopolized illusionistic techniques of panoramas metamorphosed with interactivity, observational subject-oriented image spaces, algorithmic imagery, computer generated environments, virtual reality, mixed reality, holography, and so on. Technology has never been "neutral," for as soon as it becomes functional it benefits the inventor, his patron, and those who have invested in it. In this case, the artistic and ideological expressions are enfolded in the cinematographic apparatus. The *dispositif*, which is already artistic and ideological, "is the realm of revealing, of truth" (Heidegger, 1977: 4) to deconstruct this domination of democratization over the spectacle–spectator relationship. As Godard says: "Art attracts us only by what it reveals of our most secret self," namely, the hidden and desired subjectivity.

Since the 1980s and the 1990s, the immersive and interactive media art practices of all those who have been active in this, from the avant-garde and experimental structural filmmakers to the expanded cinema pioneers and today's re-advanced VR practitioners, are predicated on a co-

dependent relationship between the potentialities and constraints of its production/presentation machinery and the filmmakers' desire to bring about specific embodiments of content. During the 20th century, VR technologies were forced to struggle with industrially designed and highly predetermined machines. Deleuze (2005: 142) conceptualized a "*mutation* which is as much cinematographic as metaphysical ... that turns away from politics, it becomes completely political, but in another way." The VR technologies of the 21st century, while still very much determined by industrial agendas, are inherently more malleable and more open to reformulation at the program level by the cinematographer. The latter can move beyond a strategy of "playing against the apparatus" and toward procedures of actually transforming the apparatus so that it can embody idiosyncratic creative programs right down to the machine level. In the unpredictable times of this post-cinematic age, the practices of minoritarian filmmakers and mediamakers need to be examined in terms of how technology can be deterritorialized in order to support "the idea that the new image has to stand up against the cliché on its own ground" (Deleuze, 2005: 21).

Panorama as Mass Medium and Propaganda

Art and the principles that underpin it have long been at the heart of political activism, which influences the rise of social movements. When contemporary art is socially conscious, political and transcendent in its effect, its educational importance has a huge impact on society. In line with this, Grau (2003: 5) says that the panorama, invented by Robert Barker in 1789, is one of the most remarkable vehicles for painted illusionism. According to Oetterman (1997: 7), panoramas have existed as natural formations since time immemorial, and panoramas as an art form are but a mere imitation of them. The introduction to this section seeks to demonstrate that this is not the case, for the panorama is, in truth, the pictorial language or "symbolic form" of a

specifically Western bourgeois view of nature and the environment. In other words, it was a medium for both freeing, restricting, and "imprisoning" human creativity – the first true optical "mass medium."

Grau (2003: 56) states that the term "panorama" is used to describe how a panoramic image might be portrayed with the proper orientation on a completely circular canvas. Barker constructed a series of curves on the concave surface of an image using empirical techniques so that the terrain appeared real and undistorted when viewed from a central platform at a certain elevation.

Crowds flocking to the modern city factories toward the end of the 18th century played a significant role in transforming the panorama, an art form of the Industrial Revolution, from an urban art form into a mass medium. In fact, their entrance fees actually helped fund the manufacture of new panoramas. For the first time in history, art and musicians found a mainstream audience. Oetterman (1997: 45) contends that in terms of the subjects it depicted and the way in which it presented them, the panorama was the first art medium to try to meet the artistic needs and wishes of unknown city dwellers.

As a modern mass visual culture arose during the 19th century, the panorama became one of the most famous public spectacles. The first panoramas were massive 360 degree paintings that were mostly 50 feet high and 350 feet across and hung as connected canvases in the internal spaces of cylindrical, domed structures designed specifically for them. These panoramas spread from London and Paris to the United States and then around the world between the late 1700s and the mid-1800s. The main purpose for creating them was to gain support for state policies, such as bringing distant vistas closer and gathering various viewpoints into one organized picture by showing wrap-around views of a city, a famous war, or an exotic destination. Essentially, the

panorama offered a “bigger picture,” an expanded vision that could, more than ever before, capture “more than any ordinary viewpoint could capture, and more than any ordinary representation could contain.”

