IMITARI – TIMEBOX (Essay by Sebastjan Leban)

How are we to break down the reality of contemporary society marked by globalisation and conditioned by continuous technological modernisation? What will be the new revolution of the visible, and what tools are we to develop in order to be able to read and analyse the ever more complex processes of its representation? Development does not only imply the technological progress of society, but also the modernisation of all its segments. As stated by Beller, cinema, television, video, computers and the Internet represent deterritorialized factories in which we, as spectators or users, work. Therefore, in the economy of the visible, looking connotes working. The major contribution to this shift was made by cinema, which, through its cinematic mode of production, transformed the perception of time, reality and fiction, and changed the production process of labour proper.

According to Beller, today the imaginative function is already inherent in perception, which is in turn completely subjected to the conditions of capitalist production and reproduction. The cinematic mode of production and consequently production through new media have brought about a crucial transformation (in the classical sense of the biopolitics of the State) in relation to the control and regulation of life as well, which is now joined by the biopolitics of capital. Today, Foucault’s paradigm of biopolitics, its reinstatement and the methods of its implementation must be upgraded by Mbembe’s paradigm of necropolitics, i.e., the politics of the deregulation of life. While biopolitics involves the regulation of life, necropolitics, through regulation and production of death, deregulates life. However, biopolitics and necropolitics are not diametrically opposed, but, on the contrary, constantly mutually complement and upgrade each other through the imperialism of circulation. Therefore, today we are faced with a crucial transformation of the interrelation between the control and regulation of life and death. In other words, the prefixes *bio* and *necro* point to the control of life and its reproduction and the production of death, respectively, although we should not forget that both paradigms include the regulation of death and life at one and the same time. As a result, biopolitics not only regulates and controls life, but, through the production of life, regulates and produces death as well. While necropolitics, in addition to regulating and controlling death, regulates life. Their ontological difference resides precisely in their (re)(de)regulation. Control and regulation thus represent the fundamental elements in the construction of the contemporary world and society.

Cinema has not only altered the mode of capitalistic (re)production, but has also contributed significantly to the mediation of new forms of regulation and control. It has become a means of the system to implement bionecropolitics. Cinema involves a material practice taking place at the global level, where capital has taken advantage of the role and function of the image for its unlimited fluctuation. Historically, cinema has thus become a means for the reorganisation of labour and a machine for the production of value. As stated by Žižek, cinema is the ultimate pervert art that doesn’t give you what you desire, but tells you how to desire. Or to rephrase, capital, through the system of production of images (in the sense of the cinematic mode of production), creates the need to desire, which secures capital’s perpetual reproduction.

The project *Imitari – Timebox* addresses the question of the function of image in relation to time and movement characteristic of Deleuze’s paradigm of movement-image time-image. Through the analytical apparatus of photography, Radovič places the spectator in the role of the one who (de)constructs each set. The point is not only to build a code for a visual interpretation that allows us to analyse singular shots making up the set (both in reality and fiction), but to activate the spectator in the very act of cutting performed by Radovič himself in the exhibited works. The characteristic film cutting thus becomes a medium for the construction of the photographic work. Radovič transforms the process of the film medium into the photographic medium and vice versa. We are thus displaced from the state of watching into the process of photograph construction, with ourselves forming a constitutive part. As spectators, we are placed in an in-between space consisting of a camera placed within the *camera obscura* and of the painting of *Grand Canyon*. The act of recording chosen by Radovič as a basis for his work *Decisive Moment* becomes the result of an active collective performance. The strategy of participatory art, the artistic result of which is the interaction between the performer and spectators, is in this case enhanced by the technical moment of the construction of a photographic snapshot. In the very moment that we are being recorded by the camera, the real time image of us is projected onto an empty gallery wall as a phantasm or parallel reality, as a reproduction of capital production. The purpose is not only to emphasize the parallelism of existence of fiction and reality, but also to analyze the relation between image, time and movement precisely through the defragmentation of a video recording. The final result is the montage of the photograph that Radovič obtains by way of cutting individual video clips from the exhibition opening, making us, the spectators, take on an active role in the construction of the work as such. Recording as a performative act becomes a photograph as an artefact.

As argued by Deleuze, cutting is the determination of the shot, and the shot, the determination of the movement which is established in the closed system between elements or parts of the set. In such a way, Radovič uses photography as the medium for the analysis of film narration and the cinematic mode of production, dissecting at one and the same time society and the processes of production through which this last is being shaped. According to Deleuze, film cannot be defined as moving pictures to which movement is added, but rather as an intermediate image to which movement is inherent. Every single element within the set is endowed with its own movement, and, when put together, these elements constitute the paradigm movement-image time-image. Radovič’s questioning of this very paradigm through the capacity of defragmentation of the photographic medium opens up new ways of interpreting and understanding the analogue and the digital where time, image and movement are caught between the reality of our fiction and the fiction of our reality.

This very relation represents the key to the interpretation of the work *Frankfurt, Times Square and Skopje*. In this last, Radovič breaks down one second of film into 24 frames. We are thus presented with a shift of Deleuze’s paradigm movement-image, while being confronted at the same time with that invisible part that constitutes a single shot. In this case, that part is the sequence which is motionless, frozen, static. However, what is involved is not only the cutting of a sequence and its arrangement into a collage or assemblage (not even a digital one), but also the breaking down of its internal relations. As spectators of the contemporary world, we possess a memory to which the digital mode of production is inherent. Therefore, we are not innocent spectators coming upon photography or film for the first time, but already have a filmic and photographic memory, meaning that we are capable of developing completely new relations within a photographic shot. This is precisely Radovič’s purpose: to force us through the linearity of movement-image to use the nonlinearity of the time-image.

Radovič’s questioning of the role and function of the spectator, what is going on with him/her and what is the object of his/her contemplation, constitutes the additive element, which allows for the further development of photography. The act of watching is the key to the understanding of the spectator’s function within the economy of the visible and cultural industry: The spectator who is not merely a passive user but above all a potential political subject able to interpret the visual codes of mediation and to produce critical thinking. The spectator as a subject, as a member of the contemporary proletariat who is not working in a factory behind a conveyor belt, but is operative within the economy of the visible, living with a different speed – the cinematic one. As a result, the new field of capitalist exploitation becomes a new field of struggle. In both cases, however, the spectator is of key importance, since watching involves not only working, but also contains the emancipative moment that enables the formation of new ideas and brings about changes.

References:

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