



THE MIRROR STAGE

International Video Art Exhibition

Front Cover: adapted from Megan Smith's video 'Child'.

The Mirror Stage



NeMe is a non profit, non government, Cyprus registered association, founded in November 2004 (www.neme.org).

The Mirror Stage

17-29 September 2008, Limassol, Cyprus

The Mirror Stage is a series of events initiated by NeMe and presented by IMCA. It is co-organised by NeMe, the Lanitis Foundation and the Cyprus University of Technology and consists of an international video art exhibition at the Lanitis Foundation, an audio visual performance at Teatro ENA by Felipe Frozza and Luigi Vitali, talks at the Lanitis Foundation by Dr Edward Shanken, Dr Dimitris Charitos and Dr Christos Barboutis, moderator: Dr Antonis Danos and screenings at Dinos Art Cafe, Veni Vidi Vici and Brent Cross.

This catalogue contains all selected videos to 'The Mirror Stage', which took place in Limassol, Cyprus from 17 - 29 September 2008.

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The videos presented in 'The Mirror Stage', were selected by a NeMe organised committee which consisted of Dr Antonis Danos, Dr Christos Barboutis, Helene Black and Yiannis Colakides.

Project Co-ordinator: Yiannis Colakides

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Brent Cross
Dinos Art Cafe
Full Moon productions

and:

Yiannos Afrodisis, Christos Barboutis, Helene Black, Antonis Danos, Natalie Demetriou, Christina Hadjiparaskeva, Yiangos Hadjiyiannis, Jeremy Hight, Catherine Nikita, Christina Olympiou, Elena Onisiforou, Panikos Petrides, Giorgos Sisamos, all the video makers who submitted their work and made this programme possible and all the visitors to our events.

Observing Video: The Mirror Stage

“...what realizes itself in my history is not the past definite of what was since it is no longer, nor even the present perfect of what I will have been in what I am, but the future perfect of what I will have been for what I am in the process of becoming”¹

Video’s rapidly developing hardware and software technologies ensure that video makers have to relearn their craft on major software or hardware updates. This (bi)annual update of tools create a cycle where the knowledge of the tool needs to be rediscovered, creating for video makers, a perpetual state of not only potential technical but also conceptual exploration. These investigations are evident in most video exhibitions, the internet, etc supporting this art medium to exponentially grow in the past fifteen years and allowing it - through the new internet technologies - to generate an accelerated presence and an ever growing international audience. In spite of this focus, video remains in a nervous condition, in a perpetual state of flux, not defined by a theoretical framework which may contextualise it within the body of cultural dialectics and academia. Instead, it is mostly defined by the practitioners and the technological advances providing it with an *“internal dialectic [...] produced out of the circumstances of its [...] multiple, ongoing invention”²* or as Bill Viola noted: *“No beginning/No end/No direction/No duration - Video as mind”³*.

This denial of acknowledging a possible certainty regarding the medium, shared by many practitioners and theorists prevents the establishment of a unifying theory for video. Their texts *“assume the status of art and take its place”⁴*. The discourse is divided and

discusses either the various capture, compositing or presentation technologies or the videos themselves as *“the canon of western art history failed to recognize the centrality of technology as an artistic medium and theme or as a hermeneutic tool for critics and historians”⁵*. As such theoretical texts on video cannot be used as bodies of reference, a critical canon by which works are read. Cubitt declares that *“...video prevents the prerequisite for a theoretical approach: that is, deciding upon an object about which you wish to know.”⁶* The use of video spanning from a documentary medium to surveillance and from wedding and family videos to art experiments, was described by Cubitt as the *“internal undecidability”⁷* of the medium. However, this argument may be questioned as it discusses the uses void of the intentions. An equivalent analogy would be to reflect on the undecidability of the use of paint in the hands of an artist, a decorator and a DIY painter. The medium is not the message but the means by which purpose is fulfilled, be that the generation of meaning or the execution of a more banal function. Nevertheless, there are doubts amongst many theoreticians as to the possibilities of a definition of the medium, a *decision upon the object*. This in my view, helps the medium as the doubts generated assist it to independently ‘be’. According to Descartes *“By virtue of the fact that I doubt, I am sure that I think, and [...] by virtue of thinking, I am.”⁸*

In pursuit of a positive contribution to this dialectic which revolves around the medium, “The Mirror Stage” programme is based on the assumption that video in general and video art in particular has reached a level of maturity

1 Jaques Lacan, *Ecrits*, p.300
2 Sean Cubitt, *Videography*, 1993, p.4
3 Silvia Martin, *Video Art*, 2006 - quoting a 1980 B.Viola note.
4 Dellbrügg & de Moll, *Theorie Remix*, 1994 on art criticism

5 Edward Shanken, *Historicizing Art and Technology: Forging a Method and Firing a Canon*
6 Sean Cubitt, *Videography*, 1994, p.xvi
7 Ibid, p.4
8 Jacques Lacan, “Maurice Merleau-Ponty,” *Les Temps Modernes* 184-5 (1961) 248-9.

that could potentially be determined through the function of its image. As such the program looks at video art through Lacan's "mirror stage". That is, how the image acts as a basic ingredient in the constitution of the picture from the subject and how this can be translated into a methodology which would assist us to evaluate the state of video art.

For Lacan, mirror images are considered formative in the development of the ego, or sense of self. Without the mirror image we can never learn the difference between "I" or the "other" as distinct to oneself. Even with the mirror absent, "*the subject finds itself reflected in others*"⁹. This transformation which "*takes place in the subject when he assumes an image*"¹⁰ is defined by Jane Gallop as "*a decisive moment. Not only does the self issue from it, but so does 'the body in bits and pieces.'* This moment is the source not only for what follows but also for what precedes. *It produces the future through anticipation and the past through retroaction*"¹¹. This approach places the mirror stage within a contemporary dialectic as it encourages an eclectic selection and analysis of information in its parts, its '*bits and pieces*'. For this reason, "The Mirror Stage" has chosen not to present a thematic content. Instead, by presenting the selected videos as 'pieces', it hopes to construct an identity where the works can be analysed in their 'bits'.

