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March 10-12

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BEYOND YOUTUBE

It's Not a Dead Collection, it's a Dynamic Database

Online Video as a Political Tool

Online Video Art

THEMES

Country Reports

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6

Platforms, Standards and the

Inhoudelijk en financiële verantwoording Unbound Book Conference, June 2011

Instituut voor Netwerkcultuur
Hogeschool Van Amsterdam
Singelgrachtbegouw,
Rhijnspoorplein 1, 1091 CR Amsterdam
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1. Video Vortex, Beyond YouTube

Naam project: Video Vortex, Beyond Youtube

Indiener; Instituut voor Netwerkcultuur

Adres; Rhijnspoorplein 1, 1091 GC, Amsterdam

Url: <http://networkcultures/videovortex>

Contactpersoon: Margreet Riphagen

Locatie: TrouwAmsterdam, Amsterdam

Mede gefinancierd door: Mondriaan Stichting, Virtueel Platform, SIA RAAK en het domein Media, Creatie en Informatie van de Hogeschool van Amsterdam

Design en ontwerp: Team Thursday, Rotterdam

1.1 Belangrijkste opgeleverde resultaten

- Conferentie, twee workshops en een avond met performances;
- Video Vortex programmaboek >> een omschrijving per sessie en daarbinnen een overzicht van alle deelnemende sprekers. Daarnaast is er van iedere deelnemer een korte biografie opgenomen. Dit event vond plaats van 10 tot en met 12 maart 2011;
- <http://networkcultures.org/videovortex> >> de website/weblog van het event. In deze blog zijn alle Video Vortex events opgenomen die in het verleden hebben plaats gevonden. Het idee achter deze blog is het hebben van een vaste plek waar materiaal kan worden verzameld en geactualiseerd rondom dit thema;
- Opnames van alle presentaties >> alle presentaties zijn terug te vinden op <http://networkcultures.org/wpmu/videovortex/6amsterdam/videos>;
- 225 tot 250 bezoekers, verdeeld over 3 dagen;
- Blogposts in relatie tot presentaties, zie volgende pagina's;
- Nieuwe contacten onderling binnen de sprekers. Netwerkuitbreiding en kenniscirculatie;
- Zeer uitgebreide lijst van bronnen zie hiervoor ook <http://networkcultures.org/wpmu/videovortex/resources>. Deze lijst geeft een uitgebreid overzicht van al het Video Vortex onderzoeksmateriaal;
- Documentatie / INC online media archief, en foto's;

- Publiek bezoekers programma;
- Bijeenkomst in het kader van Culture Vortex over online publieksparticipatie in de culturele sector in samenwerking met DEN en _V2, naast de structurele consortium partners op 1 november, KB, Den Haag. Dit om een gefundeerd programma te krijgen.

1.2 <http://networkcultures.org/vidoevortex>

De blog is gedurende het project heel erg goed bezocht, dit mede door de vooraf afgenomen interviews onder de sprekers en beschikbare resources op de blog. Dit is de mainportal richting de doelgroep. Alle uitingen omtrent het event zijn hier gecommuniceerd. Deze blog zal bestaan blijven. Hier zijn diverse materialen terug te vinden van video interviews tot foto's.

home about vv #6 amsterdam resources vv reader past events

Credits / Contact

[Video Vortex 6 Amsterdam](#) | [bio](#) | [instagram](#) | [conference program](#) | [workshops](#) | [practical info](#) | [credits](#) | [tickets](#)

Supported by:
 Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences
 Stichting Innovade Atlantic, via the RAAK Public Culture Vortex project
 Moundraan Foundation

Organized by:
 Institute of Network Cultures, www.networkcultures.org

Concept: Geert Lovink and Sabine Niederer
Editorial board: Carlos Garcia Moreno-Torres, Geert Lovink, Rachel Somers Miles and Sabine Niederer
Research: Rachel Somers Miles
Project manager: Margreet Rijnagen
Producer: Carlos Garcia Moreno-Torres
Visual identity: Team Thursday, Loes van Eech and Simone Trum

Location: TrouwAmsterdam, Wibastraat 127

All documentation will be available at: www.networkcultures.org/vidoevortex

CONTACT

tags
 2011 aesthetics amateur
 amsterdam art artist art
 video Canada collaborative practices
 country reports crowdfunding Cut of the
 Amateur documentary Dynamic
 database Emile Zile Evan Roth future of
 online tv Geert Lovink heritage José Miguel
 Bascayo Maarten Brinkman Natalie Bookchin
 netlix nirk online archive Online Video
 Aesthetics Online Video Art Online
 Video as a Political Tool Open Images project
 open source platform political tool
 program reader remix split video video
 activism video art video collections
 videovortex6

1.3 Upcoming Video Vortex events

- VV#7 YogYakarta 18-21 juli
- VV#8 Zagreb (voorjaar 2012)
- VV#9 New York (najaar 2012)
- VV#10 Paris (najaar 2012)
- VV#11 Amsterdam (voorjaar 2013)

2. Blogposts

Video Postcards from Dr. Strangelove

As a follow-up to his visit and great presentation at Video Vortex #6, Dr. Michael Strangelove put together these video postcards of the experience. If you weren't able to come to Amsterdam for the event, these audiovisual impressions will give you a quick glimpse into the happenings of Video Vortex #6. Thanks again to everyone for making it a great conference! Video registration of all the talks will be posted to the blog soon! Come back for more!



Animated GIF Mashup Workshop Video – the results!

On Wednesday March 10th, at the [Netherlands Media Art Institute](#), artist [Evan Roth](#) hosted a workshop as part of Video Vortex #6. Over 6 hours, participants worked fervently to collaboratively put together a mashup of their favourite animated gifs, resulting in a music video. Participants learned about the open source animated mashup software Roth built, how to search and download animated gifs, and how to put together their own compilations. After a fun day of sharing and showing their favourite gifs, suggesting what order they should go in, and collectively deciding what music to use, and with Roth doing the final editing, the group of 20 participants created this great number:



Evening Screening with Artist Natalie Bookchin

By Serena Westra



Still from Mass Ornament (2009)

As the final event of the sixth Video Vortex, YouTube lovers, video artists, and enthusiasts of all types were invited to enjoy an evening screening and discussion with media artist [Natalie Bookchin](#). The screening was held in [SMART Project Space](#) Amsterdam, hard to find but a great location.

On Tuesday March 15th, the program started at 19:30 with **Bart Rutten** (Stedelijk Museum) introducing artist Natalie Bookchin. While Bookchin was one of the speakers of the Video Vortex conference, this evening was set up to give her the opportunity to discuss and show the audience more of her work, and engage in an intimate and lively discussion with Rutten and the audience. Bookchin showed us three of her works: **Trip** (2008), **Mass Ornament** (2009), and the pieces of her **Testament** series (2009), with great audience response. She even showed one of her newest work-in-progress chapter of the *Testament* series, **Now he's out in public and everyone can see**, asking us the audience for feedback, and their response to her work. Want to know what the response was?

All discussion, questions, answers and comments have been noted in a detailed report. It's a great read that covers in detail the conversation that took place between Natalie, Bart and the audience that evening. The full report will be posted to the blog in a few days! Check back soon!

Koen Leurs on the Constitution of Identity by Moroccan-Dutch Youth Through Their Use of YouTube

By Stijnie Thuijs



Koen Leurs - 'Vernacular Spectacles? Dutch-Moroccan Youth on Youtube'. Photo by Anne Helmond.

After praising the wonderful lunch that was sure to revitalize the Video Vortex audience, **Koen Leurs** introduces his topic: the YouTube use of Dutch-Moroccan youth, born in the Netherlands but with natively Moroccan parents. Leurs explains how the right-wing politics in Holland are casting a shadow of negativity on the former immigrants and how the media present us with a black and white image. Anti-immigration, islamophobia, 'Kopvoddentaks' and street terrorists have become widely known and supported terms.

Koen shows us a video, a news report about the short film “Kop of Munt”, which shares a thought as to what would happen if all Moroccans would leave Holland. It’s meant sarcastically, but the media has picked it up as a heavy subject and made a fuss.

All this negative media attention causes presumptions about Dutch-Moroccan youth. But it is interesting to see them as they really are and perhaps how they handle all the bad news. Leurs wanted to find out how they constitute their identity through YouTube.

Koen Leurs – Video Vortex: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/50444200/Koen-Leurs-Video-Vortex>

Being a PhD student in Gender Studies at the Media and Culture Studies Department at Utrecht University, Leurs executed surveys (1500+) and in-depth interviews (43) with the subjects (Dutch-Moroccan youth between the age of 12 and 18), as well as an analysis of the digital material. He found that the DM youth use YouTube more often than Dutch youth and that it’s more woven into their everyday life. He also found that there are three ways of consumption for the DM youth. First, the nostalgic, ‘vernacular spectacles’. It is nostalgic longing for a home that no longer exists or has ever existed (Boym 2001). YouTube is their home in a sense, as the youngsters are ‘watching movies about where we come from’. The clips are symbolic anchors, a symbolic travel to a real, and at the same time magical place. Second is the consumption of differential music, ‘video’s of affinity’, such as those of Ali B and Yes-R. Third there is the knowledge brokering, which stands for a more broad and globally oriented consumption. Important to note here, is that this assumption parallels with the three types of orientation for migrated youth that **Hepp, Bozdag and Suna** found: origin-oriented, ethno-oriented and world-oriented.

What’s most important is that the Dutch-Moroccan youth doesn’t fit into boxes. They constitute their own identity, for a portion through the use of YouTube and other media, and combine practices and the best of three worlds (past home, present home and global culture). Above all, they watch clips that do not correspond with the negative mainstream opinion at all. Yes, they are positioned in a situation of in-betweenness, but the Dutch-Moroccan youth in Holland knows its way around the web and consumes what it likes best, not willing to apply to the negative public sphere.

In Conversation with Natalie Bookchin (part 1)



Natalie Bookchin in conversation with Geert Lovink. Photo by Anne Helmond.

Artist **Natalie Bookchin** took time to talk to Geert Lovink about online video and her artistic practice at yesterday's Video Vortex #6 in Amsterdam. To open the conversation, Natalie screened *Laid Off*, a part of her series *Testament*, which offered a 4-minute impression of her work, capturing the current global financial situation and mass unemployment in the US.

Laid Off



Below is part 1 of the conversation we got to hear between Geert Lovink and Natalie Bookchin, and adapted to include further information.

G: You're teaching at CalArts, you worked in the 90's with the internet, developed games, and now suddenly you're working with online video. How did you stumble into this?

N: I had also been very involved in thinking about online space as a site not only to make work but to distribute and exhibit it.

In the 90s I had been working, distributing, and exhibiting my work online. In 2005, I began to find the Internet too noisy and too crowded, and wanted to return to offline space in my work. I began to collect images from private security webcams that I found through a glitch in Google's search engine technology which picked up thousands of webcams regardless of whether or not they are intended to be public. The cameras offered an unusual view of the contemporary global landscape mediated through surveillance technology. I became interested in depicting the world as it was described by the technology, and so rather than looking at the recording devices in the landscape, I looked through the cameras, drawing attention to the formal elements of this perspective, its odd and awkward angles of view and composition, its often fixed perspective, the limited tonal range, the dirty lens, and the distance from and limited contact or lack of relationship between the camera — which has no operator present — and its subject. From this material I developed, *Network Movies*, a series of videos and video installations that I made between 2005 and 2007, where I sampled data flows of images from webcams from around the world to create portraits of global landscapes. Limited bandwidth and cheap cameras produced jumpy, mechanical motion and grainy, low-resolution images that revealed their technological conditions and were reminiscent of early cinema. I began to make installations and videos offline, in order to provide a more embodied experience, absent in the distracted online space —with its small screen and potential for multitasking.

G: Your video work that uses online footage started with one installation didn't it? When was the first one?

N: The first piece I made with YouTube footage was *trip* — a 63-minute single-channel video I completed in 2008, in which I documented a trip around the world using clips I culled from YouTube. From these clips, I pieced together a trip around the world from the point of view of tourists, human rights workers, locals, soldiers, and many others. The first point perspective put viewers in the position of a continually changing figure of the traveler, driving from tourist destination, across borders, and through war zones.

G: It's a gallery installation piece with the look and feel of a collaborative global road movie. There you have your first experiences of making databases, how you select the videos and put them together. Let's talk more about your approach. Now that we've seen *Laid Off*, it appears that it really must have been an enormous amount of work. It looks very complex. Technically, how did you do this? The syncing?