This prominent 19th-century artistic medium opened the path for the popular mass-media platforms and global visual culture that would become increasingly prevalent over the next century, per Comment (1999: 67). The first panoramas were large framed canvases that were hung across the inner walls of stadium-like public venues to imitate authentic photographs of real locations or activities. Early panoramas that were popular in London and Paris often portrayed these cities as centers of empire and industry and displayed scenes of imperial conquest (Crary, 2002: 18). This shows clearly that pervasive panoramas were a salient urban phenomena.

On the other hand, Grau (2003: 65) says that throughout the 19th century, panoramic photographs not only “reflected” but also “produced” and “naturalized” economic and geopolitical processes. The logic behind industrialization and globalization struck a chord with the ordering principles of panoramic representation, and evolving forms of panoramic representations corresponded to the ongoing and transforming experiences of spatio-temporal interaction and shifting conceptions of socio-political coordination.

Robert Barker’s invention rapidly became a favored medium for art, education, political propaganda, and entertainment, especially in the metropolises of France and England. Military leaders in both countries immediately understood its potential. Napoleon I, a member of Institut de France, recognized the war panorama’s capacity for successful coverage and propaganda: In 1810, during a visit to Thayer’s panorama, he realized that the invention could be used for propaganda if current affairs were presented to the public in a suggestive manner. In the park at Versailles, he intended to build eight rotundas depicting scenes from his wars. If his proposal had

been realized, this would have been the first instance of panoramas being used as permanent monuments to war. There were several examples in later years, such as Anton von Werner's panorama, The Battle of Sedan. Grau (2003: 65) also takes into consideration the panoramas of wars designed for mass viewing as having always been a part of the medium's history.

The battle scene genre accounts for approximately 30% of all panorama paintings in history, which is a very high proportion in comparison to the number of smaller format paintings of the same subject. Grau (2003: 91). The panorama identified itself as a first-class example of "molding political and social history according to the views of official and state circles of the period," with the visualization of contemporary military engagements. Since 1880, Germany has dominated the world of panorama presentation and production. The opening of the Sedan panorama on September 1, 1883, the anniversary of the battle, was a major national and media event.

According to Grau (2003: 101), the specific elements of the underlying message were built on the basis of an illusion in order to canvas public support for military interventions. Von Werner's picture composition, which successfully accomplished this feat, passed into the realm of misinformation. Whether it did so because of idealistic aberration or deliberate falsification is not important.

The Battle of Sedan, one of history's most famous panoramic paintings (Sternberger, 1977: 3), was commissioned by the German government. Grau (2003: 101) mentioned that the government encouraged this particular battle, which was funded by private capital. In light of this panoramic work's propagandistic motives, which were directed at a certain demographic, Oettermann's (1997) depiction of its reception as egalitarian, as a "democratic viewpoint," is unquestionably a reduction that, taken to its logical end, helps to idealize the panorama as a tool. Although his

explanation accurately represents the fact that all tourists have the same perception of the same picture, it is ambiguous why this should be associated with democracy (i.e., popular government). In fact, if the term ‘‘democratic” were used to describe the observer’s status in relation to the medium, there would be no need to address contact, that is, the influence of the observer on the medium and the content it conveys. McLuhan took advantage of the opportunity provided by Vision ‘65 to rehearse his idea of the “global village” and to reiterate the influence that digital media technologies have on “human civilization.” In his inflammatory talk “The Invisible Environment: The Future of an Erosion” (Sutton, 2015: 92), McLuhan (1967: 161-167) advocated identifying the reader as an aggressive participant who would deal with the present “invisible world” of misinformation.

Panopticon for Disciplining the Self

The period that Foucault calls the threshold of political modernity, which corresponds to the end of the 18th and early 19th centuries, is also the period when the human body and its productive power, which is the source of the labor force needed for capitalism to succeed, become the objects of direct economic and political interventions. However, when the old techniques used to make this labor force productive (large factories that exemplify the coercive regulations of institutions such as a prison, correctional center, mental hospital, and the military) became extremely expensive and ineffective, a new technique was required. According to Foucault, this new technique is based on human adoption, personalization, and docility required by capitalist production. Thus, he states that at the end of the 18th century, a brand-new power source emerged in Europe: “disciplinary power.” The method of taming and making this power productive is not based on violence and physical coercion, but rather on imposing certain forms

of subjectivity on people. Not only were different plays produced, with more psychological realism in the characters and the motives behind their actions to meet this new need, but demands were also raised to adapt the stage design to these new features. The bourgeoisie insisted on "seeing things from a new angle," an angle that made all members of the paying public equal. Thus, one could speak of a gradual "democratization" of the audience's point of view.