According to Lacanian psychologists the mirror stage is a process which does not end in early childhood but continues throughout our lives. Every time we look in the mirror we stare at a new 'other' which gives us clues about our process of becoming. This constant reinterpretation and reinvention of our *future perfect*, can exist beyond the study of our mental processes. Psychology looks at the object as the subject of study. In the case of a mirror image the correlation between the objects and their reflection can be seen as dependent

variables where the one cannot exist without the other. Nevertheless the key element in this relationship is not the object/subject or the reflection but the 'machine' which allows the coexistence of the two: the mirror. It is its shape and quality which affects the mirror image and the resulting relationship between the subjects and their reflection. A non flat mirror should, in Lacanian discourse, affect the "*transformation which takes place in the subject*".

Video is a recording medium, which captures the 'real' or other machine generated imagery. The recorded reality is manipulated through editing, compositing and/or other means which strip the presented pieces from their context, their initially recorded 'reality'. As such video can be said that it constructs reality by manipulating its appearance and thus presenting the "*real in its imaginary dimension*"¹². So it may be argued that video generates what may be perceived as reflective works where the image substitutes the documentation of reality and rises superior to it helping it to assume a symbolic presence comparable to that achieved by the other art disciplines.

Unlike the traditional fine arts such as painting or sculpture, video art - analogue and digital - requires a mediated process of technology for its full realisation and continued presence as an art form. This technological hardware is a permanent necessity and cannot be disposed with after the completion of the work. However the embodiment of the medium through technological mediation might not be what makes it unique as television functions in a similar manner. Video art's singularity lies within its processes towards embodiment, or transmateriality through the immaterial realm of the transformation of data into ideas, the mediation between the object and its representation.

The Mirror Stage program does not assume to provide answers, but it is hoped, that it will contribute to the dialectic by which video is viewed and placed within its temporal constraints and how

9 Yasunori Sugimura, *Golding as a Psychological Novelist*, p.54

10 Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits; A Selection*; trans. by Alan Sheridan

11 Jane Gallop, *Reading Lacan*, p.80-81

12 Slavoj Zizek: *Troubles with the Real: Lacan as a Viewer of Alien* - <http://www.lacan.com/zizalien.htm>

these constraints assist its '*process of becoming*' validated with a comprehensive theoretical body which may position it within its own theory structure. The choice of selecting Lacan's discourse as a reference and understanding for the investigation of video may be a sign of our uncertain times when "*meaning evaporates, we devote ourselves to... psychology!*"¹³ but after all, "*one must go beyond this stage, [...] and psychology as well*"¹⁴...

Nietzsche observed, "*our machines are working on our thoughts*". In the case of video, the relationship which is generated, is interchangeable. On the one hand, there is the recorded object and the subject of the resulting video, and on the other, the recorded subject and the object which video becomes, the transmaterialisation of the material into immaterial and back again. The various evolving technologies which mediate between the two, 'the mirror' if you wish, inherently determine the shape of the object and hence the presented image. In the words of Marshall McLuhan "*We shape our tools and then our tools shape us*"¹⁵ and it is this which provides us with a premise which crosses between the disciplines of art, technology, theory and psychology and the platform for "The Mirror Stage".

Yiannis Colakides, September 2008

13 Sean Cubitt: Crisis in the meaning of meaning, <http://seancubitt.blogspot.com/2007/12/crisis-in-meaning-of-meaning.html>

14 Jean Baudrillard, From Radical Incertitude, or Thought as Imposter, International Journal of Baudrillard Studies, Volume 2, Number 1 (January 2005)

15 Marshall McLuhan "Laws of Media: the New Science" 1964, xi-xii

Yiannis Colakides (AA Dipl) is a practising architect, a founding member of NeMe and a peer reviewer of Leonardo Abstracts Service (LABs).

just new year



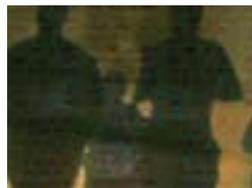
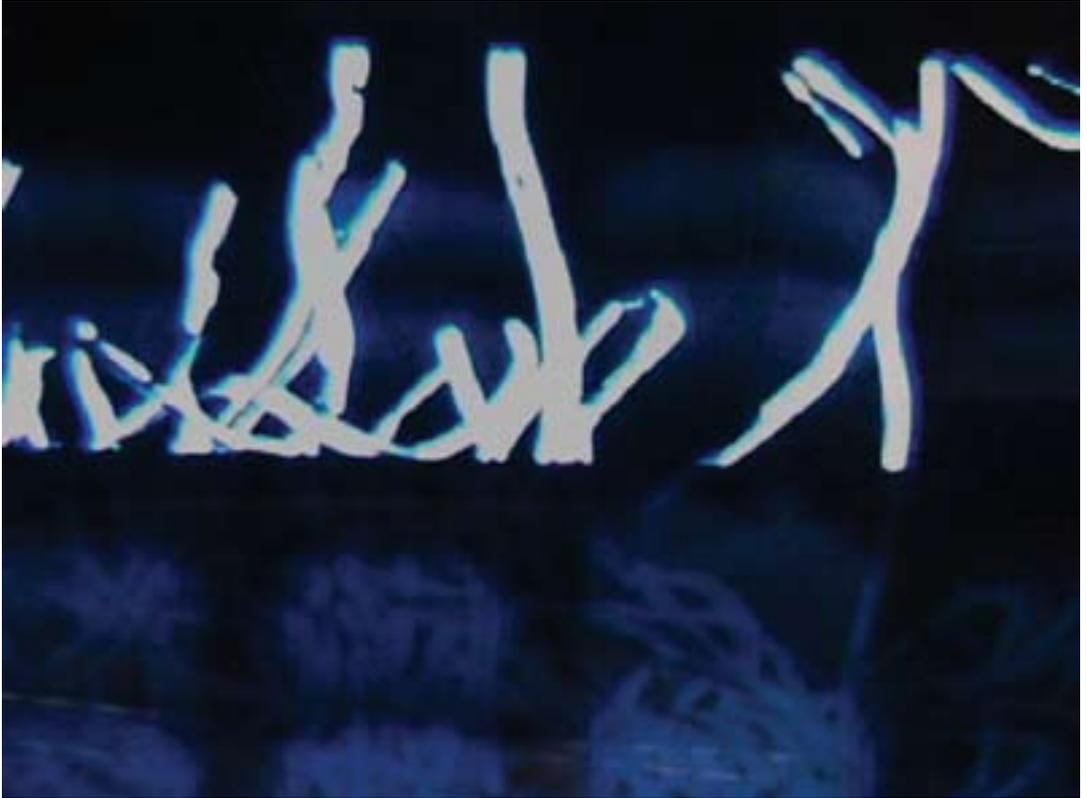
Duration: 5'52"