N: There is no database, nothing is automated – I simply searched, watched and collected the videos. For me, YouTube is in many ways a big heap of trash, out of which, with a lot of digging, treasures can be found. It's not a platform so much as a site that hosts (and buries) videos. I don't think it's a community- so calling it social media is a misnomer. I don't think there is conversation to be had on it through boxes for comments, or likes or dislikes. So I search.

I search for videos with an idea of what I hope to find, but I am often taken in unexpected directions. For example, with my current work-in-progress *Now he's out in public and everyone can see*, I began with the idea that I was going to do a piece about the reenactment and retelling of the recent Tiger Woods scandal. As I watched videos, I saw vloggers suddenly slip from discussing Woods, to Obama, or O.J. Simpson or Michael Jackson, or other African American public figures who had also been involved in media-driven scandals. As I watched and edited the videos and realized that the slips were key to the piece, it no longer became a piece about Tiger Woods, but instead about blackness as scandal. This was something I hadn't known when I started the piece. The way I find and work with material is not and can't be automated because it is through the process of searching and watching that I discover what it is I am making.

G: Ok, but let's go back to your method, maybe you know the book by Richard Senett, *The Craftsman*. When I think of you painfully putting this together, it's like a digital craft, not using sophisticated software. But you use sophisticated ways to search for terms, in different languages.

N: Yes, for *Trip* I did search in different languages. In general, I use many combinations of keywords as I search, and I revise my search terms often as I develop each work. You've discussed in previous Video Vortex conferences the subjectivity of tags, which in some ways is very useful for me as I search, but it can also make it very difficult to find videos. I have many problems with the way YouTube structures its search engine – I'm not looking for the most popular videos, I'm looking for the most varied.

G: A lot of the videos you use are very personal. Are the people in these clips talking to family or friends?

N: Sometimes the vloggers make reference to other vloggers or to their subscribers, but mostly they don't. They have all chosen to make their videos public – to make a public speech. Because of the layers of mediation, and because they are mostly at home in private spaces, their speech often becomes intimate, which creates a tension between the sometimes excruciating privateness of their speech and location, and the very publicness of the screening venue.

My Meds



N: In this one it's not so much about the individuals, it's much more about the choral group speaking together, in some way, in the other one there is a sense of individual personality that comes through at certain moments and then fades back into a collective voice.

G: Your work really reflects on theories of online subjectivity, new liberal labour and living conditions. It's amazing to see this visualised. You can read a lot of books about the individual lives that people have, which you bring together in your work. Did this grow out of theoretical notions like the multitude, in which people retain their individual voices but are nonetheless part of something bigger?

N: In *Mass Ornament* I thought a lot about the relation of the individual to the collective, and the shift from Fordism to post-Fordism. Although I force a collective out of many separate individuals and spaces, the rectangular format of each video reminds viewers that ultimately each speaker, or dancer, is isolated. In this way my depiction of a collective remains partial, and produces a visual tension between the imagined collective and the isolated individual.

G: And that comes out best in *Mass Ornament*. It has that sentiment of them aspiring to dance together, even though they're not aware of that when they're filming themselves.

N: Yes, although many are in fact responding to other videos. In this way, they are dancing with an imagined community in mind.

In Conversation with Natalie Bookchin (part 2)

(Part 2 of 2 – In conversation with Natalie Bookchin)

Mass Ornament



G: How did you come to use this idea of a ‘mass ornament’?

N: I began with the desire to do a piece that investigated the changing online status of video. Here, the emphasis is no longer on a single isolated video but on multiple chains of related videos, chains of responses, re-enactments, and remixes, and these responses are both to previous videos in the chain or to mass culture imagery.

G: In Mass Ornament you pay special attention to the audio track, it leads you through the work. This changes in Testament, where the image itself is not carrying the sequence and the sound becomes very very important.

N: Yes that is absolutely true. Sound, or rather speech, is the determinant factor in Testament. I primarily edit for sound rather than image. At first I thought, “how in the world am I going to make it a visually compelling piece?” but it turns out that image is critical – the image of the faces of the speakers give the fragmentary speech more weight, and grounds it from descending into a series of anonymous rants. The scale of the image in the installation and the direct gaze of the speaker to the viewer create a sense of empathy between the two. Unlike Mass Ornament, I haven’t added sound, I’ve just cleaned it up and edited it, paying attention to rhythm and musicality and of course to what is being said. In Mass Ornament, I got rid of the original music tracks from most of the clips; besides adding my own musical tracks, in some sequences I’ve added ambient sounds of the rooms and of the bodies in the rooms. I did this to individuate separate spaces and dancers, creating a presence of the room and the individuals, so that even with a unifying musical track, we would be reminded of the individual in their particular space. I did not want to depict the individual reduced to an abstraction, to a “mass ornament”.

G: To come back to this motive: a heterogeneous, participatory culture that we

know, the YouTube genealogy, and turning that into a collective statement made by you as an individual artist, people nonetheless see something happening here. A transformation is taking place, going beyond what people experience and express themselves. Have you had any responses from people who simply promote participatory culture?

N: No I haven't! Although some people do tend to be relieved that I put my videos online. There are different ways to think about participation: does participation mean allowing others to add comments or to "like" or "dislike" a video? In my projects, I am searching for more substantive participatory impulses, whether that means identifying with a social body larger than the individual, or articulating shared political subjectivities.

G: Some would be relieved that finally there's an artist synthesizing all this noise; people are complaining about information overload, but now there is Natalie Bookchin...

N: In some way I'm just paying attention, digging for, and compiling some of the stories we are currently telling to ourselves and others online.

G: Your works are all designed to be experienced in a gallery setup, and not on a computer. Is that a step forward or step back? And are you going to keep producing only for the museum?

N: I show the work in museums, but it is also available online. Each space reaches a different audience, and provides a different experience. The work is not online art (or net.art!) although it speaks to both online and offline space. It seems appropriate to me that the viewing experience also speaks to, and is available in, both locations.

For a chance to meet Natalie Bookchin in person and have a more in depth look at her work:

Tuesday 15 March 2011

SMART Project Space

Arie Biemondstraat 101-111 (Auditorium), Amsterdam

Time: doors 19.00 / starts 19:30-21:30

Tickets: 4 euros at the door

Online Video as a Political Tool: Sam Gregory on Video Activism and Advocacy



*Sam Gregory - 'Remix Video, Aggregated Video and Human Rights Activism'.
Photo by Anne Helmond.*

Sam Gregory, program director at **WITNESS** presented his thoughts on using online video as a political tool at Video Vortex #6 in Amsterdam yesterday.

Gregory began with presenting an image – a frame grab from the footage shot almost exactly 20 years ago, of the **Rodney King beating by the Los Angeles Police Department**. This footage, not only generated massive media attention and debate in the USA, but was the seed for WITNESS – to support the use of video in Human Rights advocacy to change policies, behaviours, laws and practices.

Video activism and video advocacy was the main focus of Gregory's presentation.

“With the ever-increasing availability of tools to create, share everyday video; witnessing and documentation of Human Rights violation is becoming increasingly commonplace, across amateurs to professionals”.

There were two points he raised regarding uploading to YouTube. First, the ubiquity of video is not evenly distributed. Secondly, the notion of access: should it be online and will it be effective online? How will these videos reach areas where there is no Internet

access or mobile access to be engaged in it?

Gregory then presented a series of videos to depict what the *Ecosystem of Human Rights video* looks like, made up of commercial and non-commercial platforms.

“It is as much as the individual speaking out as well as the graphic imagery” he says.

“It’s not just about the graphic violations of Human Rights such as torture, suppression of street protests; much of it is documenting economic social cultural rights: rights to housing...”.

Many videos uploaded recently have been demonstrative of the current circumstances in Egypt, Tunisia & Libya. For example the video blog of Asmaa Mahfouz, created 2 days after January 25 includes a number of moments that are already iconic even a month later in terms of incidents that happened in Egypt.

And this: **The most AMAZING video on the internet #egypt #jan25**



Through the recent events in the last few months, he highlights two points:

1. HOW DO WE DEAL WITH THIS MASS OF INFORMATION?

Gregory quotes Jane Gaines, who wrote in the context of the Iraq war about the prejudice of our culture being “bombarded with images”, and we never talk about being “bombarded with words”. He believes moving beyond this is critical if we want to engage meaningfully in this field of ubiquitous video.

In the past two months have witnessed the flourishing of more institutional tool-based ways to think about aggregation and curation. Tools such as [Ushahidi](#) that allow crowdmapping of photos, videos, text, [Crowdvoice.org](#) created in the Middle East,

Storify, aggregates social media including facebook and twitter, and **CitizenTube**.

Challenges: this type of curation is good for realtime protest-based situations, but less good for collective voices, and he references the Q&A session with artist Natalie Bookchin – how an individual story/event can be captured in a larger context.

2. OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH THESE COMMERCIAL SPACES

Gregory questions of the role of commercial video sharing and the reliance of these platforms. They are not public spaces but a private space and use of it is governed by an agreement.

“Hosting a political video on YouTube is like holding a rally in a shopping mall. It looks like a public space, but it’s not.”

He concludes with his picture of the changing landscape: “As we think about online video, it has these modalities of accessibility, credibility, malleability, fluidity and they allow this incredible sense of transparency, participation and action, but they also raise a lot of concerns about authenticity, about point of view, about control and how those images transform into action.”

Read more: <http://blog.witness.org/2011/01/cameraseverywhere>, and Sam Gregory, ‘Cameras Everywhere: Ubiquitous Video Documentation of Human Rights, New Forms of Video Advocacy, and Considerations of Safety, Security, Dignity and Consent’, page 268. **Video Vortex Reader II: moving images beyond YouTube.**

Arjon Dunnewind: Content with Context

By Stijn Thuijs



Arjon Dunnewind - 'Impakt Channel: Content with Context'. Photo by Anne Helmond.

By Stijn Thuijs

Being the festival, artistic and general director of **Impakt**, **Arjon Dunnewind** is in charge of a database of art related content for which he has to decide the most appropriate way of uploading to the web. An important factor to take into account, he explains, is that the audience on the web has different expectations than 'offline audience'. Online archives are the next phase and make us rethink how we structure the art collection, connect both the online and offline audience and exploit the merits of the online environment to use them in the best possible way.

How to involve an audience?

According to Dunnewind this can be done by providing the viewers quality instead of quantity. This means no comment space below the art content. Arjon would rather have a platform without any comments than low quality comments and spam on his channel. Moderation and hierarchy are keywords for the Impakt Channel, only inviting experts to give their opinion and opening little by little. Arjon wouldn't mind never to open it for ordinary users though – as it can degrade the quality.

Legal issues

: A struggle for Dunnewind are the legal issues. Foremost, who is responsible for the content and the legal issues is not always clear. While being online for supposedly 20 years, only since 5 years has there been options for artists as to in which degree their work is allowed to be published. There is no standard agreement with the artists (all permission has to be confirmed in direct contact with the artist) and more importantly: the artists themselves haven't always cleared the legal issues of the materials used in their pieces. On the sunny side of the legal issues is that the organization is relatively small, so they don't receive a lot of complaints. Also there is not much historical material in the database and the legal methods Impakt uses now actually bond the artist and the organization really well. Which results in allowing to put the work online.

The Impakt Channel : Give context to content. Or: how to make a difference

: To differentiate yourself from video websites such as YouTube – which offer little to no context - could be done in various ways. To Arjon, a way is to do that is to offer unique content. Also building a unique platform with alternate possibilities and limitations is a manner. Furthermore, connecting the online channel with the offline events, art projects and festivals, including bonus material for example, are adequate ways to create context. As are the display of background information, articles, introductions and comments by invited experts, interviews and curatorial texts from the original programs.

All that said, Arjon concludes with his wish for the online Impakt environment. 'We want the Impakt Channel to become a new platform', he says. A platform that creates exhibitions online, a flexible, dynamic, autonomous space on which can be experimented.

Book Launch: Video Vortex Reader II



Rachel Somers Miles and Geert Lovink addressing the authors and audience during the launch of the second Video Vortex reader. Photo by Anne Helmond.

On Saturday, the 12th of March 2011, a few minutes before six, the **second Video Vortex reader** was being presented to the audience of the sixth edition of the Video Vortex conference. Editors Geert Lovink and Rachel Somers Miles invited the contributors to the second volume, who were present *en masse*, to celebrate the launch of the book on stage.



Rachel Somers Miles. Photo by Anne Helmond.



Rachel Somers Miles and Video Vortex Reader II Contributors. Photo by Anne Helmond.



Rachel Somers Miles, Video Vortex Reader II Contributors and Geert Lovink. Photo by Anne Helmond.



