## LOG:: IN

Provide a username and a password

What am I currently working on? An approximation of where I arrived after working with video for more than two-thirds of my life?

I thought of a personal opening.

My aim or urge is to discuss the aesthetics and practice of video today. But I see myself only preparing a sketch, an approximation: scattering seeds in combining notes and logs. What is the urge?

Video is not simply video. There is Reels, TikTok, platforms, streaming, YouTube and FaceTime, Netflix, Disney, Amazon, MUBI, Gain and BlueTV, ultra-short, limited series, one-minute Turkish vertical soap operas, Chinese ultra shorts, scrolling feeds, camera roll, drones, social and surveillance, Face Recognition, let alone TV and cinema. Or Video AI.

Things look at me. This is a fact. We are changing.

At the 2024 IDFA Documentary Film Festival in Amsterdam, in a conversation on stage, the Romanian filmmaker Radu Jude pointed out that filmmakers need to finally *start taking TikTok seriously*.

To me, TikTok is like the beginning of cinema. It’s like Lumiére. Filmmakers are in trouble because this is ahead of us. If you are serious about filmmaking, you have to be serious about [TikTok].[[1]](#footnote-1)

Producers face Influencers, and Influencers face creators—another economy of video powered by algorithms, large language models and micro-fragmentation. Videos created and edited with texts and effects to stand out and sparkle in the audiovisual ocean, the never-ending expanding universe, ready for monetization with ads and subscriptions, community-forming live events and streaming, many to many, mum and dad, and friends of friends with on-demand video analytics, privacy and access management in a streamlined workflow.

What are we doing? Prompting. Video generators and their promoters, in great numbers by the end of 2024, highlight *a panda riding the subway, an alien smoking a cigarette, a paper boat navigating a stormy sea, and a golden statue winking at you*.[[2]](#footnote-2) Eye catching. Is this it?

People started to complain that the latest smartphones, like Apple’s iPhone 16 in 2024, produce images that are *far too detailed and ‘clinical’.* Weren’t the early HTC and BlackBerry Curve phones better with their *organic* video quality?

The retro-analogue boom continues. Netflix tries sending out VHS tapes, and Spotify offers audio cassettes as an alternative to streaming. Both are soon hit by an avalanche of complaints from younger users, unfamiliar with the concept of rewinding, who protest that the tapes will only play once.[[3]](#footnote-3)

In December 2024, it’s not just nostalgia and crystal clear imagery. With all this video around, life itself is already a movie. We are the main characters, the leading actors in our movies. Video culture causes us to view ourselves in the third person. Platform strategies support a feeling of *life-as-a-movie* for users.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Being constantly observed and constantly observing others, observing everything and anything, generates a feeling of dissociation. We are standing outside, controlling, directing, designing, and writing the script for our activities, documented through our endless video productions.

Life as a theater actualized as life as a movie, begging for audiences. Worlds are built around main characters, plots, and aura. Terminologies are popularized on social media platforms—the fictionalization of daily life through platform design, For-You-Pages, Algorithms, likes and click-counting, for massive, mediocre content creation.[[5]](#footnote-5)

The creator economy produces video as a mass product at incredible speeds, making more people see a single video clip than any cultural product of cinema ever at the classic box-office. We are beyond Andy Warhol’s claim that everyone will be famous for 10 minutes. Seconds make smiles for more seconds to come.

Instability.

**Rewind ;-)**

I call *video* moving images and all kinds of *audiovisual* material. *Film* is the old fashion *moving pictures*—*the photoplay*. *Moving images* is, as terminology, paradoxically static. It implies image definitions that very well needed to overrule if not pointed to wooden frames and glued to walls. Stick it! Tag it!

Godard, in his early film years, left visual clues referencing art on the walls of his films’ internal scenery—a photo here, a postcard there in the spaces of living of his main characters. Volker Pandenburg wrote about this in one of the best books on cinema in the 2000s.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Because moving images are no longer necessarily pictures, but also because images are more constructs of multiples, *video* remains, as a term, dynamic; it references movement and energy. Video is online, networked and expanded—light in movement.