Face/Shadows/Verting



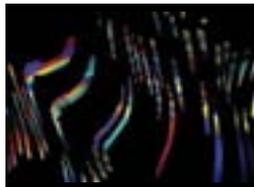
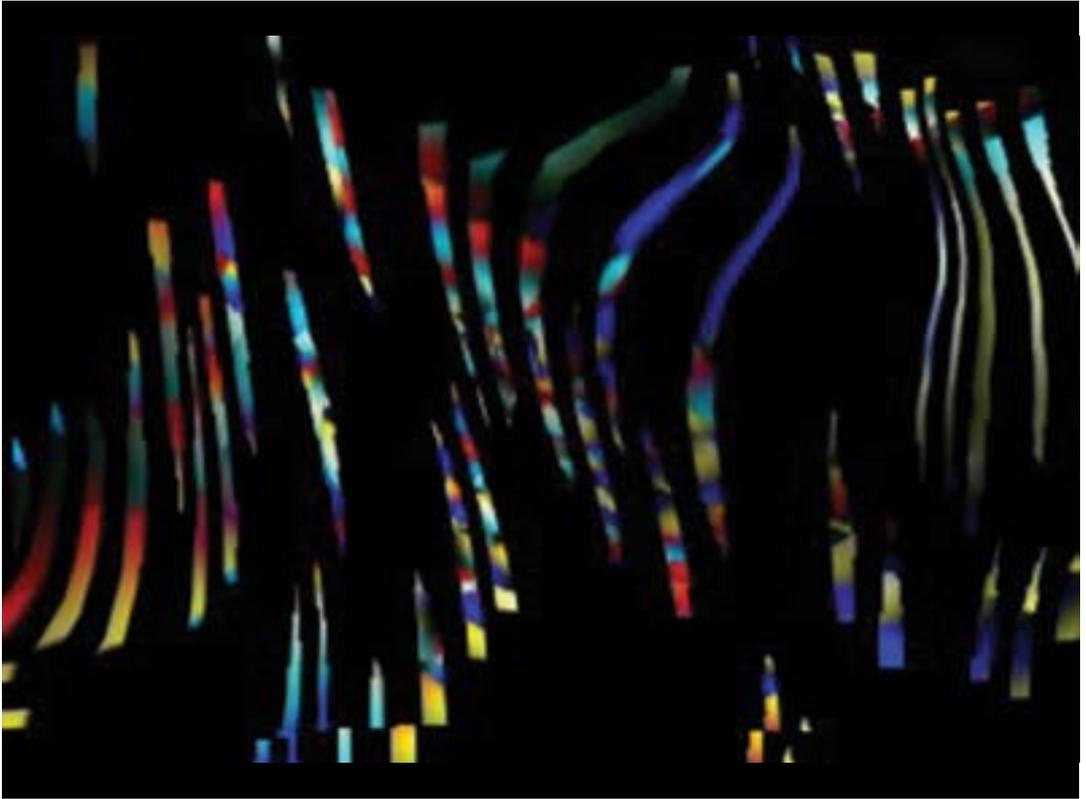
Duration: 3'00"

High Velocity Oblivion



Duration: 5'12"

Muziek Illusion



Duration: 2'00"

2007 April the second



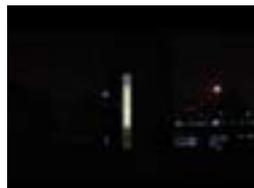
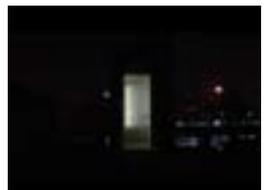
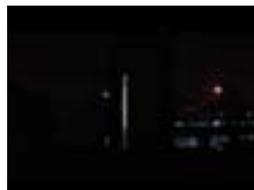
Duration: 13'46"

The Long Inside



Duration: 3'09"

Silent Nights



Duration: 0'30"

monoconcept



Duration: 5'09"

The World as Will and Representation



Duration: 8'11"