Video Vortex Reader II contributors. Photo by Anne Helmond.

[Annelies Termeer on InstantCinema.org](#)



Annelies Termeer - 'Instant Cinema: Sharing the Screen'. Photo by Anne Helmond.

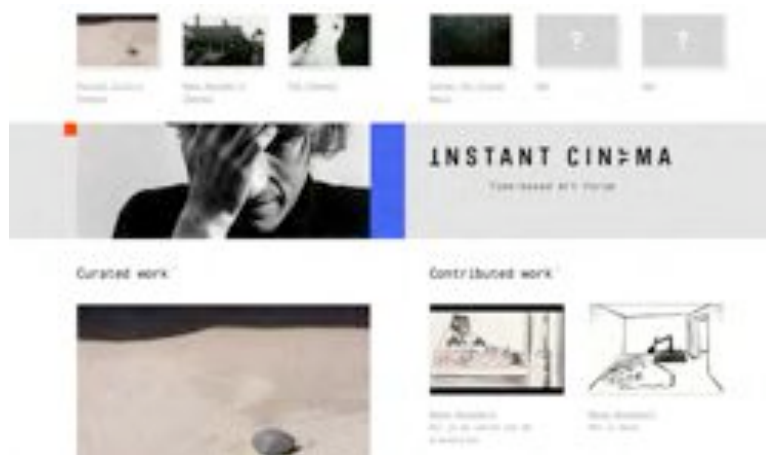
Annelies Termeer was the third speaker during the lecture themed *It's Not a Dead Collection, It's a Dynamic Database*. She is an interim head of digital presentation at **the EYE Film Institute**, formerly known as the Film Museum. The project she is affiliated with is called **InstantCinema**. The goal of the website is to facilitate filmmakers with a platform that affords them to easily upload their films and connect with likeminded people. An

important part of the target audience exists of experimental filmmakers, who now have a platform that has the ability to unite the separate spheres of the online communities, the art world and the film world.

The key subject in the overarching theme was that the preservation of works online offered a way in which the curators could add value through contextualizing the artists and their artwork, which is supposed to lead to a richer experience for the public engaging with those works. Furthermore, in the case of InstantCinema, a big factor in the succes was the establishing of a trusting relationship between the artists and the organization. The filmmakers would be offered an easy-to-use platform. As Termeer explained, InstantCinema wanted to make film widely available providing a complementary platform towards existing establishments such as the museum, specialized film festivals and cinémathèques

Termeer explained that the project came about through the shared initiative of L.A. based Dutchmen **Rene Daalder**, who is a writer and filmmaker, and **Folkert Gorter**, and interaction designer. The technical framework, the content management system of the project, originated in a few of their earlier projects, namely **SpaceCollective.org**, a cross-media platform where the future of human existence is being discussed and **CargoCollective.com**, which functions as a platform on which graphic artists can easily share their work.

In Termeer's view, InstantCinema has the important socio-cultural function to show the similarities between different forms of media-art. The site, located at www.instantcinema.org, has several features with which it tries to provide a quality alternative to commercial distribution platforms. It offers a high image quality and a solid content management system. It also has a feature that enables community building. As you can see on the image below, the left of the website exists of curated works, and the right side offers contributed work by artists:



After describing the website, Termeer expanded on what challenges the creators faced. One of the obstacles that arose, was that it was taking far more time than expected to finish the platform. Besides that, there were the usual problems surrounding intellectual

property rights with curated works. They also had to adapt the Cargo systems, making them able to house videomaterial. As Termeer explained, much consideration went into which format was being used, keeping quality standards and such in mind. Video would have to be streamable, while the works would retain a high quality.

She went on to point out that, in order to grow organically while at the same time maintaining a high standard for the artwork that would be submitted, InstantCinema would use invitation models for the filmmakers, like Google used them for Gmail. Every artist would be allowed to invite 5 other artists, thereby granting them a degree of control over the content on the site. Moderation would therefore be a shared burden for the community and the owners.

Looking ahead, Termeer sees several further goals. She points out that the aim of the project is to establish an even closer connection between the site and other offline events that are being organised by **EYE**. InstantCinema seems to celebrate the openness and connectivity that the web has to offer. The question remains how big its repository will become. By granting an accessible platform to experimental filmmakers, and taking away the obscurity of the 'art-film' by offering the public 24/7 online access to this valuable resource, InstantCinema seems eager to see what the future holds in store for it and how big the community will turn out to be. The project is still in its early days and over time we will see if the caterpillar will gloriously emerge from its cocoon as a butterfly, or if it will remain modest in the safe surroundings of its protective shell a little while longer.

Sandra Fauconnier on Video Art Distribution and the NIMk Collection



Sandra Fauconnier – 'Mediating Video Art Online'. Photo by Anne Helmond.

Sandra Fauconnier, working as an archiver for the [Netherlands Media Art Institute](#) (NIMk), delivered a speech about video art distribution during the overarching theme *It's Not a Dead Collection, It's a Dynamic Database*. The NIMk curates and distributes works of art online through its website, which contains a searchable [catalogue](#). The archive contains objects ranging from the seventies to contemporary works by established as well as upcoming Dutch and foreign artists. Fauconnier spoke about the ways in which the shift from the pre-digital to the digital era has faced the NIMk with challenges to how it was archiving its works. Commercial enterprises such as [YouTube](#), [Vimeo](#) and [Ubuweb](#) could become a nuisance, as they offer (semi-)legal ways to access works of art, while possibly not preserving the quality of the work and/or hurting the author's intellectual property rights.

The strong relation between the artist and the NIMk is an important source of its success. Fauconnier gave some interesting examples of artists that contribute to the NIMk. First off, she talked about [Marina Abramovic](#), a performance video-artist, who had been reluctant to show her work online.

Contrary to the former, Fauconnier mentioned [Oliver Laric](#) as an artist that embraces the web both as an inspiration and a distribution platform. Laric comments on popular culture by reappropriating and critiquing it in his work. Fauconnier cited [Versions](#), a project of Laric from 2009:



In these examples, we see a paradox between old and new media. Artists like Abramovic want to maintain the control over their works. As Fauconnier explained, they try to protect the exclusivity that is their business model and avoid their works being pirated, or having to deal with other forms of unauthorized (re-)use. Another reason Fauconnier offered was that the web might not be the right context in which the artist's work needs to be experienced. This argument is at once of a technical and aesthetic nature, because the internet might not be the proper medium for the work to be viewed through. Also, there is the added danger that work could be showcased in deteriorated quality. Fauconnier underlined the advantages the web has to offer, and the ambitions of the NIMk to contribute ever more as a quality filter for the public and as a mediator for artists in the online sphere. She mentioned that the preservation of the works needs to be done in a sustainable way, always having the interests of the artists at heart. The NIMk tries to do so by offering a flexible licensing system when renting out work, and by aggregating content on other platforms, like educational websites. The institute is also

engaging on a European level, with [Europeana](#), a project funded by the EU that offers access to international archives and collections, by acting as a gateway.

Fauconnier then explained the several goals the NIMk strives for. Firstly, it tries to consolidate a solid infrastructure so that interested parties are able to engage with the artworks in a meaningful way by offering a contextualized experience. Secondly, there is a participatory nature to the project. Artists will be able to receive active input from the actual stakeholders and 'connoisseurs', the artists, curators and researchers, as Fauconnier put it. The institute thus plays an important role within the preservation of culture, by linking their online activities (the catalogue) to their offline events (for example, 'de [MediaKunstMobiel](#)' or MediaArtMobile).

In the ongoing process of digitizing both old and new artworks, Fauconnier and the NIMk search for new ways of making video art more accessible through the website. There is, however, as she points out in her contribution to the second VideoVortex reader, an increasing amount of pressure upon cultural organizations – their positions being rendered 'precarious' by the current economical and political climate, as she put it. Someone in the public resonated that feeling, when he asked what the panel thought about the fact that many projects such as the NIMk, [InstantCinema](#) and [Impakt](#) exist alongside each other. Is there a possibility that some would be rendered redundant? Fauconnier jokingly commented on that, when speaking on the subject of copyright issues within the curated works. She said: 'We are small enough, so that people don't notice'. That blessing may turn out to become a problematic issue in the near future.

ArtTube: Balancing Expert Knowledge with Connectivity and Interactivity



Catrien Schreuder - 'ArtTube: Museum Boijmans van Beuningen'. Photo by Anne Helmond.

First things first: **ArtTube** is not an art collection database, and is not an archive; it is an educational platform bringing videos about art and design. With this remark Catrien Schreuder opened her presentation on **Museum Boijmans van Beningen's** video platform, ArtTube. This amidst a panel, "It's Not a Dead Collection, it's a Dynamic Database," where indeed art collections and archives predominated.

Though her presentation in itself didn't shed any particular new concepts or ideas to the field of online video platforms, things did get interesting once the question and answer started. In her presentation Schreuder had commented on how the interactive parts of their website weren't being used much, but rather were filled with spam. This triggered questions from the audience on the possibility that they were gatekeeping too much (limiting the videos on ArtTube mainly to content produced by the museum and its authorized experts). Furthermore, a member from the audience asked: "Isn't a new platform's worst nightmare no visitors, no content, no comments and no participation instead of spam?" After all, the title of this panel put the emphasis on the dynamism of video collections online, a dynamism that is often associated with user participation, connectivity and interactivity.

Schreuder replied to this by emphasizing one of the most privileged concepts of the panel: context. Since videos are so easily shared online what makes their particular platform special and significant was precisely the context they are able to provide as an art institution, as an online platform with videos on art from a very specific kind of source, a museum. She remarked that they are a knowledge institution, and though they do want to connect with the public "we want to share our knowledge *as well as* connect with the public," and as a museum "we are expected to offer information."

Sandra Fouconnier from the Netherlands Media Arts Institute (NIMK) seemed to agree when she observed on a similar lack of user participation in her institution's platform that "the content that we offer is quite specific, it is not something that people see everyday . . . first they just want to learn about it." Earlier in the panel, Arjon Dunnewind from Impakt Festival, had remarked that with regards to comments in their curated video art platform it seemed logical to first privilege experts and then slowly open up to the "average user."

Schreuder also mentioned that there are different kinds of environments and types of interacting and sharing. In their case, as a museum, "our share function is a more likely way of participation," than for example leaving comments or discussing the videos in ArtTube itself. This, she hypothesized, probably happens in the users "own environment."

"Our website is not the place where people go to discuss our videos, they go there to get the information" she concluded.

A bit more on ArtTube

The idea of creating something like ArtTube started around 2008 with the Museum Boijmans van Beningen's experience that video is a very popular media to inform

people. The museum had been using video as one of the ways to complement its exhibitions and better inform the visitors about what they were seeing. ArtTube started with the idea that those videos should be online too, not just on YouTube but on the museum's own website since, like most of the speakers in this panel, Schreuder emphasized the importance of context with regards to video sharing platforms.

As part of this effort of providing context the videos in ArtTube has notes with details and links to things being talked about in the video. Furthermore, the museum's website also offers other interactive platforms such as [ALMA](#), an online database for exploring the relationship between objects and their depiction in art, and [MijnBoijman.nl](#) where the user can create its own exhibitions from the museum's available collections.

Even though originally, the videos in ArtTube were not made for an online platform but rather for visitors to the museum (which may differ considerably from the kind of audience that'll use an online video platform), eventually the museum started to produce more varied types of videos. As Schreuder said, they didn't want a dead collection "with boring talking heads." And so they started making small documentaries of people working in the museum, timetravelling series on the links within the museum's different collections, interviews with artists and videos of events happening in the museums.

Joanne Richardson on the Critical Distance in Political Filmmaking

By [Sjoerd Tuinema](#)



Joanne Richardson - 'Making Video Politically'. Photo by Anne Helmond.

Video artist Joanne Richardson (GER) was invited to give a presentation in the session called "Online Video as a Political Tool", beginning her talk with a critical look at the

terms 'online', 'political' and 'tool'. As Marx had wrote in the Economic Transcript, a social revolution will "not get to the next stage" when the state is used as means to overthrow the state. Here's the opposition between Heideger (using the available tools) and Nietzsche (somehow doing something completely different) becomes relevant in considering the subjectivity of activism and the traps of deconstruction, a few of the central topics in [Richardson's work](#).

As Richardson was a participant in the Romanian 'indie media', the question of "what is it that makes our media other than other media?" started bothering her. Even more, the online tools that had been made available had proven to be largely a celebration of openness and accessibility itself. Making video users into producers would clearly not have brought new models of producing, "what makes video activism different other than putting it into the hands of the users?" To come back to Marx' point: don't these approaches by the masses still follow the same ways of production as with 'other propaganda'?