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This essay is a compilation of notes and logs—a log book. These logs are entries in a literal sense—each is an entry point, and one can jump from one entry to another. Logs are fragments, pieces of an assemblage. They can be montaged to each other, *assembled*, in many different combinations and orders.

I traverse the field of aesthetics, pointing towards a status of instability with pleasure. The essay's text will travel many paths; some might not seem to converge, and fragments may feel floating, but I will try to clarify the connections as best as I can at this moment of writing. I hope to open some doors to further in-depth investigations, discussions and studies.

This essay’s epigraph, a line from Goethe’s poem *West-Eastern Divan,* references a mode of writing that is more ephemeral, spontaneous, instantaneous, inspirational, and imaginative, rather than certain traditional theoretical or *frozen* reflections of storage media forms marked by hierarchical orders of the literary, by defined, well-known rhythms, academic or artistic. It aims to deliver intensity and to preserve the fleeting aspects of the mediated things in passage.

Pictures, not letters, are drawn in the sand or dust, and with a wood stick, generating a blurred visibility that transcends time. It is the energy of the writing that creates an electrifying, long-distance effect. An inscription in a place makes the passage significant.

*Each particle of dust carries a unique vision of matter, movement, collectivity, interaction, affect, differentiation, composition, and infinite darkness.*[[7]](#footnote-7)

Dusty books on shelves, manuscripts in archives recalling fairy tales, deserted places, attics, and dunes.[[8]](#footnote-8) The house of Gaston Bachelard,[[9]](#footnote-9) the museum of Orhan Pamuk,[[10]](#footnote-10) and the predictions of Italo Calvino[[11]](#footnote-11) crystalize in the invisible dream-like sphere of imagination.

I am looking at what makes the dust move.

The German term *Anschauung* might convey the meaning of *looking at -* looking at something. *Anschauung* or *Betrachtung* generates a reflective environment of more depth. There is something to look at, but not just a quick look; it is a look unfolding over time and descriptively, from the details to the totality of the phenomenon or the thing, but to more than the idea. *Anschauung* emphasizes the process of looking towards or at the thing of interest. It is the act. It is action and practice.

But what is it that makes the dust move? I see light.

Kazimir records with his camera and then watches his videos. He says this is the way he sees it. The first YouTube video was *Me at the Zoo*![[12]](#footnote-12) That was 2005.

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**Yoghurt Boxes**

About forty years ago, the idea of an at-home information processing machine grew out of a garage; so goes the legend. Apple was born and made lots of money by selling plastic boxes, which a Turkish friend of mine smilingly called*Yoghurt Boxes* cause of the similarity between the Macintosh and boxes used for yoghurt in the early 80s in Turkiye.

Around this time, Yoghurt-box-time, two other guys discovered that you could sell long rows of code, strings of ones and zeros, rather than boxes with electronics. Microsoft's operating system for personal computers came on a disk and gave us the ability to manipulate, at home, all the box’s strings of ones and zeros.[[13]](#footnote-13)

The machines and their operating systems got more and more complex but also compressed, flattened, and merged with other machines and digital tools to communicate, record, and reproduce images and sounds, movies and television, all coded and algorithmically processed data, culminating in the all-in-one object we call the smartphone—a companion always with everyone and always connected. Seeing and speaking.

It is a simple piece of glass with a coated electronic back and a battery to keep alive VIDEO to look at. The fairy tale continues with a seeing, speaking and showing machine demanding touch, occupying sensorial space, and canceling out.

**Online Video**

With the smartphone, online video is everywhere all at once. Video itself is ubiquitous, unquestionable and unquestioned. This much has been noted many times before.[[14]](#footnote-14) Video is elementary to all aspects of contemporary, technology-driven life, from entertainment and communication to education and marketing. Video is multifaceted, from personal communication to encompassing visual storytelling, interactive experiences, personalization, live streaming on various platforms, and human-machine relations and interactions. Online video has spread to virtually all communication apps, with people constantly creating and sharing video content to prove their existence. It is an integral part of modern communication, shaping how we interact, express ourselves, and consume content in the smartphone era. As I wrote before in *Video Spheres*[[15]](#footnote-15) and *Video Theory*,[[16]](#footnote-16) video is an un-discussable companion of the everyday, an obvious attachment to a range of practices not necessarily related to screening, presenting or communication. It is essentially a relation and a relative without being named so. Rather than a kind of object, video is an appearance. It could be a definition. Operational. Expanded.