Jeremy Bentham's panopticon, a new word derived from *pan* (entire) and *opticon* (observe), means "observe the whole." Along with Robert Barker's panorama, these two instruments, both invented in 1787, used strikingly similar visual methods to provide new modes of sensory access, which he claims coalesced and influenced architecture rather than the viewing matter.

The idea behind Bentham's design is the philosophy of controlling the broad masses of the period and deals with a discipline model that encourages the power to establish an auto-control mechanism in their minds and encourage them to do the right thing / desired without showing itself, thereby giving the people the feeling of being constantly watched (Lamb, 2015: 231). As a result, he contends that there is no risk that the panoptic machine's increasing authority will devolve into tyranny, for the disciplinary process will be democratically regulated and continuously open to the great tribunal committee of the world. Bentham was aware of the panoramas that Barker was constructing at exactly the same period. Visitors, occupying the central place, saw a landscape, a city, or a battle unfolding around them. Foucault (1995: 207) claims that the visitors occupied exactly the place of the sovereign point of view.

When Foucault's analysis of the panopticon is regarded, one notes that Oettermann's use of "democratic" with regard to the panorama completely vanishes. The cells in Bentham's model prison are arranged in a panoramatic circle around a central observation tower, which Foucault

dubbed “power’s laboratory.” Prison guards keep a close eye on the inmates behind bars, and this absolute supervision is thought to be the key to their reform. The scene replaces the prisoners in the panorama, but provides little more than an illusionary overall vision to the viewer, who is hermetically locked off from everything beyond the picture. Because if it were not hermetic, there would be no feeling of presence or virtuality. Boundaries between picture and spectator were purposefully removed, albeit within a regulated and organized scenario, in order for the sight to be “indelibly burned on the soul,” as Reichs-Anzeiger put it. Per Grau (2003: 111), the Sedan panorama inverted the condition seen in Bentham’s Panopticon, for in it the spectator is the subject of political control.

Virtual Reality and its Majoritarian Usage

The new alliance of art and technology embodied by VR and its image culture cannot be considered an isolated phenomenon, for it is an integral part of revolutionary developments in the economy and military technology. According to Germany’s Ministry of Economic Affairs, contemporary developments in new information and communications technologies are radically changing both the economic and technological spheres to a degree that is comparable with the transition from the agrarian- to the industrial-based society, with all of the accompanying changes. The computer is transforming entire sectors of the economy, production, planning, administration, military operations, and leisure, as well as rapidly changing virtually all areas of life. The diversity and speed of communication in today’s world is influencing the education system, speeding up and expanding the production of information, and transforming the structures of knowledge. The welfare state and legislature are struggling to keep up with these

developments. In brief, the computer has engineered massive transformations, and the pace is accelerating and showing no signs of slowing down.

This close-knit fabric of economic and technological interests, sensation seeking, and escapism has all but banished the military origins of this technology from the public consciousness. In addition to investments made by the military-industrial complex and the space industry in the early 1990s, those of the electronics and information sectors of civil industry were particularly heavy. Of particular interest were applications for developing prototypes faster; simulating industrial production processes; constructing walk-in simulations of built environments from the past, present, and future; visualizing scientific research results; and simulation-aided research. Today, many commercial companies (from Facebook Oculus to Unity) have tailored their own VR research departments to their specific requirements. Alongside telecommunications, software firms, and the entertainment industry, they also include such traditional industries as automobile manufacturers and civil aviation. Medicine uses the new technological applications in a wide variety of fields. Furthermore, hitherto inaccessible sections of the market are being opened up, and not only in more remote regions, by the introduction of e-commerce. The entertainment sector was the first to develop marketable VR applications. Almost without exception, the leading finance and economics journals have published reports on VR technology, the general drift being that there is hardly an area where this polysensory medium cannot be utilized. As a result, R&D efforts related to virtual computer worlds have become a globe-spanning project[1] (Grau, 2003: 169-173). These unbelievable projects have been developing on a daily basis ever since 1980. New interfaces have been communicating three-dimensional representations using