After stumbling upon a film of [Jean-Luc Godard](#) that displayed a political struggle, for Richardson this was the shift from "[political] content to the mode of production." Following from this shift of production were different strategies to depict political agendas. The first one, that of image reference, is about the relationship that truth claims. By questioning the image and the reference political film-making would act as a 'counter-documentary'.

Another aspect, that of form and content occurs when "the form is made of elements that don't fit, [consequently] it asks the audience to take its part and create meaning." Richardson here mentions the a montage method in which footage from different political events are mixed together and suggest a collective social struggle while in fact the ideological contexts were hardly comparable.

In "[2 or 3 Things About Activism](#)", Richardson deconstructs the effects of montage. In the former work, she uses different kinds of fragments which gradually fall apart and thus create a distance between the viewer and the objectivity of the image. Overall, Richardson stresses the importance of this 'critical distance', as the viewers "should not create identification but [...] make them think for themselves and reconsider the relation to the image."

Video Activism and Online Distribution in Post-New Order Indonesia

By Ryanne Turenhout

On the second day of Video Vortex at the Trouw in Amsterstam, Nuraini Juliastuti and Ferdiansyah Thajib explored how video activist in Indonesia, appropriate a variety of distribution strategies. The began with a brief historical overview giving brief a historical overview of video activism in Indonesia. They continued with a mapping of video activism, the prospects and barriers and a brief exploration beyond activism.

At the early stage between 1970 and 1990s it began with an entrance through videocassettes. As explained in Juliastuti and Thajibmain's book *Video Chronic*, the New Order saw the potential dangers of the cassettes and took measures to contain and control video practices. Nevertheless, film in Indonesia experienced several boosts, in the late 1980s the production and consumption was increased by the advent of private television stations, between 1991 and 1994 video production rose with fifty percent and in 1995 there was a rise in video piracy which extended the consumption beyond the economic class. This historical overview that they presented and is further explored in the book '*Video chronic: video activism and video distribution in Indonesia*' shows that video practices in Indonesia are an interplay between production, distribution and consumption. They went on to show that at the end of Suharto's New Order in 1998 a burgeoning of alternative media such as zines, mailing list and discussion platforms can be seen. These can be seen as alternative media outlets that form channels for discussion that could circumvent repression.



Ferdiansyah Thajib - 'A Chronicle of Video Activism and Online Distribution in Post-New Order Indonesia'. Photo by Anne Helmond.

According to Juliastuti and Thajib two main ways of media participation can be observed in Indonesia. First there is the empowerment of marginalized communities. Secondly, media participation can be seen as a reaction to the more general exclusions created by capitalist media.

Thajib and Juliastuti went on to explore the intersecting trajectories of video activist, consisting of grassroots-, tactical- and experimental video activism. Grassroots video activist work with specific communities. Online they highlight the ceremonial aspect of being together, they also need video to connect with other events that are going on nationally and globally. Tactical video activist are those who are flexible in the methods of distribution. They use online distribution actively and feel that the mainstream media



Nuraini Juliastuti - 'A Chronicle of Video Activism and Online Distribution in Post-New Order Indonesia'. Photo by Anne Helmond.

are not the appropriate channel or means to attain their goals. Tactical activists also use specific sites for their videos, for instance Indymedia. Experimental video activist explore the potentials of video and do more than expire change and intervene. They see online and offline as another way to experiment, connect and as a means of developing themselves.

Despite the rise of the video activism there are still technical barriers to be overcome. The limited bandwidth, particularly outside urban centers, the high-cost of getting access to the Internet and the increasing size of video files are difficulties to be overcome. Not only are there technical barriers but also the public perception is a barrier as well. The moral panic among the aggressor community; fears of being exposed to pornographic materials are mentioned as reason for not installing internet facilities in villages. There is also a digital divide which is not so much about getting access to the tools but is more about how can the tools be used. Media literacy is more an issue than who has access to the Internet, which became evident during the panel discussion after the presentation. Furthermore, the video producers are also concerned with how the material is going to be used and don't really see the use for putting it online. Most of the producers care more about watching and making the video's in conjunction with the community and they are not sure how it is going to be perceived and watched online.

The last part of the presentation went beyond video activism. The ubiquity of mainstream video-sharing services opens an area where the non-activist video can be pushed to the public and old media are using more amateur content. Additionally, the police are increasingly using the video's as evidence, for instance a video of violence on Java, and to identify the actors involved in the events. The question then remains what the activist can do with the videos. Ferdiansyah Thajib concludes the presentation by stating the audience must do more than just view and take action, and that the video's must emphasize the social change content that already exists offline, this to ensure that the

audience is more receptive to these video's.

The research into video activism in Indonesia has been published as a book (pdf), which can be found on the following website.

<http://engagemedia.org/videochronic-english>

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Andrew Lowenthal on the Need for Indymedia Movements

By Ryanne Turenhout



*Andrew Lowenthal - 'The Public, the Private and Media Autonomy'.
Photo by Anne Helmond.*

On the second day of Video Vortex at the Trouw in Amsterdam Andrew Lowenthal addresses the issues of how to use and distribute video politically and how do you do that independently and autonomously.

Andrew Lowenthal began by giving an overview of what EngageMedia has been doing over the past six years. They came out of the indymedia movement and are concerned with social and environmental issues in Asia pacific. At that time that they got started the tools needed for video distribution were not widely available. Media activist intervention was needed if the tools were going to be there. They've developed an online video sharing platform and their work revolves around how to use the tools that are out there for political and social impact. The literacy, skills building and generating ideas on how to effectively use the tools that are available.

This presentation raises some important issues and reflects on the need for Indymedia movements for online video activism. One of the issues raised is that not only the number of hits matters but also who is watching matters. If your video gets 200 hits on Youtube and also 200 hits on for instance Engagemedia, who is watching is going to be very different. It is great if people watch the video on Youtube but getting the engagement that you need is a different question. Another issue that Lowenthal addressed is, how do you as social movement compete with other movements? This, for Lowenthal, remains an open question. He went on to discussing several projects that Engagemedia have been doing.

Lowenthal briefly touches upon web 2.0 and the decline of media activism. The contradictions that can be seen are now too difficult to ignore. Now with the advent of wikileaks and companies like Amazon and Paypal distancing themselves and pulling the plug, it is increasingly becoming apparent how much we depend on these kind of companies and how much we have under-emphasize the independent infrastructure that we need. Especially, according to Andrew Lowenthal, as social movements keep growing and conflict with the interest of these companies.

He further discusses the question of how do you distribute video politically. Open technologies and licenses are part of it but also important is how do you build new geographies across borders. Lowenthal sees video and the Internet as drawing new political spaces, that don't actually have to conform to the traditional political terrain that we are often governed by. Shifting the political terrain is what they are trying to do. He goes on to discuss what is so special about video which is in his mind, the overcoming of otherness. Otherness, according to Lowenthal, often proceeds violence. In order to exclude someone, you have to 'other' them. With video you can overcome the otherness and build relationships between people and issues that are quite similar. EngageMedia is interested in drawing together the commonalities between the various issues. People often contextualize the issues just within the nation-state that they exist in even though these processes are beyond (or at least partially) the control of any one institution. The question than remains how do you build these cross-border and cross-cultural collaborations? Lowenthal believes that there is a huge amount of potential in the tools that are available, for instance universal subtitles project.

Lowenthal concludes with some interesting remarks. EngageMedia is interested in creating independent autonomous structures but also in creating spaces within the corporate spaces that have emerged, or the culture within them. He went on to say that people go to all sorts of lengths to get the content they want, upload it and find it. If they want the content, they will find it. Lowenthal concluded with the remark that the infrastructure is very important, but if you don't have content that speaks to the aspiration and the needs of the people you can't hit the mark.

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Florian Cramer: Bokeh Porn Poetics, On the Internet

Film Genre of DSLR Video Camera Tests

By [Ourania \(Rania\) Dalalaki](#)



Florian Cramer - 'bokeh porn poetics: On the Internet Film Genre of DSLR Video Camera Tests'. Photo by Anne Helmond.

[Florian Cramer](#) (media theorist, director of the Piet Zwart Institute) participated in the first day of Video Vortex to provide the audience with an insightful overview of the Bokeh Porn concept. In his presentation he introduced us to Bokeh Porn as a subculture within online video aesthetics and the associations that connect it to Vimeo aesthetics.

This subculture of Bokeh Porn has to do with past movements of amateur film making, computer operating systems and, last but not least, the [DSLR video revolution](#). A revolution that enabled the proud owners of the commercial technology of DSLR cameras to participate in the production of more cinematic videos and has chosen Vimeo as the medium that better presents its final projects. The community that has adopted this aesthetical approach is not a pure amateur community but also a filmmaking one; its presence is not only found online (although the online community is enormous and apparent in fora and websites such as [dvxuser](#), [slashCAM](#), [eoshd](#)) but also offline, with the recent example of the [International Amsterdam DSLR meetup](#).

Florian Cramer presented the origins of [Bokeh](#): in photography, the Japanese term Bokeh represents the aesthetic quality of the blur or, simply put, the blurry and out-of-focus background of the image; an effect that used to be captured in filmmaking only through professional cameras, as it has certain particular technical requirements (large film size, wide lense etc). This filmmaking aesthetics genre was originally introduced to broader audiences in post-1960 Hollywood film production with the movie "[Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf](#)"; Bokeh is part of the mainstream visual language ever since.

The proliferation of such technology, that spreaded via DSLR video cameras, made it possible for the average amateur consumer to successfully achieve the Bokeh effect and integrate it in filmmaking /video production. A good, “typical” in the words of Cramer, example of an amateur video implementing this cinematographic technique, pushing the “blur” effect to the point of making Bokeh the central aspect of the whole film, is the online video “[Light Benders](#)” by Ben Carino, available on Vimeo. A second example can be also found online: “[The Bathroom](#)” (created by user pilpop) clearly illustrates the formula for Bokeh Porn which can be summarized as such: experimental productions applying Bokeh, introducing frames with soft colors, smooth shots and a piece of instrumental music to accompany the creation. Furthermore, in his presentation, Florian Cramer stressed the major role that the camera plays in such productions to the point of becoming the main actor in the film, the pure materialized version of McLuhan’s dictum “the medium is the message”, the Narcissus that is reflected in more contemporary ponds for the sake of the directors’ gratification.



As Cramer informed his audience, the term Bokeh Porn was theorized by [Simon Wyndham](#) in his web log, in an attempt to depict the core of the culture that developed around Bokeh. More explicitly, according to Cramer the baseline of Bokeh Porn aesthetics is concluded in the production of short “test” demo films, where narratives are generally absent. This absence is not meant in order to serve modernist purposes but to fulfill the creators’ desires to film mainstream videos, in a non experimental implementation of an originally experimental technique. Bokeh Porn directors are not entirely amateurs yet they are individuals who, coming from amateur culture, wish to produce works that look and feel like professional ones. To achieve that, they have become vital parts of this subculture characterized by the obsession, fetishization of technical equipment, driven by the notion that the filming procedure is more important than the film itself, underlined by the presence of only one narrative that describes the Bokeh filmmaking process. Bokeh Porn stands for pure continuity, for “fluidum” instead of Barthes’ “punctum”, for the wish to expose the dream factor of the film -the camera itself. Bokeh, in the words of Florian Cramer “is a form of visual fetishism, is not avant-garde but porn” (quote captured by [Anne Helmond](#)).

This short presentation on Bokeh Porn aesthetics concluded with inquiries that investigated the associations between Bokeh and reactions towards the flat digital image and the connection between this genre and the revival of analog aesthetics (seen through innovations such as the Hipstamatic application for iPhone devices). More specifically, the speaker argued for the haptic, tactile quality that we used to know as a cinematic quality. He also underlined the fact that with Bokeh Porn aesthetics this touchable, tactile quality is materialized through the camera as a production tool. All in all, for Florian Cramer, users implementing Bokeh Porn aesthetics in amateur, demo, filmmaking production stand as other Alices in Wonderland, holding their cameras – the dreamworld of cinema- in their hands.

Holmes Wilson on Universal Subtitles: Collaborative, Volunteer Subtitling Using Free Software

By [Ourania \(Rania\) Dalalaki](#)



Holmes Wilson - 'Universal Subtitles - Collaborative, Volunteer Subtitling for any Video on the Web Using Free Software'. Photo by Anne Helmond.