Video reflects the immediacy of life itself, the desire to overcome death through memory and replay.

Of course, underlying and motivating the essay is a question: *What is video?* The question is meant to reference the historical work of Andre Bazin and his collection of essays *What is cinema*.[[17]](#footnote-17) And yes, this suggests, at first anyhow, that cinema is an ancestor or at least a possible close relative of the idea and object in question.

Aren’t these moving images? The very question suggests difference: the one, nostalgic, still about narration and storytelling, a perfect embodiment of the image (which, in fact, is falling apart, unstable, left in tatters after its deconstruction and tech treatment); the other, simply everything and anything.

Video and the question *what* create a vector, which traverses various environments and formulates a path of exploration from the moving image as an electronic construct and signal (now built by code) towards the embedding of simulated cinematic forms, and further still to the multiple applications of images, or, more reflectively, towards seeing video as the crystallization of time.

Cinema: frozen photographic images, chemically fixed crystals to be played to build syntactical relationships, constructing narrative conditions, embedding its ending through its conditioned form and aesthetics—light captured to be freed.

Media in the digital world is hyper-fragmented. Ultra-short videos dominate social media consumption. In our daily lives, we not only touch video screens (our smartphones); the video itself touches us through our devices.

The uniqueness of video, developing from the history of electromagnetic signals, dismisses the distinction between analog and digital. It helps to create the fragmented media platform structures built around us by technology capital, our consumption, our surveilled behaviors, and automated likes, generating subjectivity in *electric seeing*.[[18]](#footnote-18)

Video can shape our beliefs and perceptions and reflect and amplify them. As such, it has become a key battleground in debates over truth, authenticity, and representation. Emerging technologies like AI, blockchain, and the metaverse are simple transformative pathways to whatever unknown.

Video in expanded form has been woven and dissolved into the very fabric of our digital lives.

**Shiny Things**

Early film theory saw the screen as a window to another world. Today, the vast amount of online video creates a constantly changing *ocean* of moving images. Traditional film theories based on cinematic referencing may need to be revised to understand this new reality. Moving images are not just simple pictures flowing in time to build narrative structures, but instants and experiences, movement and duration through a signal affecting eyes, ears, and hands.

Online video has blurred the lines, the borders between categories of cinema, film, media, television, photography, moving and still images, sound, and music. Massive amounts of video data exist online and are layered in multiple chains stacked on each other, creating a complex network of meaning, expression and experience. Machine learning and algorithms are crucial in navigating this world in its complexity. All of which calls for new methods of understanding.

With Geert Lovink, we wrote about the totality and power of online video and its aesthetics and political economy, which differ significantly from film and television.[[19]](#footnote-19) Online video implies, from the moment of recording, extreme availability, mobility, and algorithmic processing. Images—blocks of light data—are no longer stand-alone, but are classified, measured, rendered, tagged, and automatically processed to optimize for *algorithmic beauty already in the basic image-making process*.

An aesthetic appeal might arise from simple patterns—structures or visual elements by mathematical algorithms or computational processes—and might influence our perception of beauty, rendering a normalization and distortion through social media and targeted advertisements of what was ungraspable and vivic to describe before and everyones personal preference.

DOVE’s campaign *Real Beauty in the age of AI* refers to and acknowledges the impact of generative image algorithms on imagination and the representation of *beauty,* presenting a guided *Prompt Playbook*.[[20]](#footnote-20)

Just as modern art finally seemed poised to escape the force of representation, GenAI tools like Midjourney, Stable Diffusion and DALL E in 2023 gave everyone the incredible ability to create very fast, high quality images, expanding to an imaginary world, transporting biases, raising ethical concerns, and foregrounding the over-sexualization of the female body, a lack of diversity, non-inclusivity and the reflection of narrow definitions of beauty. Either in the datasets used to train AI models or the language used to describe influence the output, generating an increasing problem, where women are not free anymore in their daily preferences.