[1] Such as an audio visual interactive project 6th SENSE combined with Virtual Reality mobile applications with hand drawing methods (see https://martinazelenika.com/portfolio/6th-sense/)

the head-mounted display (HMD) or the more recently created CAVE since the end of the 1980s (Heim, 1998: 26). All in all, VR's rhythm has repositioned itself from the military to the lived environment and incorporated information technologies into daily facilities such as workplaces. In regards to the relationship between humans and their usage of this latest technology, VR reveals illusions that vary from one to another, depending on individual uses. Grau (2003: 17) states that illusion works on two levels: (1) that of the classic function, which is the playful and conscious submission to appearance that is the aesthetic enjoyment of illusion, and (2) temporarily overwhelming one's perception of the difference between image space and reality by intensifying the suggestive image effects and through appearance. In a virtual image, many existing forms of image with acoustic and other elements that appeal to other senses come together. Virtual images can be utilized as a space for modeling and gaining experience. If artificial creatures, agents, are present in the virtual image space, which behave like subjects and react to the observers, the feeling of being inside the image space is even further enhanced. When incorporated into artificial bodies, which are in reality merely technical images, we may even experience certain evocative phenomena that can influence our consciousness. In this way, the senses and communication systems of our flesh-and-blood bodies are able, via hard- and software interfaces, to enter into an exchange with all manner of simulated creatures. The integration of a representation of the observer's own body in the image space, an avatar, is also a means whereby immersion can be enhanced (Grau, 2003: 343-344).

VanDerBeek's Movie-Drome, Evolution, and Minoritarian Art Practice

In the 1960s, expanded cinema artists, avant-garde and experimental filmmakers were dealing with film's structural space and were trying to rescue the film screen from its two dimensional

space. The optical as well as electronic and digital mixture of the cinematic experiences in Stan VanDerBeek's (1927–1984) MovieDromes offered an interactive possibility to the avant-garde movement. MovieDromes, what VanDerBeek calls an "experience machine," provided an interactive communication between the spectators and spectacle and spectator via data transferring system. The idea behind MovieDromes was to give the viewers kinesthetic sensations, thereby freeing them from the physical orientation and creating the immersive feelings of being somewhere else. This was the same idea of many expanded cinema practices in which the viewer's perspective is transformed from a Cartesian perspective to multidimensional perspectives. The Movie-Drome may have opened up the possibility of deterritorialization, but it clearly points to a heightened awareness of privatization and centralized control. The satellite and fiber-optic cable system by which VanDerBeek intended to store and transmit his films was the same system being developed by the US military and government to safeguard its ability to maintain control in the event of a nuclear attack. While VanDerBeek may not have envisioned Movie-Drome functioning as a means of remote social control, it did point to that very possibility. Weibel (2003: 138) says that VanDerBeek was not operating under the guise of complete objectivity, for he employed multiple screens as a way to shift the agency of meaning to the viewer. He wanted the viewers to engage with one another as part of a wider global constituency, rather than stay alone within the privileged realm of the fine arts, by providing an immersive multi-sensory experience. Movie-Drome, designed to link an audience via a telecommunications satellite network rather than Cartesian models of location, may have functioned as a network-based mode of communication and created a special kind of collective audience.

Immersive Interactive Practices & VR of the 1980s-1990s

Digital art began as an extremely costly technology. Today, a multinational network of artists is working to advance virtual worlds in privileged research institutes around the world. The distinct contours of the distinctions between science and art started to crack down thirty years after C. P. Snow first proposed the concept of "two civilizations" (Grau, 2003: 173).