The importance of subtitles is an undeniable fact for [Holmes Wilson](#), co-founder of the [Participatory Culture Foundation](#). Through the foundation's latest open source, software-based project [Universal Subtitles](#), the creative staff of the foundation argues that subtitles urgently need to support the vast universe of online videos.

What is Universal Subtitles? Universal Subtitles is a software platform that allows people to collaborate and create captions for online videos.

Why subtitles are important? Subtitles are essentially the bridge that can assist online videos move freely across language barriers while the use of captions can make them "searchable" for web search engines. In addition, the feature of subtitles can make an online video accessible to deaf and hard of hearing viewers as well as cover the needs

of those who just need these annotations to focus on their screens. In his presentation at Video Vortex #6 Holmes Wilson stated that subtitles can extend the political impact of a video as well as enable and empower the interactive viewer-video exchange.

Why subtitles are hard to do? Creating subtitles to annotate online videos can be a tricky procedure for a number of reasons according to Wilson. Machine transcription and translation provide low quality results still; the whole procedure is time-consuming and requires participants with language skills in order to be completed. Also, as we are dealing with online videos, the potential captions' creator must take into account that videos move across websites/platforms while there is no ready-to-use standard application for web video subtitles. In other words, even if one makes the subtitles, there is no provided way to apply them directly on the video. It was mainly the desire to solve these problems that led to the development of the Universal subtitles project.

Why Universal Subtitles? Universal Subtitles manages to satisfy the needs of the public: it is a free, accessible, open source software (which means that the code behind it is provided online for those interested), it can be used on any site or platform (beyond YouTube!) as it works across multiple instances of a video. Universal Subtitles inspires its users to work on a participatory, collaborative (in Holmes Wilson's words: Wikipedia like) model. One of the most important features of the software is the fact that it allows the video to spread across different platforms while the subtitles retain their piercing effect, as they will persist and also improve through the online community that supports the project.

Universal Subtitles has already won some hearts in the online world as many organizations are already using the software (such as: Mozilla, Wikipedia.org, The New York Times, the music band OK Go etc).

How does Universal Subtitles work? You can check that for yourself through their [demo](#) or watch this [video](#) from the Video Vortex #6 presentation proving that creating subtitles is easy and fun to do!



Teague Schneider on Preserving Indigenous Heritage

with IsumaTV

By Sjoerd Tuinema



Teague Schreier - 'Improving Access and Facilitating Use of Indigenous Content with Isuma's Hi-Speed MediaPlayers'. Photo by Anne Helmond.

In Friday's first session called "It's Not a Dead Collection, it's a Dynamic Database", media archivist and researcher Teague Schreier (US/CA) took off with an elaboration about the 'IsumaTV' project she's currently working on. The people behind this initiative aim to set up an accessible infrastructure for streaming and uploading video content in indigenous subcultures. This is not only a technological challenge, but also requires a lot of media literacy within these communities. Other than with traditional heritages, it doesn't focus on the long-term storage but instead prioritizes the accessibility of the users.

When it comes to the technological part of accessibility, the project would require a solid approach to work for the across different communities. Since the Inuit areas are largely isolated from 'regular' broadband services (the costs / bandwidth speed ratio is one of the aspects that widens the 'digital divide'), the organisation introduced special media boxes into these indigenous communities. Through this local server network, the IsumaTV network performs much better than mainstream platforms like YouTube or Facebook would have. Moreover, having a stand-alone video platform overall increases the feeling of (reclaiming) ownership, "it helps with having a good relationship with the users." Even though the technological trade-off is that the network updates with a delay of about a week, this is still acceptable for a project with a goal to preserve cultural heritage.

In the end, the project seems very worthwhile. Especially in the "era of of rapid change, [in which] indigenous groups seek to preserve their subculture". Since the project started in 2008, over 2000 videos in more than 41 languages have been uploaded as well as pictures and text. Content-wise, it proves to be valuable to have the locals themselves

act as curators, instead of having slightly related ‘outsiders’ maintain the archives. The fact that the communities rely mainly on verbal communications is another point that video creates a lot more insight into the different cultures.

Future plans with this initiative are to attract more sponsors like repositories, institutes, museums and participatory media (especially now the Canadian government has cut the budget), as well as to add crowd-source (subtitling or voice-over) features as well as further improving the network its accessibility.

Internet Censorship in Turkey and Online Video

By [Diana Soto de Jesús](#)



*Ebru Baranseli - 'Internet Censorship in Turkey and Online Video'.
Photo by Anne Helmond.*

As if the Internet Gods had planned it all along, Ebru Baranseli gave a report on the current situation of Internet censorship in Turkey right on the [World Day Against Cyber Censorship](#).

According to Baranseli, a professor of graphic design at Anadolu University, until 2001 Turkey’s government had a “hands off” approach to Internet regulation: “It was thought that the general legal system regulating speech related crimes was adequate.” But that line of thinking wouldn’t last long. From 2001 onwards the government started to intervene.

Still, “until 2005, the Internet in Turkey was a largely free medium,” said Baranseli, who also works as a digital activist against Internet censorship. It is after this year that the so called “Internet Law of Turkey” (Law 5651, passed in 2007) gets introduced and online content starts being regulated more rigorously.

Online video in particular got quite some attention. “In the past, video sharing websites such as Metacafe, Dailymotion, and Vimeo have been banned in Turkey,” reported Baranseli. In fact, Metacafe is still banned. But perhaps the most notorious case of Internet censorship in Turkey with regards to online video is when an Ankara court ruled in favor of blocking access to YouTube in May 2008. This was due to 10 videos regarding Ataturk, commonly known as modern Turkey’s founding father. It would take approximately 2.5 more years for YouTube to be legal again in Turkey (October 2010).

But the “Internet community,” as Baranseli calls it, has not stayed passive with regards to the Turkish government’s Internet censorship. For example, through sansuresansur.org (which translate to “censorship on censorship”) they’ve set about to inform people on the reality and dangers of Internet censorship. As part of their campaign they’ve made a series of videos which you can see through YouTube, although, from Baranseli’s report, it remains uncertain for how long Turkish people themselves may be able to see them. Here’s one with English subtitles.



Even if to the eyes of somebody used to relatively unlimited access to Internet websites, the add may seem a bit dramatic; it highlights how Internet censorship can, and does affect, even the more ordinary aspects of daily life. In a tragicomic anecdote Baranseli recalled how one of her graphic design students competed and eventually won a prize for a Vimeo competition, but since at the moment access to Vimeo was blocked in Turkey they couldn’t neither vote or even see the video.

You can find Baranseli’s presentation [here](#).

“There should be more room for fun in art” – Animated Gif Mashup Studio Workshop with Evan Roth

By Anna Jacobs



Evan Roth - 'Animated Gif Mashup Studio Workshop'. Photo by Anne Helmond.

Last Thursday (10-03) I attended a workshop about animated gif mashups led by the artist [Evan Roth](#). Twenty minutes before the start of the workshop the room was already filled with enthusiastic students, no doubt because of Evan's well-documented reputation when it comes to lively workshops. The audience included a variety of New Media-, Interactive Media-, Audiovisual Media-, Media & Information- and Media Design students, some from the Netherlands, but also a few exchange students from Austria, Curacao and Argentina. All the participants were asked to bring their computers for the workshop. Evan Roth immediately gave his session an informal tone, by kicking off with: "I've never done this workshop before, I just want to have fun and make some video mashups with you guys".

He quickly introduced us to his earlier projects for the [Graffiti Research Lab](#) and the [Free Art & Technology lab](#). As an artist, Evan is outspoken about open source and free culture. This is exactly what the F.A.T. Lab is about: an organization dedicated to enriching the public domain, by keeping all the content in the public domain. Its disclaimer states: 'you may enjoy, use, modify, snipe about and republish all F.A.T. media and technologies as you see fit.' However, the workshop during the Video Vortex wasn't about activist issues or promoting free culture, but about making gifs.

We all know gifs, or *graphic interchange formats*, probably as those geeky granular images of dancing people or singing cats. Their old school image is why Evan thinks they're cool. But I was still wondering why Evan decided to let us work with gifs. I had in mind that his answer would have something to do with open source and free culture, since everyone is free to collect and spread gifs and use them for other purposes. But he surprised me by saying that his main point for that day was just having fun. "There should be more room for fun in art". He told me how his other lectures and workshops were more directly linked with politics, but that he felt like really doing something else this day. He wanted us to just play with gifs, get our hands dirty. He did add that he clearly sees how gifs are important in an ideological sense, since they create some sort

of overall image of the internet right now, they're all small time capsules. So from a historical point of view it is important to curate them somewhere where they can't get lost.

The future of the ubiquitous gifs? Hard to say, according to Evan. He feels they had their peak in 2010, when *'We Make Money Not Art'* started growing bigger and bigger. At the beginning of the internet era gif and jpeg were the standard form, but slowly they were overtaken by png and flash (for movies). This is why Evan isn't sure how gif will develop in the upcoming years, so most important is to make sure that all previous gifs are saved in a good database.

Since there weren't any students in the room who already had any experience with making mash ups, Evan gave a quick demonstration and showed us some of *his work*. After making sure everyone was connected to the internet, he showed us Private Pad, the 'public chatroom', we'd be using for sharing links and FileZillah where we could put the gifs we've found on the internet. Using gifmashup.evan-roth.com (an open source animated gif mash-up software built by Evan), we could add a couple of gifs together to make a mashup. He gave us a few links to GIF collections, like *Dump*, *Heathersanimations*, *Gifsoup* and *Tumblr*. The rest of the workshop there was filled with the buzz of a great atmosphere. Everyone was actively searching and sharing gifs and Evan filled the room with songs varying from Biggie to the Beatles, looking for a suitable song to accompany our collective mash up. When the server started crashing since the input was so great (we filled three folders with gifs), Evan decided to let us vote for a song and started to create the mash up. Sadly we were running out of time, so we only got a sneak peek of our work, but it already looked great.

Evan's mission was definitely accomplished, his workshop surely was a lot of fun.

The results of the workshop:



Online Video Art: Ashiq Khondker and Eugene Kotlyarenko Play with the Diegetic Desktop

By [Catalina Iorga](#)



Ashiq Khondker - 'The Diegetic Desktop'. Photo by Anne Helmond.

[Ashiq Khondker](#) and [Eugene Kotlyarenko](#)'s presentation was the most entertaining and confusing of the first day of Video Vortex #6. To begin with, their collaboration took place exclusively on the internet, after Ashiq contacted the artist to interview him about a series of videos he shot entirely with screen capture software and published online as a sort of mini-series entitled '[Instructional Video #4: Preparation for Mission](#)'. To match the spirit of Kotlyarenko's pieces, the interview – or the attempts to get it done – were recorded with the aforementioned software and edited into a narrated, self-presented documentary. That is to say, there was no usual speaker-behind-a-laptop combination, but a fullscreen projection of the clip.

Called [The Diegetic Desktop](#), this video showed Ashiq trying to interview an arrogant and downright obnoxious Kotlyarenko via iChat and Skype, while switching between notes and Web browser windows or sharing his screen with the American artist. As the video progressed, it seemed there was no way to deal with Eugene, annoying and uncooperative, lazily slouched on his sofa with a giant bottle of water and a couple of mysterious green pills that obviously didn't cure his delusions of grandeur.

The apparently failed interview had a big impact on the audience, who became very engaged, asking questions or even calling Kotlyarenko an 'a**hole'. But then a surprising revelation was made: the whole video was set up. When Sabine Niederer, managing director of the Institute of Network Cultures, complimented Ashiq on his patience in interviewing such a difficult character, he confessed that both he and Eugene had been faking it all along. Ashiq said that playing the goofy guy came naturally to him, while

Eugene took on the role of the arrogant artist.

It was not just an entertaining presentation, but an actual piece of video art that, rather than making sweeping statements about the future of online video, showed how diegetic desktop works play with software and our minds.

Online Video Art: Roel Wouters and Conditional Design

By [Caroline Goralczyk](#)



Roel Wouters - 'Directing the Audience: What Happens When Media Producers and Consumers Merge?' Photo by Anne Helmond.

In his presentation on online video art and the design of fluid digital environments, graphic designer and project director Roel Wouters introduced the audience to interactive projects which include dynamic media such as web video and animation to install crowdsourced performances. With his colleagues Luna Maurer, Jonathan Puckey and Edo Paulus he has published the [Conditional Design Manifesto](#), which is based on the work of his collective called [Conditional Design](#) and emphasizes the idea of following processes in the digital realm rather than its products.

