A cine-camera films an event on a University campus in Ohio, USA. The scene filmed, almost by chance, in conditions not conducive to rational operation, happens at a pace hardly permitting accurate exposure or focus. The information recorded in the emulsion is urgent: it is processed and put into the hands of an American TV network or News Agency which transforms the image in the film frames into electric signals later beamed at an antenna on a satellite orbiting the earth. The satellite passes on the signals to a tracking station in the South of England and electrons are 'piped' to a recorder which duly notes the facts on a magnetic tape.

That evening, the message is re-transmitted as part of a BBC news broadcast to be detected by a TV receiver; information is decoded and divided among three guns in its cathode ray tube. They spurt out streams of electrons which excite, to varying intensities, spots distributed evenly in triads over the surface of the tube. Red, blue and green dots blink as they are scanned.

Staring at the screen is a still camera. Still, until with a sudden snap it gulps the moving picture (if it was 8 mm originally 16 frames per second scanned 25 times per second, a gulp equalled 2 frames scanned 3 times). What does the subject feel buried in a layer of gelatine in the darkness? 'There is no known way to detect a latent image in a photographic emulsion except the process of development.' Out of the chemicals into the light another, this time random, mesh of coloured particles tells the story. The same message is there - the tone of voice is new, a different dialect, another syntax; but truly spoken.

The two and a quarter square transparency now confronts a process camera to be sliced and layered. One slice carries no magenta, one no cyan, one no yellow, another slice holds in reverse the tonal values of all colours. Different times of exposure through these separation negatives produce different positives which when holding back varying amounts of light from an emulsion on a nylon screen make some areas of mesh open and leave others closed. Fifteen such screens are used to print pale transparent tints on paper. Fifteen layers of pigment; a tragic chorus monotonously chanting an oft repeated story. In one eye and out the other.

Cover image: Richard Hamilton's typescript for "Kent State" (1970)

In 1970, the late British Pop artist Richard Hamilton coolly recounted this chain of events in order to tease out the implications of his 15-layer silkscreen print, *Kent State*.

He had set up a photographic camera in front of his TV set at home, and over the course of a week of evenings waited patiently for an image to suggest itself as source material for further work. The camera had already snapped a number of exposures from a variety of sports, entertainment, and current affairs programs before footage of the shootings by National Guardsmen of students at Kent State University in Ohio (during a protest against the US military's Cambodian Campaign) was screened on the news on Monday, May 4. The frame Hamilton finally developed shows the top half of the body of one of the shot students prostrate on the ground, head turned towards the amateur cine-camera that originally recorded the moment.

Given the gravity of the event, Hamilton deliberated, but anyway resolved to press ahead and make use of the shot — the questionable "arty treatment" of which, he supposed, might at least serve as a lasting indictment. In the screenprint that emerged several channels of transmission (and 15 layers of ink) later, Hamilton made sure to leave the curved, distorted edges of the cathode ray display within the black surround of his photo of the screen. He also positioned the rectangular shot on the left hand side of the printed sheet to mimic the off-center screen typical of that era's TV sets. The image is thus "framed" five times over in the final print: first by the original cine-camera, second by the television, third by Hamilton's photo-camera, fourth by the implied TV on the screenprint, fifth by the printed sheet itself — plus a sixth if you include the frame that encases the print when hung on a wall.

Hamilton's procedural account stops short, too, of listing itself as the latest in the line of transmission — the perpetuation and degeneration of the image as representation now transposed to text; not to mention its carrier, a typewritten A4 sheet; nor the scan of a photocopy of that original sheet in a plastic hole-punched sleeve on the page previous to the one your eye is now scanning, which you either downloaded as a PDF and are reading in the form of assembled pixels of light on an LCD screen of some description, or as laser-or inkjet-printed carbon on paper, or maybe lithographically reproduced as part of the hard copy edition of this issue; and finally in the precarious form of the apprehension of this entire 45-year-long process you now carry in your mind.

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