

PROCESS: IN MEDIA RES
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“Avant-Garde Cinema as Media Archaeological Praxis”

Abstract

This paper will examine the ways in which the works of avant-garde filmmakers correspond to new research methodologies within the emergent discipline of media archaeology. Through reconsiderations of obsolete, outdated, archival, and even imaginary technologies, media archaeological practices seek to expand discourses via a process-oriented lens, resituating forms of historical scholarship as performative and critical arenas for non-linear narratives, inter-media relations, and new spatio-temporal understandings. In a fashion similar to Jussi Parrika’s observation that media archaeological excavations ultimately “are meant to elaborate our current situations,” this paper will explore how the works of three contemporary Canadian experimental filmmakers (all of whom are members of the Toronto-based Loop Collective) draw on historical materials and practices to illuminate contemporary media environments: Kelly Egan’s *c: won eyed jail* (2004), which re-contextualizes discarded 35mm family photographs in a film-quilt deconstructing the nature of texts and the contemporary acceleration of images; Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof’s *fugitive l(i)ght* (2005), which utilizes archival footage of Loïe Fuller’s Serpentine Dance to comment on the effects of electric environments upon lived bodies; and Stephen Broomer’s *Pepper’s Ghost* (2013), which reflects the changing nature of the cinematic image in a return to techniques corresponding to a “cinema of attractions,” amidst current transformations from analog to digital platforms and the year of the “selfie.” Combined, these three works succinctly demonstrate how vanguard forms of artistic practice have the ability to offer

unparalleled conditions for researching alternative histories and generating unique insights into relationships between communication, culture and technology, through the capacity of artworks to act as a “time machine” in which processes of perceptual and technical experimentation can be constantly made and re-made.