In their work, Wouters and his fellow group of designers focus on the increasing blur between consumers and producers which comes about as a result of web technology enabling user participation in the creation of online video art. Roel Wouters presented two projects that are based on users taking part in the installation of a video, one based on people taking pictures of themselves with a webcam, prior given the instruction to resemble a particular frame and one based on creating a video, resembling a particular scene or act. As if to say “If I would be the director, you would be my actors”, these projects are based on collaborative story-telling in creating online video art which

participants can share with their friends online.

“It is surprising how these projects result in really beautiful photography. People are not self-conscious when resembling the frame which they are given and that is why they appear very natural” stated Wouters when presenting the two projects “**One frame of fame**” and “**Now Take a Bow**” to the audience. His collective Conditional Design was recently involved in the **5days off** festival in Amsterdam with a **project** based on an iPhone application which Routers calls a ‘social photo toy’, resembling ‘the ultimate amateur photo’, which is people taking pictures of themselves in front of a mirror using flash.

Here is an illustration of the ‘One frame of fame’ project:



Joining the Online Video Conversation? The

Presence of Institutional Actors on YouTube

By [Geert Faber](#)



Patrícia Dias da Silva - 'Joining the Online Video Conversation? The Presence of Institutional Actors on YouTube'. Photo by Anne Helmond.

The second day of the Video Vortex conference at Trouw in Amsterdam. In the seventh session [Patrícia Dias da Silva](#), a PhD Fellow in Social Sciences at the Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon, talks about how YouTube has been embraced by European institutional actors, and how [YouTube](#) is reaching out to traditional actors and media, instead of maintaining an 'alternative' posture which nowadays is more connected to the [Vimeo](#) platform.

YouTube allows political institutions to reach out to their audiences in a visual and interactive way by creating online video channels, posting videos, and using the social tools around the video. [CitizenTube](#) was initiated by YouTube as a political VLog in 2008 and initially had strong focus on the US elections but expanded and grew toward a platform for citizen journalism around the world. It showed a first step towards the use of online video for a political and journalistic purpose and to engage an audience to respond, comment, and interact with the videos that are posted and perspectives that are shared.

The use and appliance of new media technologies and platforms by the European Commission was first described in the eEurope initiative from 1999. There was a strong believe the internet would revive the economy and provide new economic and political changes for Europe. A first attempt to use the YouTube platform to reach out and interact with 'European citizens' was the [Questions for Europe channel](#) in collaboration with EuroNews. It allowed people to ask questions by posting videos which would be answered by members of the European Commission.

In 2007 **EUTube** was launched after the failed introduction of the European constitution to engage with citizens and to create a community of voices. It was a first step from the European Parliament to engage and connect with European citizens by using online video and the reach of the YouTube platform. With the tagline 'sharing the sights and sounds of Europe' it was a noble attempt to gather the different perspectives around Europe and create a dialogue about the road that Europe should be heading. The channel launched in four different languages of which English was the most popular. The channel showed reports about the EU, people in the field working for Europe, and institutional videos to promote projects and departments.

After showing some examples of the institutional use of the YouTube platform, Patrícia Dias da Silva brings up several discussion points about the use and success of these initiatives. First, the European politicians saw and used YouTube as a static archive, as a collection of videos all stored on one online channel, instead of being a dynamic archive. It was used as an aggregation of the appearance of public figures and politicians in other news media, speeches, and personal items. For example, the channel of the Berlusconi government is mainly showing videos from his own news networks.

As a second point of discussion da Silva shows how institutional videos often disable the ability to comment on videos and start discussions with other users. So on the one hand YouTube is used to reach out and allow interaction between Institutions and 'the people', but the functionalities provided by YouTube are disabled. The British Prime Minister David Cameron disabled comments on **his videos** but allowed interaction on his **personal website**. A third point of discussion is the low participation on YouTube channels with political ambitions. The Norwegian Prime Minister requested video questions on his YouTube channels resulting in only 5 responses. The same was the result from a similar initiative by the European Commission and EuroNews with the Questions for Europe channel. Most videos were uploaded by EuroNews and hardly any question were uploaded by participants themselves. Fourthly, a problem faced by many channels was the flaming and trolling in the comments of the uploaded videos, an important reason to disable the comment functionality. As Margot Wallstrom, former European Commissioner for Institutional Relations and Communication, described 'The level of intelligence is low, and closing the board would improve the décor of EUTube'.

A fifth point of discussion questioned if the channels were used for increased participation, or as propaganda channels for European perspectives and regulations. People do not believe the motives of participation but see it as government funded propaganda. The sixth, and last point noted by da Silva is the frivolous nature of some videos posted by politicians and institutions to attract more viewers and comments. As an example she refers to Spanish video 'Votar és un plaer' (Voting is enjoyment) video place by the **Juventut Socialista de Catalunya** in which a woman is having an orgasm while voting. This practice results in flagged videos (18+) and comments and discussion on the use of video by political institutions.



We can conclude that governments and political institutions are struggling with how to use online video platforms to reach out and connect with the people. As noted by da Silva, they often see YouTube channels as repositories for videos; as dead databases. They miss the dynamics and interactivity these tools provide in creating a narrative for an online audience. By engaging the public with, for example, social media tools, you can get them involved. However, people tend to see social media initiatives by politicians as manipulation or propaganda tools without a real interest in the interactive participatory side of the story. Flaming and trolling in comments, a low engagement, and the lack of interactivity, often results in declining attention from both the public and the initiators after which participation dies out. As long as institutions do not see and use the added value of online video platforms, these initiatives will fail. It would be a good strategy to look at the activist use of online video, for example in the middle east, and how public engagement results in active participation and valuable discussions.

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Photos from Video Vortex 6



Bloggers and Audience at Video Vortex #6. Photo by Anne Helmond.



Evan Roth presenting at Video Vortex #6. Photo by Anne Helmond.



Registration Desk at Video Vortex #6. Photo by Anne Helmond.



Ben Moskowitz presenting at Video Vortex #6. Photo by Anne Helmond.



Bloggers and Audience at Video Vortex #6. Photo by Anne Helmond.



Video Vortex. Photo by Anne Helmond.



Michael Strangelove presenting at Video Vortex #6. Photo by Anne Helmond.



Geert Lovink speaking at Video Vortex #6. Photo by Anne Helmond.



Book Launch Video Vortex Reader II. Photo by Anne Helmond.



VeniVidiVortex: Closing Party. Photo by Anne Helmond.

The whole [Video Vortex 6 photoset](#) can be found on Flickr. Please join us by tagging your Video Vortex photos with `vv6` and adding them to the [Video Vortex Photo Pool](#).

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/networkcultures/sets/72157626117414867/>

Ben Moskowitz: Video of the Open Web, Not Just on the Open Web

By Serena Westra



*Ben Moskowitz - 'Video of the Open Web, Not Just on the Open Web'.
Photo by Anne Helmond.*

The second speaker of the Platforms, Standards & the Trouble with Translation Civil Rights session is **Ben Moskowitz**. For the second time in a year, the first time was in November for the **Ecommons** conference, he came all the way from the USA to join us. Moskowitz works for the **Mozilla Foundation** and is an adjunct professor at NYU's Interactive Telecommunications Program. He served as the director of the **Open Video Conference** and led the 2009-2010 **iCommons** video policy project.

He fills the room with enthusiasm as he starts speaking: 'Hi, how are you all doing?' He begins his presentation with a shocking statement for a conference about YouTube: 'Web video isn't real web video.' But before the other speakers and the audience can start a protest, he starts explaining: it is not real web video because it is online video. There is a difference between both, in the sense that most web video on the Internet is 'just TV pasted into a web page'. This might as well be a black box, according to Moskowitz, and is quite of the opposite of open source. The problem with this form of presenting web video, like YouTube and Vimeo, is that it is too static. You cannot even link to a video: you can only link to a page.

Moskowitz solution to this problem is **HTML 5 video**. With HTML 5 you can embed videos: 'They become a part of the fabric of the web.' You can create semantic connections and all kind of things you can't simply do with flash. It will revolutionize storytelling in a way that is non-linear and points directly to other information, links, sources, maps, and so on.

Moskowitz and his team at Mozilla started a video lab, [Web Made Movies](#), and tried to answer the question: 'How can we use technologies and create new ways of engaging with people?' In addition to this, they build with a group of volunteers and college students [Popcorn.js](#), which uses the HTML 5 video framework. 'Popcorn.js is an event framework for HTML5 that provides a simple API for synchronizing interactive and immersive content. Popcorn.js utilizes the native HTMLVideoElement properties, methods and events, normalizes them into an easy to learn API, and provides a plugin system for community contributed interactions' (Popcorn.org). This open source software functions, in the words of Moskowitz, as a set of Lego's for your web video's. It is open source, so everyone is free to use it in his or her own way. They already have several plugins for webservice and made a graphical user interface, called [Butter](#).

As a demonstration of Popcorn.js, Moskowitz shows a video made by his cousin. She made a book report with the use of Popcorn. Not only do you see her report of the book in a small webcam video, Popcorn makes it also possible to show at the same time a map of the places discussed, several webpages and links, pictures and subtitles. You can even choose subtitles in another language by [Google Translate](#). Compared to this, the book reports I used to make really look old fashion!

Another great example is [rebelliouspixels.com](#). This website shows a video of Donald Duck, with the voice over of Glenn Beck. The uniqueness of this way of showing video on Internet is that you can exactly see at every point in the video what source has been used for the sound and image. And there is more: you can also read footnotes with background information and Wikipedia information about the subjects.

The last example Ben mentions is a video of a speech of Obama. At the bottom of the video is a tweet to time button, which shows the current time code. Click on the button and you generate a twitter time link, which links to the exact time of the video, so you don't have to search in the video to the part you want to see yourself.



*Ben Moskowitz - 'Video of the Open Web, Not Just on the Open Web'.
Photo by Anne Helmond.*

According to Ben, it is important to teach kids HTML. 'One of the great things of the web is that you can hack it.' It is important to view the source. Moskowitz and his team are working on a way to make it easier to understand how the Internet works. They want to 'pull back the curtain' and get people more involved in coding and being active. Mozilla, a global non-profit dedicated to putting you in control of your online experience and shaping the future of the Web for the public good, is putting a lot of effort in this. 'It exist to promote openness, Fire fox is the main way we do this. It has really exceeded to open up the browser.' The [homepage of Mozilla](#) says: 'Mozilla is all about keeping the web open and free for everyone, everywhere. Our work is protecting the web from exploitation, centralization and control.'

As you can see, Ben Moskowitz and his team at Mozilla are doing a great job by keeping the web open and creating 'real' web video. If you want to see more of his projects, there will be a new Open Video Conference soon. Unfortunately he could not tell us yet when, but we'll wait and see!

Dr. Michael Strangelove – “Any Moment Will be a Youtube Moment”

By [Caroline Goralczyk](#)



Michael Strangelove - 'The Cultural Value of Amateur Video'. Photo by Anne Helmond.

In his talk on the cultural value of amateur video, the author of [“Watching Youtube: Extraordinary Videos by Ordinary People”](#), scholar and artist [Michael Strangelove](#) explained how amateur productions will gain greater value due to their potential of challenging the meaning of things, their subversion of a capitalist mode of production and their use by individuals as tools for self-representation of the world. Why does [‘Laughing Baby’](#), [‘David coming back from the dentist’](#) or the [‘Star Wars Kid’](#) make a difference in our lives? And what is it that makes online video different from TV? Dr.Strangelove’s answer to this is straight to the point: “It’s the amateur”.

When elaborating on how online video is entering into our culture as part of the material we use for creating our world, Michael Strangelove referred to Michel Foucault’s notion of compulsory visibility and how the new generation of digital natives is growing up with the thought of radical transparency in representing themselves. This drive to be visible and to reveal one’s private life is reflecting how online video matters in people showing bits of themselves, always having in mind that any moment of their life could be moment visible for others, a Youtube moment.

“What we see through online video is what is different and what is the same” states Strangelove, pointing to the value of amateur video for constructing reality and shaping feelings by challenging the tastes and styles that are commonly recognized by the general public. In this regard, online amateur productions particularly convert the capitalist mode of production away from a centralized power, from ‘the few to the many’,

from 'homogeneity to heterogeneity'. People will talk about their mundane lives, women will be de-marginalized and given a voice, which will overall result in the challenge of official versions of the worlds and in contesting the prevalent situation. Online video then serves as the source material used for expressing what attracts us, what repulses us and how we construct reality. This alternative mode of cultural production further enhances new forms of aesthetics as through online video we can see others and we can also react with intolerance.