Platform



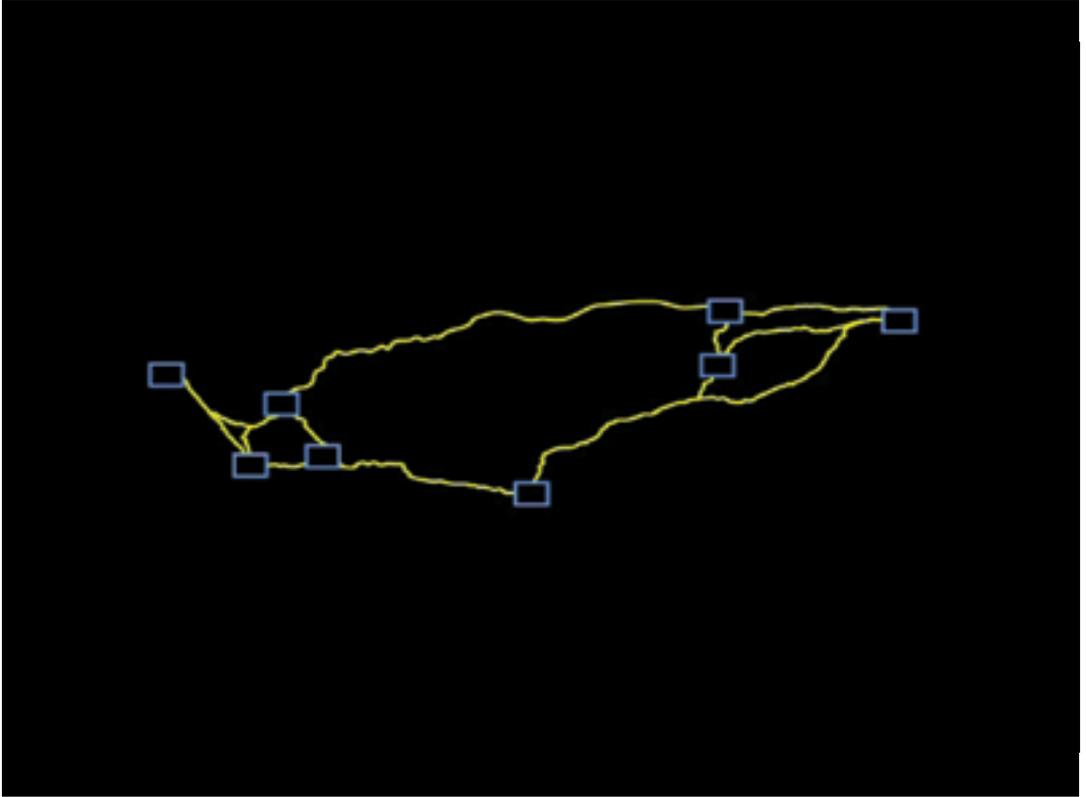
Duration: 3'47"

Why My Body



Duration: 3'20"

Sky Wires: At Home and Homeless



Duration: 9'31"

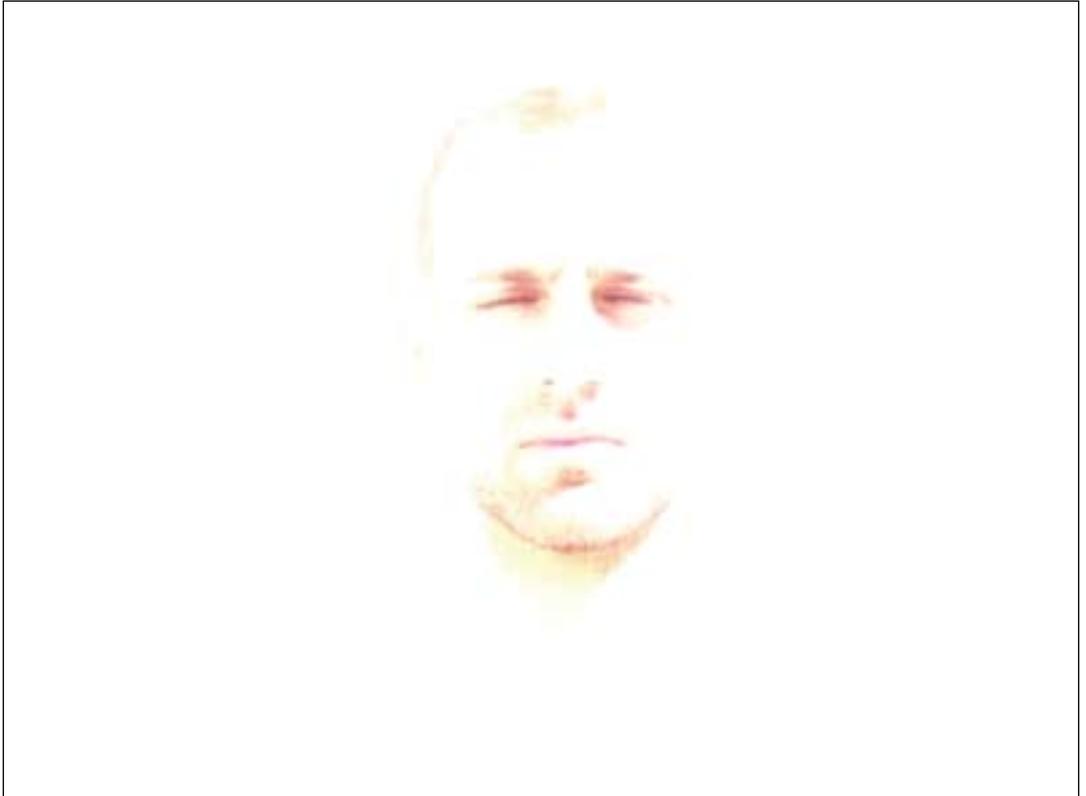
Urban Surfing



3 channel

Duration: 7'04"

The Only O[n]ce



Duration: 7'31"

EC-101, Maribor/Ljubljana, 15h14



Duration: 4'03"

Dubus



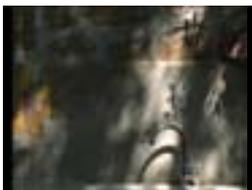
Duration: 4'09"