Artificial Nature and Natural Artifice, in Peter Weibel's Future Cinema work, states that immersive work employs 3-D technologies to force viewers to immerse themselves in the plot rather than just seeing it as a sequence of images or a predetermined movie from the outside. Artists have been interactive VR art installations for nearly a decade, as well as simulation technologies like CAVE environments, an immersive device developed by the EVL community in 1991 at the University of Illinois, or Head Mounted Displays (HMDs), developed in 1984 at NASA, based on Ivan Sutherland's (1968) initial ideas and the groundbreaking work of Morton Heilig, the first one to suggest, in 1960, that two miniature TV displays be placed in front of one's eyes. Following earlier experiments with projection screens and real-time computer-generated photographs during the late 1980s, artists such as Jeffrey Shaw, Ulrike Gabriel, Char Davies, and Maurice Benayoun used VR technology during the following decade to create interactive artworks.

In the early 1990s, when lower-cost high-performance computers came on the market, an artist could depict naturalistic three-dimensional bodies with up to 500,000 polygons. Silicon Graphics Workstations introduced the possibility of real-time operations, which also allowed interactive simulations (Grau, 2003: 176).

The new inventions and the mobility of image space from moving panoramas to early VR inventions such as Diaroma, Vitarama, Sensorama led to Heilig's advanced cinematographic

invention: Cineroma. The idea of democratization now became a reality, for it helped viewers free themselves from their stable perspective and position and assume a more interactive and multi-dimensional perspective. Such attempts on the viewer have been tried since painting first appeared. Weibel (2003: 110) says that in the 20th century's interwar period, avant-garde film was initially seen as a spin-off or a by-product of visual art movements like Cubism, Futurism, Suprematism, Constructivism, Dadaism, or Surrealism.

Deleuze (2005) emphasizes that knowledge is the latest Spectacle. Capital is a specific type of information that defines, to a large degree, what Experience is selectively unfolded as information in our time. The cliché regime, which reinforces commonsense and ideological conceptions while denying access to the richness and singularity of Experience, is the standard Image that authority selects from Experience. That Image, which reinforces politics while blocking more complex and diverse forms, is an example of Deleuzian's thinking.

Image, according to Laura Marks (2002, 34-237), is the third level. It's a Peircean Third in that it defines the relationship between First and Second (i.e., Experience and Information). There are two types of images: those that depict Experience explicitly and those that embody Information or Capital. Any image is a selection of Experience unfolding.

Video came of age as an art form only when "upstaged by the standards of the faster, more 'interactive,' and more virtual digital media," writes Marks (2002: 147). Low-quality digital images, such as those of Kamias and the Dogme 95 films, gain renewed aesthetic value (Brown, 2016: 114). Similarly, non-cinema is not an a priori cinema (hence its "liveness," except when scripted), but rather the a priori from which cinema and the cinematic originate. It entails attempting "Vision-in-One," or the opportunity to see everything at once. Moreover, it is not a cinema of disconnection, but one that tries to bridge the differences in order to make the

connections apparent. This liberating Dusselian cinema emancipates cinema from mainstream hegemony and the spectator from Beller's interpretation of cinema's hegemonic philosophy. It is a digitally enabled (non-)cinema in the sense that it is about modern production and distribution methods (Brown, 2016: 127-128).

Most Recent VR Works of *Minoritarian* Viewpoint

We perhaps need to mention the accessibility of VR screenings first. VR screenings have been displayed at film festivals, technology events, and art galleries for free. These free screenings can be thought of as efforts to gain visibility just like a new product that is being advertised. The technology of VR, in this context, is still at its infancy as there are only a handful of impressive and highly acclaimed works present in the literature. Moreover, many VR movies leave the viewers with a sense of disappointment. In addition, highly acclaimed movies are usually not freely accessible. Many of these highly acclaimed movies, such as "Deserted" (Tsa Ming-liang) and "Carne Y Arena" (Inarritu), are screened at festivals to which only members of the film industry are invited. General audiences are left to deal with the critical reviews. This situation has a striking resemblance to the silent-era movies, before the digitalization of the archives, where everyone had access to the critical reviews but no one actually saw the movies. The main reasons behind these circumstances are economics and politics. The development of VR technologies and the production of VR movies are expensive. Just like any expensive technology during its infancy, VR movies are widely accessible to elite professionals in order to create a hype. While a few visionaries still try to use VR as a medium to create impressive works, most of us have not had the chance to see even those. In short, VR movies are just like those of the silent era, for they only document ordinary events in everyday life. Somebody like Melies can

guide us toward a future where VR is used by its full potential to create both realistic experiences and unrealistic fantasies alike.

