

Dan Graham Past Future/Split Attention//1972

Two people who know each other are in the same space. While one person predicts continuously the other person's future behaviour, the other person recounts (by memory) the other's past behaviour.

Both performers are in the present, so knowledge of the past is needed continuously to deduce future behaviour (in terms of causal relation). For one to see the other in the present (attention) there is a mirror reflection or closed figure-eight feedback/feed-ahead loop of past/future. One person's behaviour reciprocally reflects/depends upon the other's, so that each one's information of his moves is seen, in part, as a reflection of the effect that his own just-past behaviour has had in reversed tense, as perceived from the other's view of himself. For instance, the expectation of the person predicting the other one's behaviour may be thwarted if the other person deliberately alters the course of his future behaviour and establishes an alternate or negative series of actions. However, unconsciously (conscious to an outside observer in a longer span of time) he may perform as predicted, but in a displaced or altered sequence of responses which reflect his reaction to the reaction of the other, to his projecting a 'past' identity upon them. Or he may be projecting the behaviour that the other person is anticipating from him onto the other person's past, trying to affect that person's future predictions, and so on. (As part of the thinking process in terms of time continuum of cause and effect, the observer, in dealing with what he sees, extrapolates from the observed's past behaviour projected in a line to the future.) For the performance to proceed, a simultaneous, but doubled, attention of the first performer's 'self' in relation to the other (object) – the other's impressions – must be maintained by each performer. This affects cause and effect directionality, as does the discrepancy in time between words as linear projections and the very different (but also linear) sequential direction of behaviour. As videotape is a continuum (unlike film, which is discontinuous, an analytic re-construction) with separate sound (verbal) and visual tracks, it is an ideal medium for presenting this sequence.

Dan Graham 'Past Future/Split Attention' (1972); first published in *Dan Graham: Théâtre*, ed. Anton Herbert (Ghent: De Appel, 1978) n.p.