Single photographs have been abandoned with smartphones, as computational photography combines multiple images with sensory data to render a precise, studio-like and aesthetically appealing look. This process is only possible if the image is converted to machine-readable text (code), facilitating online image identification, discovery, retrieval, misuse, exploitation, and dissemination. Smartphones have transformed image production, where images are no longer standalone, instant records of a lost moment, but are processed, classified, and optimized through computational photography techniques and *beautification*. Technology acknowledges change: a series of images, a moment needed to define chiaroscuro, the art of light and shadow, in order to overcome the scary frozen death of the single instant.

Online Video is neither photographic nor cinematographic, but a modular data scan to build gestures, signals, forms of speech, moods, temperatures, and climates. It reflects a world defined on frequency and built out of algorithmic belief, as fragmented live video images from drones, satellites, and cameras combine with search algorithms. This cultural practice transcends traditional boundaries.

Online Video isn't merely passive consumption; it's a participatory practice that allows one to express oneself and *connect*. As both product and event on a digital algorithmic automated assembly line, it extends automation beyond production to consumption and spectatorship. Online Video develops bodily intimacies; people have intimate relationships with networks and dominant platforms, with an ever-growing ocean of data.

Still, there needs to be a theoretical toolset.

Any theoretical approach is marginal. A canonical text for this moment remains to be written. We need a critical lens and a theoretical framework to understand the complexities generated now and their impact on contemporary media and life.

Online Video is an essential defining element, close to forms of life, and should be described as a cultural practice. The participatory nature of this practice demands a reevaluation of both the aesthetics and political economy of video.

Video transcends space and aims to experience something representable less as an image than a social process: an appreciation of impermanence for its own sake. It also fosters a unique intimacy with technology—an intimacy that necessitates critically examining online Video's role in shaping our perception of the world.

We need a deeper understanding of Video as a operative, transformative force, the elan vital (Bergson) of contemporary culture.[[21]](#footnote-21)

We need to better recognize the multifaceted nature of Video if we are to appreciate its cultural, technological, and societal implications.

We need to acknowledge its vitality in terms of its ability to capture and convey the world around us, to see similarities between its creative and dynamic energy and that which animates things and drives them towards growth and evolution, creating complexities and expanding self-organizing systems.

We need to acknowledge Video’s ability to captivate, surprise and convey meaning—ephemeral, but also often pointless.

**A New Barbarism, Positive**

Gene Youngblood suggests that technology allows us to create new worlds through new languages. Online Video, with its emphasis on personal expression and connection, has the potential to be that new language, paving the way for a new heaven on earth. To do this, to use the potential and the energy and overcome the generated status quo, we need to be the barbarians knocking at the gates of Rome.

Barbarism here is not associated with destruction and violence. Following Walter Benjamin’s notion of *positive barbarism,* it means a renewal, a kind of cultural *starting over* or clearing away of established traditions and norms.[[22]](#footnote-22)

This is a call to action.

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The notes and logs, or logbook-like chapters, collected here are about theory as practice and practice as theory, video practice or audiovisual practice, the practice of moving image signals and the practice of sound, audio - Means simply the practice of recording and transmitting, variations of time, at the same time or at some time, including anytime, act and event, the instant as life itself, reproduction, replay, but also the generation of new and non-human in togetherness, the power of Video and the responsibility of form.

The attempt is to capture here in written form something approximating visual-based thinking in movement, to avoid sticking with images, to circle and spiral around them, moving from association to association, spherically, all towards the pleasure of Video.