Deserted from Reality or *Theatre of Life*

The first VR movie we will discuss is "Deserted," the only VR movie of Taiwanese director Tsai Ming-Liang, which made its premiere at the Venice Film Festival in 2017. Although Tsai Ming-Liang studied dramaturgy, he includes very little dialogues in his feature films and places mini-plot dramaturgy or encounters in the structure of his audio-visual narrative. In other words, knows classical dramaturgy very well but has chosen to apply the archi-plot understanding in classical dramaturgy as a mini-plot in the most minor way by taking the singularity of cinema into account. His characters are often either unemployed, homeless, or immigrant workers open to experiences of multiple sexualities with sexual preferences unacceptable in classic dual identities, as in "I Don't Want to Sleep Alone." One common feature of is that all of them are lonely. We usually see their efforts to cope with loneliness, albeit intermittently, throughout the film. His preference to depict lonely but non-patriarchal characters clearly represents his understanding of minor art. In Tsai's films, we watch people try to cope with situations and the tests of their endurance, resistance, and the possibility of other experiences, other types of love, rather than actor performance. The characters experience everything with their bodies in front of the camera. This can be either a sex scene or a scene in which the character eats incessantly. When a director with an international fan base for his slow-paced movies is invited to make a VR movie by the Taiwanese technology giant HTC, he first watches a few VR movies to discover how far the technology has reached and makes the following determination: "You can turn your head in any direction and there'll be something to look at. The viewer is kept busy, the

filmmaker is busy, everyone seems to be busy for no reason" (see https://variety.com/2017/digital/asia/tsai-ming-liang-craft-of-vr-film-making-1202542689/). When he is about to give up after finding the technical results too digital, after seeing the image quality and color saturation in a frame taken from a 360 degree film he accepts the challenge to try his own style in VR. He says: "It was a 360 degree view of a fabric shop. The details of the image were crisp and the colors rich. I was enthralled. It was only a single frame from a VR clip, yet it gave me the sense that I was there in person. I became interested."

"Deserted" is a full 360-degree virtual immersive film and technically a Head-Turn VR (Carne y Arena part 2 - Notes on VR Cinema Design). The duration of the movie, 55 minutes, is extremely long compared to other VR movies. Moreover, it contains no dialogue. While the main character is trying to get rid of an illness, he can neither communicate with his mother nor with a female ghost, who is next door. The only entity he can communicate is a fish. Both women sit directly opposite the protagonist and gaze at him, just like our position in the VR chair. In their different ways, both are of course figures of us, strapped into our own apparatus and seated watching (see https://lwlies.com/festivals/tsai-ming-liang-the-deserted-vr-taiwan-film-festival-london/).

The audience naturally feels like one of the ghosts floating in this story, and this evokes Farocki's concept of "phantom images" about the technical image. In Casetti's words, "the technical image is visual but not always visible, just like the characters and the audience in the movie. In addition, they are like the technical images that remain behind us when we turn our heads and that we cannot see in the present moment but are still digital and virtual there. This allows us to experience a portrait of loneliness in VR style. Only a minor art would bring up a male character who lives alone, cannot communicate, and cannot act in any seemingly relationship or action.

A Far Eastern and non-white director uses major technology, sponsored by HTC and with maximum freedom, has a $1.6 million budget, makes a movie ten times longer than other VR movies. To top all that, almost no action is in sight since the movie is about loneliness.

As we mentioned before, most of us, including the author of these lines, do not have the opportunity to see this movie because that is too costly to screen. There is a similar situation just like in the case of technical image: It is there, it is a visual work but it is not visible to everyone" (see https://variety.com/2017/film/asia/vr-venice-tsai-ming-liang-deserted-1202542656/).

Director argues that VR might be alternatively called the theater of life.