Limbo Sketches



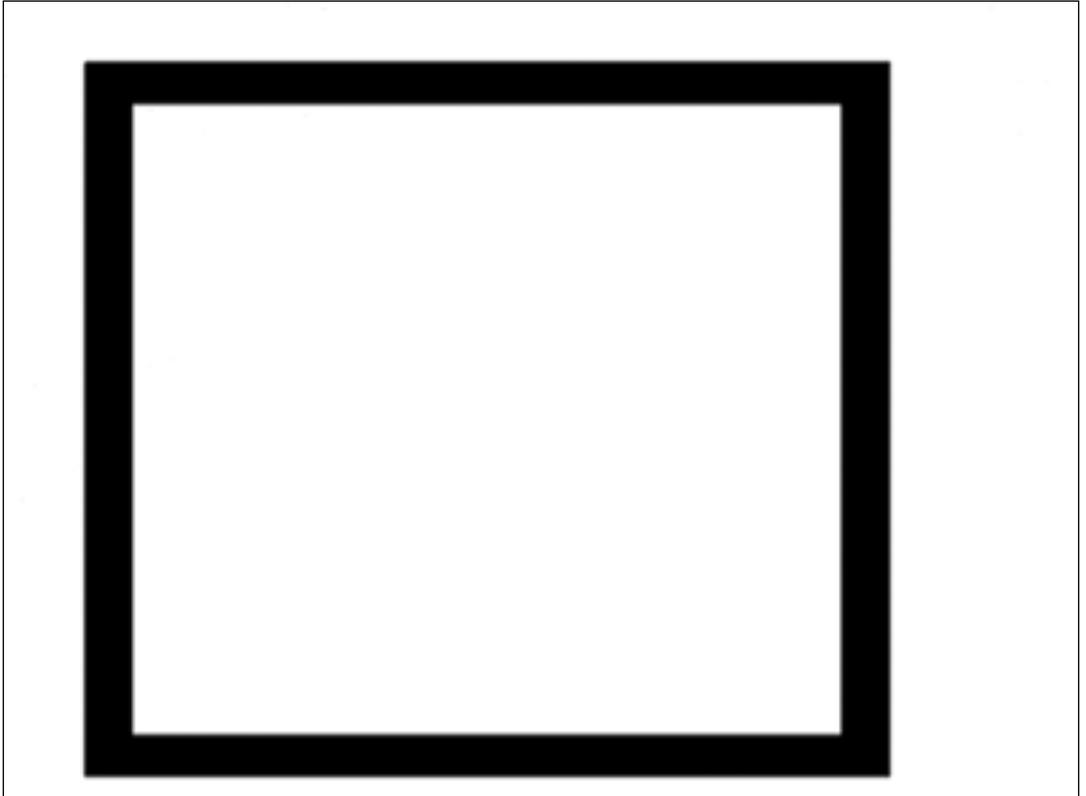
Duration: 9'30"

Afternoon Echoes

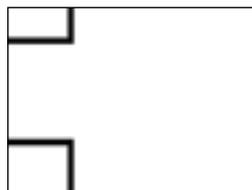


Duration: 1'26"

Please Pass The Dark Chocolate Over Before I commit Suicide



my color etc
Please specify



White and Black A
White and Black C
Any other Mixed t
Please specify.....

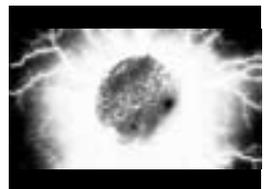
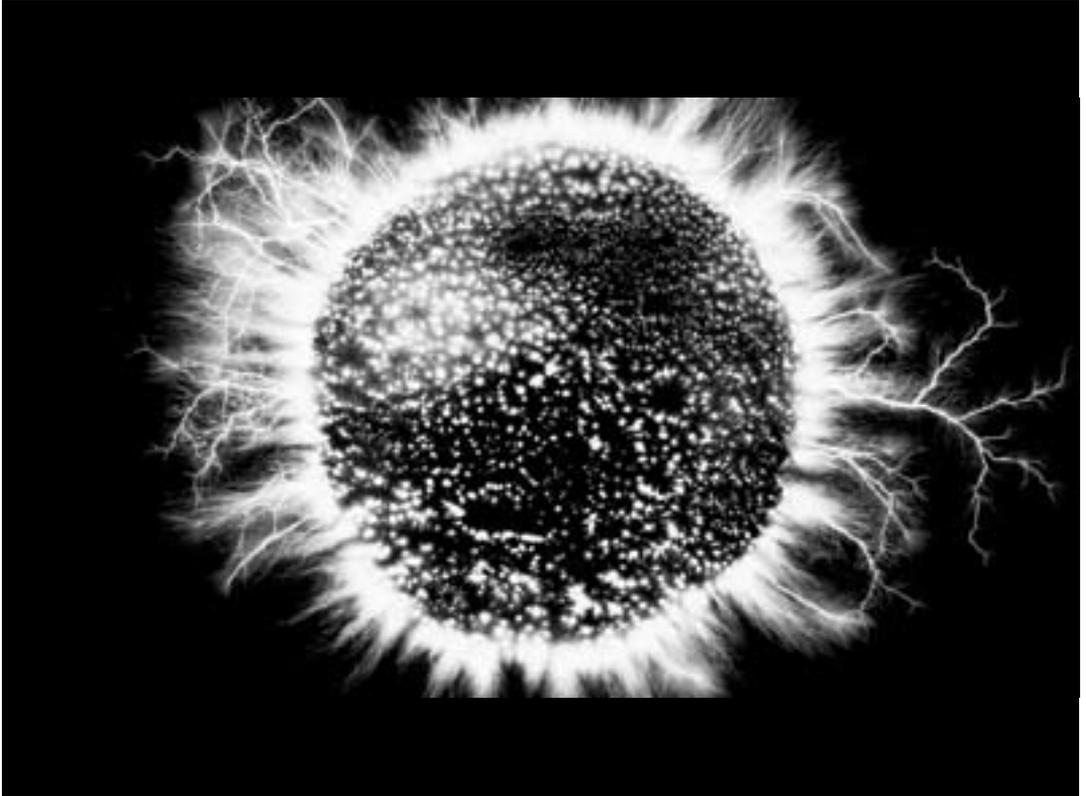
Duration: 1'38"

Portrait #27



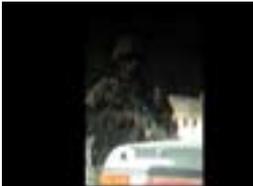
Duration: 7'17"

Energie!