Michael Strangelove - 'The Cultural Value of Amateur Video'. Photo by Anne Helmond.

When asked whether critical notions of 'the amateur' such as the one put forth by [Andrew Keen](#) are justified, Michael Strangelove answered ambiguously. He stated that there is a valid critique of the amateur's production and notions of free labour of users are becoming more important in the face of using user-generated content for commercial gain. As for now, the work of the amateur is showing contradictory effects and pulling in two directions: it moves between an increase in expressive capabilities and the recapturing of these capabilities into the commercial market system. However, there is a clear map of forces at work and the substantial impact and value of amateur production does not primarily lie in the production, but in the contestation of meaning of things.

Dr.Strangelove in preparation for Video Vortex #6:



It's not a Dynamic Database... It's a Dead Collection? [Temporarily Unavailable]

By [Geert Faber](#)



*Mél Hogan - 'It's not a Dynamic Database...It's a Dead Collection?'.
Photo by Anne Helmond.*

The second day of the Video Vortex conference started with the session 'It's not a dead collection, it's a dynamic database' covering a next phase of digitalizing and distributing

video archives. The first presentation of the day is from Mél Hogan who talks about the rise and fall of three large online video art repositories in Canada and the setbacks they encountered. Mél Hogan is currently completing her research creation doctorate in Communication Studies at Concordia University in Montréal, Canada. Her research documents defunct, stalled, and crashed online video art repositories within a Canadian cultural context.

The title of her presentations (and of this blog) provokes the title of the session and questions whether the web provides a dynamic databases or dead collections. The growth of YouTube and its popularity has set new standards for online video databases, archives, and interfaces. More often online projects become entities on themselves instead of just bringing an offline collection online.

To showcase the difficulties of bringing video art repositories online, Mél discusses three cases from Canada and the setbacks they encountered. These cases were created by interviewing the people, partners, and organizations involved, by reviewing ground reports, and tracking the visual history of these collections and website by using the [Internet Archive Wayback Machine](#). A general notion among these online projects is the implied value of the content the archives contain and the focus on the broader context. All the project envisioned an archive of videos and described a context in which those videos should be placed, however, the cases show that this context is often harder to develop and control, and affects the popularity and success of the online archives.

The first case describes the start of [Vidéographe](#) by [viThèque](#) which started in 2010 and is still online. The project encountered several setbacks in the development of the channel because of the involvement of several different partners and getting copyrights for the content. After years of development the project is now taken into the courtroom to settle arguments between different ex-partners, resulting in a widespread of competitive online channels presenting the video material of Vidéographe. A showcase how context is hard to manage and control on the web, and how the offline organization of projects can influence this.

The second case discusses the Vtape project which started in 2006 and ended in 2008 being a part of the virtual museum of Canada ([Musée virtuel du Canada](#)). The website has an active link to the archive but has been offline, or '[temporarily unavailable](#)', for many years now, questioning the access of websites beyond the technical framework.



The last case discussed the Médiathèque project initiated by [SAW video's](#) which started in 2003 and ended in 2009. The website provided artists a payment of 200 dollar per year for every submitted video. The website turned out to be an online repository of online video which focused more on availability instead of context, a faith, as Mél notes, for all digital media. A severe server crash in 2009 suddenly ended the availability of the website and it has been offline ever since. Although back-ups are available the website is still offline as a result of lack of dedication from SAW video's, and new initiatives being developed. Mél Hogan has written a more detailed overview of the rise and fall of Médiathèque and the traces left on the web in a paper for [FlowTV.org](#).

Collaborations with different partners and receiving long-term funding are common difficulties for online art video repositories. It is still unclear who controls and owns the content in the databases and how copyright material should be distributed from these archives. The cases discussed shows how videos were dispersed over different video portals including popular video websites such as YouTube and Vimeo. Another setback many online repositories faced was the adoption by both the audience and the artists, over time hits declined and channels were never adopted by the video art community. A challenge new channels trying to tackle by including social media tools for reaching their audience. Having the technology in place is not enough, context, partners, relationships with artists, and funding has an important influence on the success of the channel. This can be achieved, for example, by developing a good connection between the artist and the platform and by giving the artist some control over the platform to involve them in the process to keep the platform online. However, as Mél notes, crashes and broken links have shown the paradoxical nature of online archives; failures are part of the narrative.

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Vito Campanelli and the Memetic Contagion of Aestheticized Objects

By Nicola Bozzi



Vito Campanelli- 'Book Launch: Web Aesthetics'. Photo by Anne Helmond.

Vito Campanelli's presentation of his own *Web Aesthetics. How Digital Media Affect Culture and Society* (published by NAI) was one of the few theoretical ones in a very visual and demo-ridden Video Vortex edition.

In his work, the Italian scholar reduces important phenomena like social and peer-to-peer networks to their historical premises, laying the foundations for an organic aesthetic theory of digital media. His intervention outlined his conceptual framework, providing the common denominator to the examples analyzed in the book.

Taking the very cover of the volume as an example of how this world is dominated by surfaces, Campanelli proceeded to describe the progressive aestheticization of reality. He quoted well-known theorists of the simulacrum and the postmodern, like Jean Baudrillard and Fredric Jameson, but also Italian Ernesto Francalanci and his book *Estetica degli oggetti* ("Aesthetics of Objects"). It is through objects, or rather through their metamorphization from products to pieces of art, that Campanelli explores the diffused aesthetical dimension of our contemporary reality. When domestic objects no longer belong to the internal sphere, the home becomes the place where subjects feed the illusion shaping a virtualized and spectacularized reality. But if our possessions have become simulated fetishes, what have we become? Like several other speakers at the conference, Campanelli mentioned the amateur. We are all potential media amateurs, fascinated by a vertigo induced by world-making. As Baudrillard put it, "the object seduces us by giving us an illusion of power over it".



Web Aesthetics are the distributed aesthetics of digital networks – which, according to Geert Lovink and Ned Rossiter, do not just reside on those networks, but are made by them. For this reason, like [Aby Warburg](#)'s iconology, the Web retains the cultural memory of the Western world, as it sediments through the centuries. The memes depicted in YouTube videos or animated GIFs (which we have heard so much about in Video Vortex) are highly expressive images that populate the tabula rasa of memory, spreading and surviving by memetic contagion. This last term suggests a viral component in the reproduction of images, intrinsically driven both to movement and preservation, that goes beyond the boundaries of the Web.

Dagan Cohen and Upload Cinema: Taking YouTube to the Big Screen

By [Nicola Bozzi](#)



Dagan Cohen - 'Upload Cinema: Bringing Web Film to the Big Screen: from Nice to Mainstream'. Photo by Anne Helmond.

Upload Cinema is a monthly video spree that quite literally takes the most valuable YouTube gems to the big screen. That is, the not-so-big one of the **Uitkijk**, the smallest and coziest movie theater in Amsterdam.

Dutch creative director Dagan Cohen and cinema programmer Barbara de Wijn started the initiative because they thought (the best) YouTube videos deserved a bigger screen. So, to make sure they selected only the most compelling, they made the format of their cinematic get-together strictly editorial and topical, with a monthly theme explored with the help of experts and, of course, crowd-sourced suggestions from the users of their website. Previous editions of Upload Cinema have included “The Perfect Speech” (just before the American elections), “Video Gastronomy” (pretty self-explanatory), and of course “Pussy Galore” (which, for the dirty-minded out there, is the mandatory focus on YouTube feline celebrities).

Just like the videos it screens, Upload Cinema has gone viral and the brand has been exported to 15 Dutch towns, but also beyond national borders (e.g. Barcelona and Madrid). Cohen said they’re not going Pecha Kucha-style yet (by which I mean franchising their format) in order to preserve the quality of the selection, but they have been having collaborations and special events apart from the usual monthly meeting.

The most successful of this latter type, titled quite grandiously “The Canon of YouTube” (which gives you an idea of how serious they are about selecting the highest-quality stuff), culminated in a live dancing performance involving the audience and the ever-green YouTube hit “the Numa Numa song”.

As Cohen said, sometimes viral is something very physical.



Dagan Cohen - 'Upload Cinema: Bringing Web Film to the Big Screen: from Nice to Mainstream'. Photo by Anne Helmond.

Dagan Cohen’s presentation can be found online, [here](#).

Online Video Aesthetics: Florian Schneider talks about the Open Source Documentary

By [Catalina Iorga](#)



*Florian Schneider - 'An Open Source Mode of the Documentary'.
Photo by Anne Helmond.*

German filmmaker, media artist and activist Florian Schneider ambitiously set out to present a mission statement for a novel type of documentary, the open source mode, and launched into a highly theoretical and somewhat cryptic talk that contained a few guidelines on how this transition can be made, but lacked any clear examples or results.

He started by explaining the moving images that ran in the background throughout his presentation, namely scenes from the first Dutch sound film and one of the first documentaries in film history, '[Philips-Radio](#)' (known in France as *Symphonie Industrielle*). Made in 1931 by [Joris Ivens](#) after a commission from Philips Eindhoven, the film shows the mass production of radio transistors at the corporation's factories.

Schneider proceeded to question the possibility of a 'Philips-Radio Revisited', of making a documentary about a fragmented, discontinuous post-industrial space. Ivens found himself in the very midst of production, while nowadays it's impossible to visually reconstruct the technical aspects and social division of production; this network cannot be traced.

The aesthetic potential of the contemporary network should become the main focus of documentary makers, as opposed to emphasising only the creation and distribution of content. Schneider believes that what is at stake is the production of a new vision, an optical experience. In other words, it's not about 'what to see' but 'how to see things',

meaning that a number of challenges must be considered: ethical, political and especially aesthetic ones. He is calling for a reinvention of the documentary under network conditions, keeping in mind that the network logs, captures, records and stores interactions between subject and object.

Schneider first elaborated on the *status quo* of the documentary. First, there has been an emancipation of this genre from its typical carrier media – film and photography – and an expansion into other fields, such as painting, theatre and other artistic forms. Another crucial development is digitisation, which has redefined editing; to edit can now mean to connect data streams instead of splicing 16 or 35mm film. The network has replaced or engulfed ‘the streets’ on which the filmmaker would wander in the quest to (re) appropriate a reality that exists independently from the hermetic space of the creator’s studio. In this quest, the documentary filmmaker waits something to happen, for the unexpected to occur; this notion of anticipation reverberates into the editing process as events are reconstructed with the same frame of mind.



Florian Schneider at Video Vortex. Photo by Anne Helmond.

He then expressed a series of concerns about how film is made in the networked environment. In this context, there is a tension between legible and illegible, with a strong tendency for making things readable and decipherable in order to be searched, found, categorised, indexed tagged and subjected to an algorithmic process. Schneider controversially claims that text-to-image hybrids (i.e. subtitles), which can be indexed, represent death to film since they make everything calculable. This anti-computationalist perspective continues with his recommendation of an algorithm that produces difference rather than sameness, multiplicity instead of identity, since online aesthetics are all about weaving items into a mesh of similarities instead of discontinuities.

Nevertheless, the network allows the filmmaker to explore an absolute out of field, to work with sources not originally captured in frames given that the content of the image always escapes proper framing. The essence of the network image, what makes it

mobile is that there is no chance to readjust it.

Ending with an open question – ‘What is networked seeing?’, Schneider left the audience eager to find out exactly what an open source documentary would look like. Maybe that will be answered at next year’s Video Vortex.

Evan Roth: Freedom, Art & Gifs



Evan Roth 'Animated Gif Mashup Studio Workshop'. Photo by Anne Helmond.

Artist **Evan Roth** received a degree in architecture from University of Maryland and a MFA from the Communication, Design and Technology school at Parsons The New School for Design. His work focuses on tools of empowerment, open source and popular culture.

Roth describes his own work as a middle zone between open source and pop culture. His work should appeal to people in museums and people in cubicles, wasting company time, at the same time. Unsurprisingly, he considers meme culture to be an art form as well.

Roth has a special interest in graffiti, and is one of the co-founders of the **Graffiti Research Lab**. A few of his interesting graffiti projects include:

Graffiti Analysis: A software tool that creates visualisations of the unseen gestures involved in the creation of a tag.



Evan Roth - Graffiti Analysis

Led Throwies: LED lights, attached to a magnet, that can be thrown onto a metal surface.



Laser Tag: Putting huge tags on buildings, using laser and projection technology.



Graffiti Research Lab - Laser Tag.

Roth is also part of the **Free Art & Technology Lab**, an organization dedicated to enriching the public domain through the research and development of creative technologies and media. A few of the projects he discussed included:

The China Channel: A Firefox plugin that filters your browsing in such a way that it replicates the experience a Chinese person would have surfing the Web.