Virtually Present, Physically Invisible

Alejandro G. Iñárritu's interactive virtual reality installation "Carne y Arena" (Virtually Present, Physically Invisible) enables visitors to "enter" the body of a migrant trying to cross the Mexican-American border. Having removed their socks and shoes, the participants feel the sand and heat, experience the thirst and fear felt by real migrants, and come face-to-face with an armed policeman. In effect, they "become" migrants and lose all that protects them: skin color, nationality, wealth, and so on.

This exhibit, a six-and-a-half-minute-long installation, was inspired by the Mexican artist's on-site witnessing of the deaths of 780 migrants after their boat capsized in the Mediteranean. It presents two core elements of a minoritarian viewpoint: overcoming the official ideological narrative, which is totally negative, and obtaining social justice for the migrants.

The narrative is that of migrants being "animals, rapists" (Iñárritu 2018), as well as "illegal," taking American jobs," "criminals," and "carriers of diseases. "Carne Y Arena" tries to counter this by enabling a participant to "stand inside a migrant's shoes" and experience exactly what he

or she does – all except for the actual consequences, for “If you don’t understand, you can’t love” (Raessens, 642 Television & New Media 20(6)).

Casetti and Pinotti consider “Carne Y Arena” as a post-cinema work due to its “unframedness, presentness, and immediateness” (Casetti and Pinotti, 2020: 193). You are there as long as you are allowed, because there is no frame or distance to separate you from the virtual experience of actual migrants. The participants relive their experiences – no sugar coating is provided to make the participant “comfortable,” for the intention is to create understanding and sympathy and thereby disprove the official narrative. Also, once you enter you can only go forward. In other words, you cannot end the experience whenever you want to. It must be endured until it is over.

Bodyless Subjects – As Conclusion

Hsin-Chien Huang, a Taiwanese new media creator, focuses on “issues between aesthetics, humanity and technology.” He contends that “all of the quantum leaps between different disciplines point to the essence of the entanglements between art and technology.” Strongly affected by the links he saw between the software programs while working in the computer game industry and those used in military simulation and training programs, as well as the Columbine (1999) shooting, he began reflecting “on how technology alters humanity.” He eventually returned to Taiwan to “rebuild my profession as a new media artist and my relationship with society.” His recent works focus on “technology as a colonization means” and “how to localize technology.” For example, “Bodyless (2019)” presents a minoritarian viewpoint of the Taiwanese government’s policy of “white terror” to root out “communist spies” during director’s childhood. People were followed, interrogated, detained, and even disappeared for entirely new “crimes” concocted by government officials. No appeals were allowed (taken from 1-

www.storynest.com/2_cv.php?lang=en) During this time, Huang states that "human qualities were simplified and quantified by the ruling class." Thus the participant of this VR project, transformed into the ghost of a dead political prisoner, has several experiences during Taiwanese folk religion's "Ghost Month," when the ghosts visit their families. He employs folk culture's memories of tragic heroes who become gods, spiritual symbols, newspaper clippings, and childhood memories based on his now-elderly mother's stories to form what he remembers of "a rich spiritual world interwoven with nature." In his opinion, "a mechanical force starts to break down this world and eventually reduces human forms and memory to simple geometrical shapes that the technologies can easily process." His message is clear: "Governments are now using emerging digital technologies (e.g., digital surveillance, big data and AI) to monitor and control people." After all, it is quite easy for military drone pilots located thousands of miles away to kill "just a few pixels on a screen" – individual human beings located in Iraq and Iran. He also notes former President Trump's use of Twitter to convey his policy decisions.

Huang contends that animation enables artists to share and preserve their feelings and memories. "Bodyless" is his attempt to share the stories of his family that his mother told him when he was just a child. He believes that such new technologies will enable people to "start to remember our past through different means, and that will affect how we experience things." Clearly, such artwork can also cause viewers to question the government's official narrative. Huang seeks to "animate the viewer's feeling through interaction," reveal "the parallel between the living and the spiritual worlds," and expose the government's lies. In his interview with TechvangArt, he states: "*Because in the old days, the government used its power, and the military police to make people obedient. Now the governments use the new technology, artificial intelligence to change our minds. So this is what I try to say in Bodyless: Have we really escaped from the old days or*

are we now living in a Brave New World ...?"" and "*But I think now our memories are being changed, that there is no truth anymore. ... As a professor, I always try to teach students more technology because I think that it will give them a chance to fight back*" [italics in the original] (see https://youtu.be/PV8YVVsQGsM).