Duration: 5'08"

Why we Fight



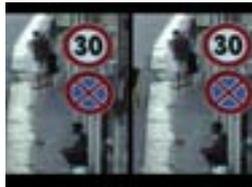
Duration: 4'25"

Reigning Cats and Dogs



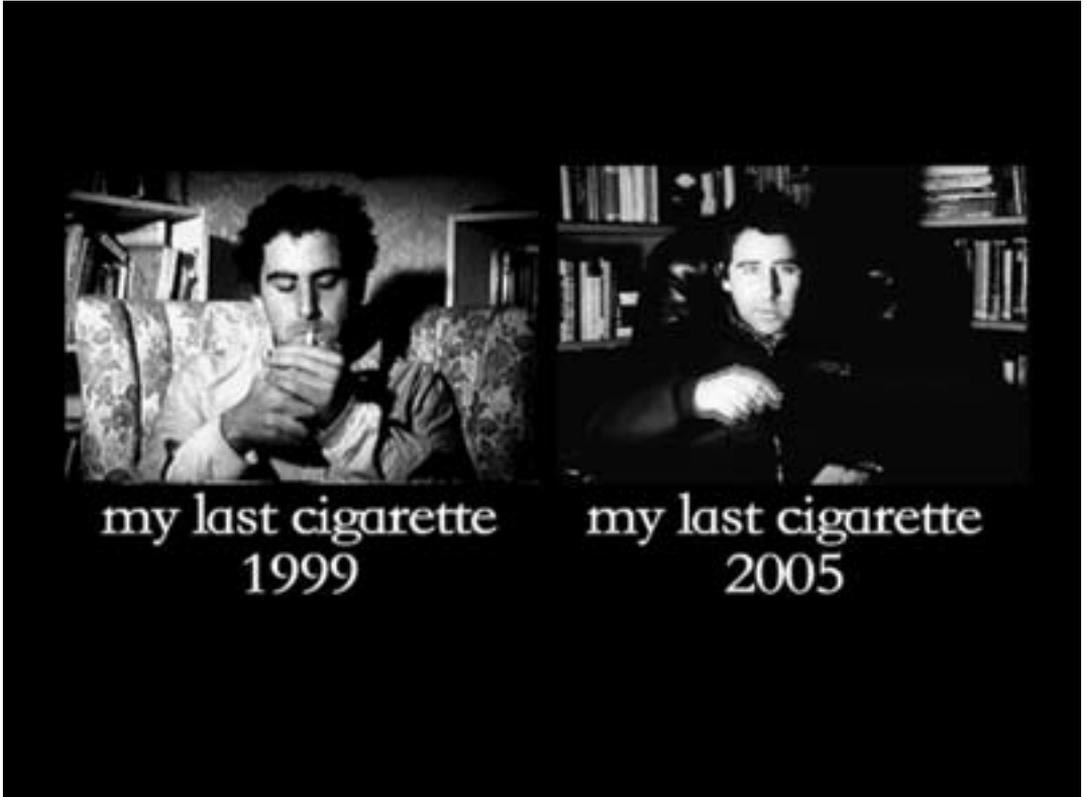
Duration: 15'03"

Flaneur I

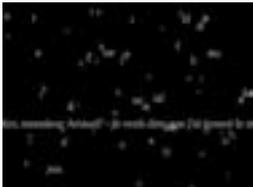


Duration: 4'57"

The Quitter



Duration: 2'24"



Duration: 20'39"

Gesti PerFormanti



Duration: 14'59"

2 Minute Warning



Duration: 2'00"

Claudia and Paul



Duration: 3'29"

Orders



Duration: 3'44"

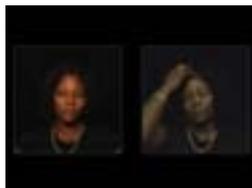
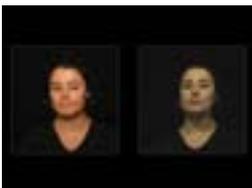
Embroidering Leaves



2 channel
Duration: 7'06"

Sam Holden

70 Still Frames and 5 Minutes 50 Seconds of Video



Duration: 6'06"

From the series 'iLandscape'



2 channel

Duration: 5'51"

Simply a Love Song



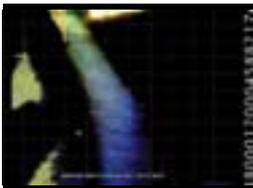
Duration: 4'49"