Duplicating the Google Streetview car: Instructions on building your own Google

Streetview car. A Google de-marketing campaign:



F.A.T Lab - How to build a fake Google Street View car

EyeWriter: Hardware and software developed to enable famed graffiti artist TEMPT1, who suffers from ALS, to write graffiti again.



Aside from graffiti, Roth has a significant soft spot for animated Gifs. At Video Vortex, Roth lead a workshop of 20 people in creating an archive of animated Gifs from the Web, than mashing those up with music to create in-browser music video's. The result was comparable to this earlier video by Roth:



When asked if he sees a connection between graffiti and gif animations he had to admit he hadn't really thought about it. An important resemblance between the two, he noted, is that both spring from amateur grassroots cultures.

Maybe there should be more animated Gifs out in the streets.

Andrew Clay – YouTube: Make Money While Escaping Death

By Nicola Bozzi



Andrew Clay - 'The YouTube Rich List: A List of Riches?'. Photo by Anne Helmond.

A media theorist and lecturer at Leicester's [De Montfort University](#), [Andrew Clay](#) has been investigating online video for some time. As an opener of the sixth edition of *Video Vortex*, his intervention explored YouTube and effectively went a bit beyond, as the Reader tagline suggests. The British theorist raised several compelling questions about the popular video sharing platform, inspiring the audience to ask quite a few questions at the end. In particular, his analysis of the top YouTubers – the ones who got rich by putting serial sketches online and engaging the community – took stock of the YouTube experience so far, focusing on the blurrier and blurrier distinction between amateurs and professionals.

Criticizing taste-based evaluations of content such as Andrew Keen's *Cult of the Amateur*, Clay took notice of the most successful video genres – that is, comedy and entertainment-enhanced news. What seems to be the most interesting aspect of the phenomenon to the British professor, though, is the community and the networking possibilities that it enables. Top YouTubers not only partake in the same superstardom, amplified by increasing collaborations with each other, but also have the capacity to engage the audience in a participatory media space, as well as casual crowds.

Apart from the YouTube-specific discourse, Clay put the platform in relation to other preexisting media – like Mtv, once the mainstream source for edgy content – and pondered on future developments. For example, it is clear that the website wants to get more and more involved with television, while maintaining and extending its online supremacy even by schooling and workshops in less media-savvy countries – a bit like [Current TV](#) did in its early days.



If YouTube's merit has been that of bringing niche into the mainstream – narrowing the technical gap between professionals and amateurs – according to Clay there is a deeper, hidden purpose that drives people to struggle in order to establish their niche presence on the internet giant's surface. Quoting German philosopher Martin Heidegger, he argues such focus on inauthentic lives is a human attempt to scare death away. We don't know if the [Annoying Orange](#) will be forever remembered, but it might definitely survive its author.



Andrew Clay at Video Vortex. Photo by Anne Helmond

Matthew Williamson: Degeneracy in Online Video Platforms



Matthew Williamson - 'Degeneracy in Online Video Platforms'. Photo by Anne Helmond.

A graduate of the Ontario College of Art & Design, and nowadays an artist working in a broad range of media, from print to web. **Matthew Williamson** examines the relations between man and machine, and was at Video Vortex to discuss the condition of online video today.

Kicking off with a quote from Michael Snow, who allegedly responded to the fact that his film *Wavelength* had been watched over 50.000 times on YouTube with:

“The people who watch the video online have not watched the film, but have actually seen a ghost.”

Indeed, the Web is full of these ghosts: *Wavelength* appears on a lot of online video platforms today. It wouldn't be much of a stretch to say that there's a redundant amount of video platform on the Web these days, without much diversification between these platforms: Just take *Double Rainbow* for example.

This degeneracy is self-generated out of competition and reward. On *Youtube*, this reward is socializing. On sites such as *Megavideo* however, this rewarding is more banal, in the form of actual reward points per view. This can only lead to a flood of lowest common denominator content, with the needs of the many outweighing the needs of the few.

So what will the future of online video look like? The answer to this question, according to Williamson, is that the majority of the internet content is moving towards video, so the amount of degenerate content will only increase.

On the upside, if enjoy anime music video's, you're all set.

Workshop: Remixing and Re-using Open Video Collections – Part 2

By Diana Soto de Jesús

Almost 8 hours into the workshop we've just finished showing our work. Its an eclectic collection that goes from funny countdowns to sardonic observations on femininity, passing through Dutch villagers in traditional outfits dancing to techno. It was interesting that certain types of images such as groups of animals running wildly, orchestra directors and early 20th century dancing couples were featured in many of the videos even if these dealt with different topics, were made in different styles and (most of the time) using different footage. This highlights the creative potential of remixing where the sources may be similar or even the same in some cases, but the results are quite idiosyncratic and creative.

But what are the sources? Where can you get your free and perfectly legit audio and video material to use and share as you wish?

In the workshop we basically used four sources for our material (all free and open source of course).

-[Open Images Project](#) – this is an initiative of the [Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision](#) in collaboration with KnowledgeGeland. It is based mainly on material from the the Netherlands public broadcasting archive but users are invited to add their own material to the collection and so it keeps on growing. Furthermore, Open Images also provides an [API](#), making it easy to develop mashups.

-[Archive.org](#) - both audio and video material. It has the advantage of storing all sorts of materials (film, music, books) currently in the public good. This means that your remixed video could easily include bits and pieces of Alfred Hitchcock's *The 39 Steps*, George A. Romero's *Night of The Living Dead* or Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

-[Freesound.org](#) - there's a great variety of sounds and special effects available here (from conversation sin bar, to a surprised American from the Midwest). Furthermore the active community means that you can make requests of sounds you need. In order to download from here you need to be a registered user.

-[Jamendo.com](#) – specially oriented towards music, it has all kinds of genre from electro to classical.

In terms of editing software people used a diversity of programs from iMovie to Adobe Premiere Elements to Final Cut Pro. Some also took advantage of [MPEG Streamclip](#) (free) to convert their Open Images videos from .mpg to a better format.

This workshop has taken place in collaboration with MediaLAB Amsterdam.

Workshop: Remixing and Re-Use of Open Video Collections

By: [Diana Soto de Jesús](#)



Maarten Brinkerink, organizer of the "Remixing and Re-Use of Open Video Collections" Workshop. Photo by Anne Helmond.

Just a day before the much awaited sixth edition of Video Vortex, students, media producers, video amateurs and overall new media enthusiasts are gathering in the [Netherlands Media Art Institute](#) to indulge their geeky tendencies in some open video remixing and experimenting.

In the context of the [Open Images project](#), participants of this workshop will get creative with material from the Netherlands' public broadcasting archive, to make their own short videos. We've now just started and this is the goal of the day: each and everyone of the participants needs to make a short (1 minute) movie by the end of the day.

But first things first. Who is responsible for all this?

The workshop is organized by [Maarten Brinkerink](#) project manager of the [Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision](#) and it is lead by mixed media artists and [Emile Zile](#) and [José Miguel Biscaya](#).

And so, amidst the tangle of ethernet cables providing the much needed internet connection, the workshop begins.

As we present each other it becomes clear that a lot of participants have some experience with video editing but no experience whatsoever with open source video. To which Emile clarifies that there's quite a difference between video editing experience and experience working with samples and remixing.

José describes what we'll do today as making a collage, something that most likely everyone is familiar with even if only from his/her kindergarden days. He explains that sampling is about taking something out of its context and doing something else with it,

more than experience what you really need is intuition. So its not about building tight narratives but rather interesting mash-ups. Keeping this in mind Emil and José gave a series of tips that I summarize here.

1. Think about audio, it can really change the meaning and add a new layer to your remixed video – As an example Emile mentions the **Gendered Advertiser Remixer** a tool where one finds two columns, one with video material and one with audio material from commercial ads and can then combine them. Consequently, one comes up with very uncanny ads where Barbie is showing off her silky smooth blond locks to a narrator with a deep bass voice more apt for a G.I.Joe ad. This kind of wacky gender bias experimentation works because the duration of both audio and video material is the same, both sample banks are 30 seconds long. Furthermore, they both have quick video editing and quick paced dialogue. So these unexpected collisions between different media end up producing a “third meaning.”
2. Get a broad range of samples to work with – that is, even if you have an idea in mind, say kittens for a new addition to the ever growing LOLcats collection, don't stick to samples only from that area. When you are doing your search look for material in other topics like say, religion, you never know what you made find.
3. Chance is on your side – Think about chance collisions. This is one area where randomness can be a good thing.
4. Forget the Timeline – “Timelining” or making a structure doesn't really work for this kind of endeavor. It is more about seeing what collisions and connections work.
5. Get rhythm – You don't need to make a film that looks like a film with a beginning an end, you can go by rhythm. For example cut a series of left to right motions and mash them together.

I'll be tuning in again later to let you know all about the specific sources to find material and resources to edit them in order to create your own video stories with found material, as promised by the Video Vortex organizers.

VeniVidiVortex: Closing Party 10.03

Program Out Now!

Download [here](#) the program for the VVV closing party.

Reflecting on our growing digital culture and its increasing audiovisual presence in our daily lives, artists CONSTANT DULLAART, ANJA MASLING, GIORGI TABATADZE, EMILE ZILE, and YELLOW GOOGLE HEAD AND MACACOSTAILEY and DJ 4LCH3MY (aka Katja Novitskova), reveal the possibilities and playfulness of online video to explore, appropriate, and create. Slamming, mixing, melding, mashing, stalling, freezing and buffering will ensue as artists drawing from moving images on the Web beckon you into the vortices of our online video world. From the live collision of video

clips to the manipulation of the YouTube interface, the Institute of Network Cultures welcomes you to a closing night of visual sensory over-load through performances and projections.



Video Vortex Reader II: moving images beyond YouTube

Dear All,

the Institute of Network Cultures is pleased to announce the publication of *Video Vortex Reader II: moving images beyond YouTube*. The printed copies have arrived safe and sound at the INC headquarters as we wait excitedly to launch the book at the Video Vortex #6 conference on Saturday.

If you are unable to attend the event, you can order a copy of the reader by emailing: books@networkcultures.org

The reader is also available as a PDF download in the [Video Vortex Readers page](#)



T I M E T A B L E

THURSDAY, MARCH 10

N I M K

10:00 - 16:00 → Workshops

FRIDAY, MARCH 11

T R O U W A M S T E R D A M

09:30 - 10:00 → Doors open, coffee and tea

10:00 - 10:15 → Welcome and introduction by Geert Lovink

10:15 - 12:30 → **ONLINE VIDEO AESTHETICS**

Michael Strangelove, Andrew Clay, Florian Cramer,
Florian Schneider

12:30 - 13:30 → Lunch

13:30 - 15:15 → **PLATFORMS, STANDARDS & THE TROUBLE WITH TRANSLATION CIVIL RIGHTS**

Matthew Williamson, Ben Moskowitz, Holmes Wilson

15:15 - 15:30 → Coffee break

15:30 - 17:00 → **ONLINE VIDEO ART**

Evan Roth, Dagan Cohen, Ashiq Jahan Khondker
& Eugene Koylyarenko, Roel Wouters

17:00 - 17:15 → **BOOK LAUNCH: WEB AESTHETICS**

with Vito Campanelli

SATURDAY, MARCH 12

T R O U W A M S T E R D A M

09:30 - 10:00 → Doors open, coffee and tea

10:00 - 12:30 → **IT'S NOT A DEAD COLLECTION, IT'S A DYNAMIC DATABASE**

Mél Hogan, Sandra Fauconnier, Annelies Termeer,
Arjon Dunnewind, Catrien Schreuder, Teague Schneiter

12:30 - 13:30 → Lunch

13:30 - 14:45 → **THE WORLD OF ONLINE VIDEO: COUNTRY REPORTS**

Ferdiansyah Thajib & Nuraini Juliastuti,
Koen Leurs, Ebru Baranseli

14:45 - 15:30 → **Q&A** with Natalie Bookchin

15:30 - 15:45 → Coffee break

15:45 - 17:15 → **ONLINE VIDEO AS A POLITICAL TOOL**

Sam Gregory, Patricia Dias da Silva,
Andrew Lowenthal, Joanne Richardson

17:15 - 17:30 → **BOOK LAUNCH: VIDEO VORTEX READER II**

20:30 - 23:00 → **VENIVIDIVORTEX: CLOSING PARTY**

TUESDAY, MARCH 15

SMARTPROJECTSPACE

19:00 - 21:30 → **EVENING SCREENING** with artist Natalie Bookchin