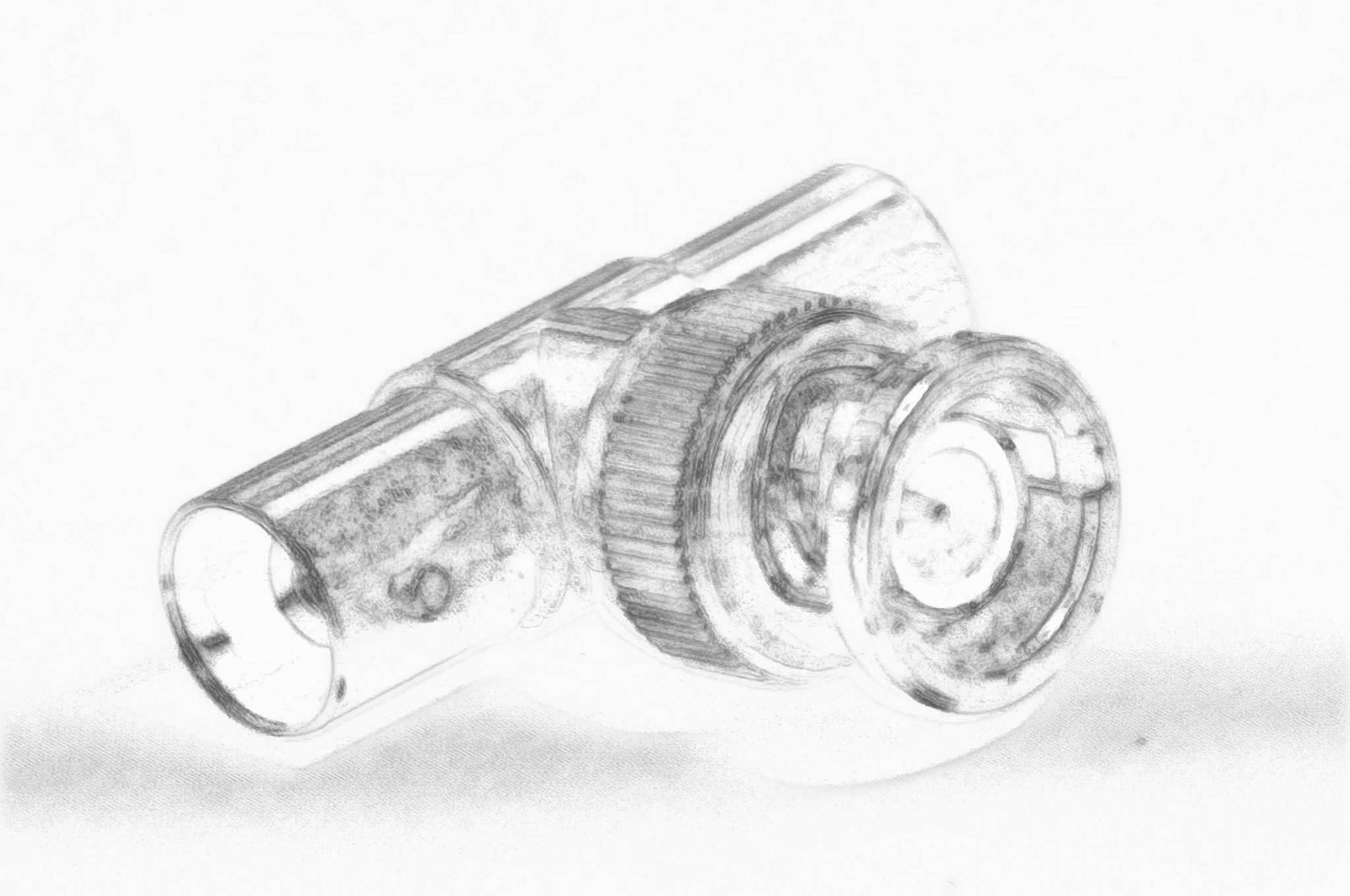


Fig. 1 ARTEFACT

Obviously an artifact, i.e., man-made and not a geological relic, round-shaped tubular, composite object (made of different components (?)); apparent use of various metals or metal alloys (mainly grayish-white, i.e., a possible high-tin copper alloy, lead or even dome-plated or natural silver, if more recent vanadium-containing iron, chromium, zinc or similar possible, digestion can only bring about an X-ray fluorescence analysis); in addition, use of copper or gold-containing material (pin at the end of the flange (?)). In the inner part of the flange (?), visible corrosion residues (?). Mechanically regularly applied, revolving lamellar pattern; whether parts of it are movable cannot be verified on the basis of the image.

- Dr. Thomas Zimmermann

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