December 25th 2005



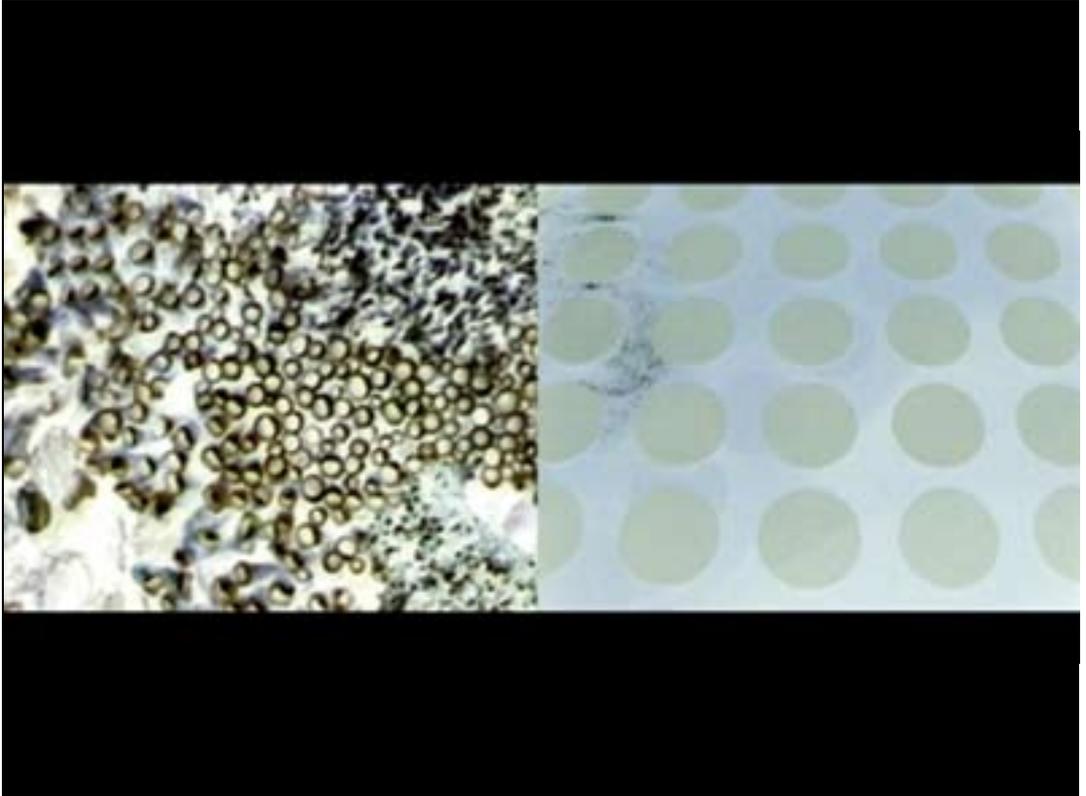
Duration: 3'16"

Rosa's Cut_Reloaded



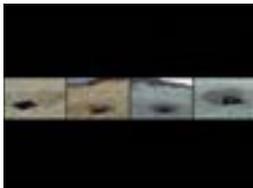
Duration: 4'46"

Untitled War



Duration: 1'42"

Manholes



Duration: 10'13"

Mmmmmnnnn...



Duration: 0'34"

Shooting from the Hip



Duration: 17'16"

Study on Human Form and Humanity #01

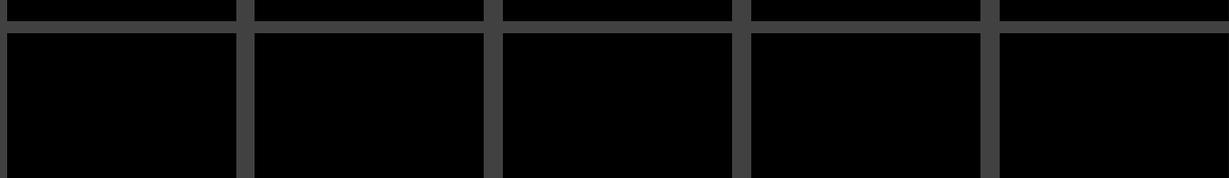
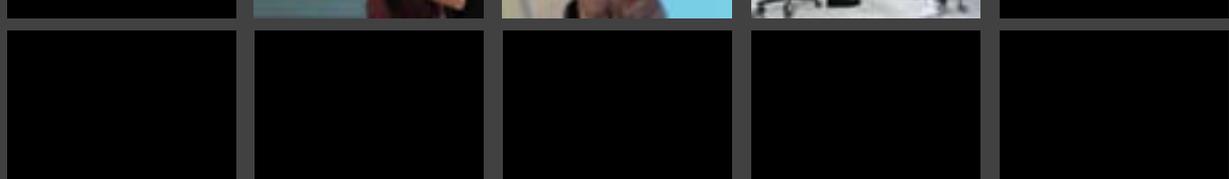
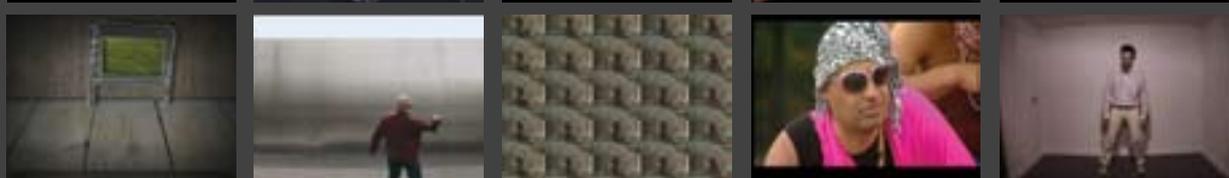
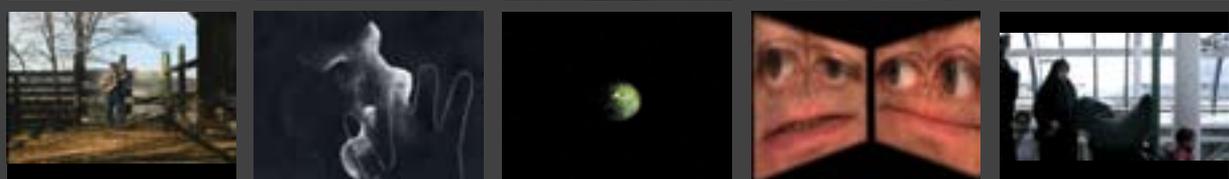


Duration: 1'49"

Flow



Duration: 2'32"



The history of every art form shows critical epochs in which a certain art form aspires to effects which could be fully obtained only with a changed technical standard, that is to say, in a new art form.

Walter Benjamin, *The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction*

As artists begun to use the technologies of mass media to make art (be it photography, films, radio art, video art, or digital art), the economy of art system dictated that they use technologies designed for mass reproduction for the opposite purpose – to create limited editions. (Thus visiting a contemporary art museum we find such conceptually contradictory objects as “video tape, edition of 6” or “DVD, edition of 3.”)

