Haptic Cinema
workshop at DocsForum, Docs MX film festival, Mexico City
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October 20, 2016

Intro
Useful to think that images do not represent but transmit, make contact.
My theory of haptic cinema a radical receptivity. Viewer does not interpret but receives with body.
Film experience is a dynamic between haptic and optical, affective and discursive.
Will discuss some ways we can experience films as tactile and physical: methods for filmmakers who want their work to make a quasi-physical contact with the audience, and ways for viewers to cultivate their tactile and multisensory response to a film.

The methods
1. Haptic visuality, a kind of intimate and embodied looking distinct from the more common optical visuality
   Optical visuality: distant view of complete subject associated with Renaissance perspective. Renders the image as a figure distinct from ground. Viewer can receive it from a distance.
   Haptic visuality (Aloïs Riegl): close, “grasping” view. Antonia Lant adapts for cinema¹
   Riegl’s concept of haptic image revised by Deleuze + Guattari in A Thousand Plateaus; I adapt it for cinema²:
   viewer not completely distinct from object beheld. Figure-ground difference not clear.
   Invites viewer to subjectively come forward and merge with the beheld. e.g.:
   -low resolution: analog video, super-8, some kinds of digital video (though corrected for edge recognition)
   -diminished figure-ground distinction

Nicky Hamlyn, Autogrill_Verghereto (UK, 2008):
found moiré pattern

- shallow focal plane
- some kinds of close-ups
- background activity that interrupts the figure, e.g. crowding, light flares
-calls on the whole body of the viewer, prevents separation subject-object

Note in most works there’s a dynamic between optical and haptic visuality:

Arthur Jafa, *Dreams Are Colder than Death* (U.S., 2013)

Kali Jones and Maurizio Ruggiano, *The Certainty of Shadow* (Italy, 2011)

2. **Tactile sound**
   - sound can evoke texture, taste, atmosphere; invites embodied response
   - haptic sound evokes confusing immersion in a scene, not clear distinction. Cf. multiple microphone placement in Robert Altman’s *Nashville*

3. **Material breakdown** emphasizes physicality of the medium
   - paradox that when the image is weaker, the bond can be stronger. Poor quality indicates that the image had to travel a lot to get to the viewer:
     - **film:** dust, scratches, splices
     - **analog video:** demagnetization
     - **digital video:** compression (codecs); glitch: physical voltage change, damage to support, or altering the integrity of the image through code.
4. Other artifacts layered on the image: watermarks of copyright holders, piracy companies; comments on YouTube etc.

Note economics of the broken-down image. Who can afford a high-quality image, who makes do with a poor-quality image?

5. the index, a sign that builds a connection between the pro-filmic scene and the viewer

Index: C.S. Peirce, a sign that refers to its object by necessity. Often the result of physical causation—photograph, fossil.

Cao Fei, *Shadow Life* (2011) multiply indexical as recorded work, shadow play

More broadly, index is whatever the image points at. Simple fact that the initial gesture reaches the viewer. Image makes a social connection to other viewers and environments along the way from source to receiver. 

DVD of *Butterfield 8* from my local library with glitch at climax of movie. Videos demagnetize, and DVDs glitch, at points where users paused them most often! Social connections increase as perceptibility decreases.

6. **Embodied response** occurs at several levels, building a physical and affective relationships to the image
   - autonomic nervous system (sweating, arousal, etc.)
   - mimesis, where the film elicits physical responses in the viewer. “Mirror neurons” actually a new term for Carpenter’s effect, 1876: how people reproduce the actions of others they see with their own bodies
   - mirror-touch synaesthesia
   Possible to cultivate these responses

**Shift in discursive-affective balance**
affective response to the way a film feels, not cognitive responses to the film’s discourse
Haptic-optical, affective-discursive, are dialectical. Need both.

**Hot and cool**
“hot” media reach out, “cool” media draw the viewer in (Marshall McLuhan)
high resolution, 3D, virtual reality are hot: can analyze with Riegl’s theory of grasping eye
low resolution, poor-quality images are cool; they draw us toward them

Thanks to the audience for great questions, including:
Truth in digital media: Not worried about breakdown of index. Facts are social, built through communication; cf. Peirce.

Animation, immersive media allow us to experience non-human embodiments.