In response to a question of how he tried to communicate his experience during martial law, Huang mentioned his concerns with "the new technology": the ability for large-scale government surveillance, the simplification of human quality, a distant drone pilot viewing pixelated Iraqis or Iranis and deciding whether to kill them, "a convergence between the old ruling government and the new technology" that is "all against humanity," and the increased spread and amount of government censorship (see https://voicesofvr.com/822-dreams-symbolic-language-of-vr-dream-logic-metaphor-cultural-heritage-of-bodyless/).

Iordanova argues that one cannot overlook the significance of this medium of cultural dissemination, as an increasing number of viewers migrate to the internet for cross-border cultural consumption. These vernacular yet lively channels of circulation are only expected to proliferate as the influence of cyberspace word-of-mouth advertising grows in the form of new virtual societies. As online word-of-mouth and blog-based film commentary increasingly become the make-or-break subject of marketing campaigns, marketing tactics will shift dramatically. It has the ability to boost a small independent feature as well as derail a multimillion-dollar production (2010: 36).

O'Sullivan states that art practice would be engaged in a relentless fight against the state's "ideological veils." If, on the other hand, opposition is seen as dominant and the state apparatus as secondary (as capturing this "life"), one is engaged in affirming an ontologically prior moment. This is the transition from critique to innovation, or, more precisely, the place of

critique within creativity (2005: 8). Conventional cinema is lacking the "'people,"' and that minor cinema, or what Deleuze refers to as "new political cinema," can figure "'people to come" Deleuze (2005: 208).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brown, W. (2016). Non-Cinema: Digital, Ethics, Multitude. *Film-Philosophy,* 20, 104–130.

Casetti, F. & Pinotti, A. (2020). Post-cinema Ecology. In Chateau, D., and J. Moure (eds), *Post-cinema: Cinema in the Post-art Era* (pp. 193-218). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Comment, B. (1999). *The Panorama.* London: Reaktion Books.

Crary, J. (2002). Géricault, the Panorama, and Sites of Reality in the Early Nineteenth Century. *Gray Room,* 9 (Autumn), 5-25.

Deleuze, G. (2005). *Cinema 2: The Time Image*. London: Continuum.

Foucault, M. (1995). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by A. Sheridan. New York: A Division of Random House, Inc.

Grau, O. (2003). *Virtual Art: from Illusion to Immersion.* MIT Press.

Heidegger, M. (1977). The Question Concerning Technology. *Environmental Ethics,* 1-14.

Heim, M. (1998). *Virtual Realism*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hillis, K. (1999). *Digital Sensations: Space, identity, and embodiment in virtual reality*. The University of Minnesota Press.

Iordanova, D. (2010). Rise of the Fringe: Global Cinema's Long Tail. In Dina Iordanova, David Martin-Jones, and Belén Vidal (Eds), *Cinema at the periphery* (pp. 23-45). Wayne State University Press.

Lamb, J. M. (2015). *The Architecture of Punishment: Jeremy Bentham, Michael Foucault 2 and the Construction of Stateville Penitentiary, Illinois.* Lewis University John M. Lamb Collection, Accessed May 14, 2021.

Marks, L. U. (2002). *Touch, Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media*. Minneapolis / London: University of Minnesota Press.

McLuhan, M. (1967). The Invisible Environment: The Future of an Erosion. *Perspecta, 11,* 161-167. Published by: The MIT Press.

Oetterman, S. (1997). *The Panorama: History of a Mass Medium*. New York: Zone Books.

O'Sullivan, S. (2005). Notes Towards a Minor Art Practice. *Drain, 2*(2).

Sternberger, D. (1977). Panorama of the 19th Century. *The MIT Press, 4,* 3-20. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/778476.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Aad9e92f4d2b02db00a47622379a0d2eb

Sutton, G. (2015). *The Experience Machine: Stan VanDerBeek's Movie-Drome and Expanded Cinema*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: The MIT Press.

Weibel, P. (2003). *Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary After Film*. Cambridge: The MIT Press.