Lev Manovich, *Post Media Aesthetics*

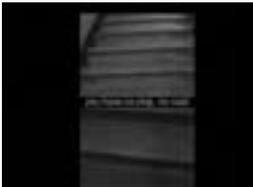
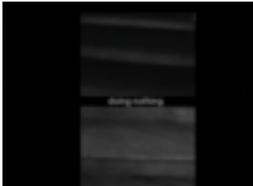
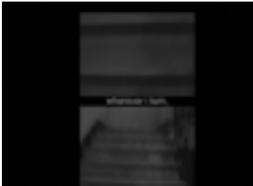
Although there has been important scholarship on art and technology, there is no comprehensive technological history of art...

Edward A. Shanken, *Historicizing Art and Technology*

“the mirror stage is a phenomenon to which I assign a twofold value. In the first place, it has historical value as it marks a decisive turning-point in the mental development of the child. In the second place, it typifies an essential libidinal relationship with the body image”

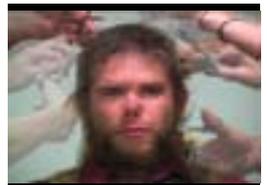
Jacques Lacan,
Some reflections on the Ego

The City



Duration: 2'02"

Chromosome



Duration: 5'38"

Yellow Sparks, Self Similarities



Duration: 7'50"

Disappear



Duration: 4'14"

Ritual



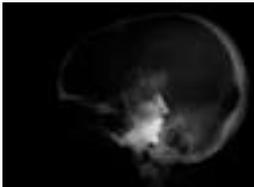
Duration: 3'36"

rockin



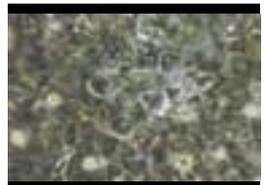
Duration: 1'43"

Fragments



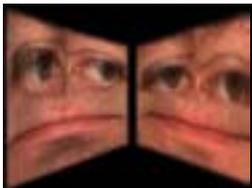
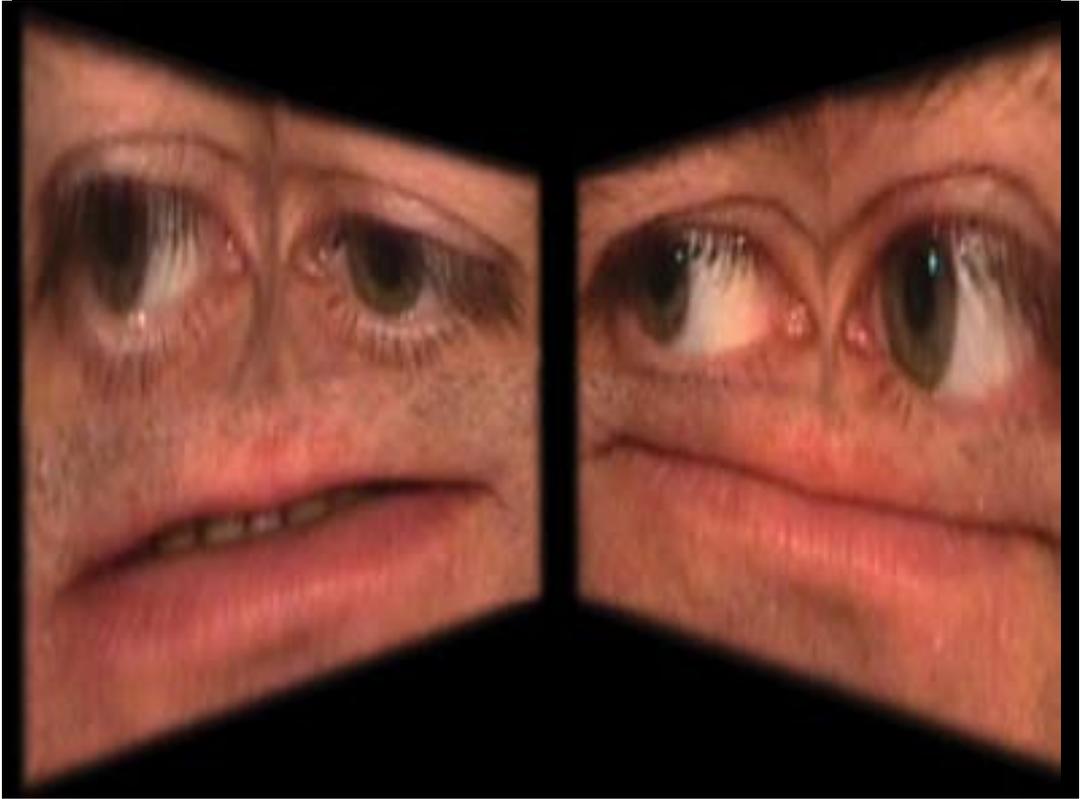
Duration: 2'57"

Void/Light



Duration: 4'07"

Me & Myself



Duration: 2'59"

Public Figures



Duration: 10'19"

Taking Control



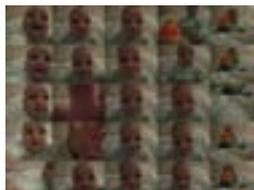
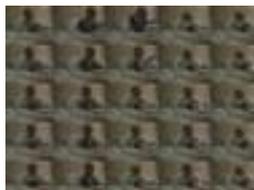
Duration: 2'28"

Minor Protest



Duration: 1'21"

Peek-A-Boo



Duration: 3'33"

Dominant Culture



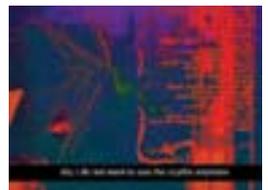
Duration: 14'53"

This Side Down, Damn if I know



Duration: 2'12"

Fashion Death



Duration: 4'51"

How to Explain Paintings to a Bronze Hare



Duration: 1'46"

Re: Commandments



Duration: 5'00"

Stair



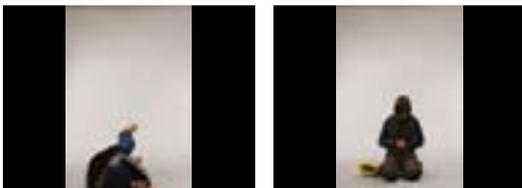
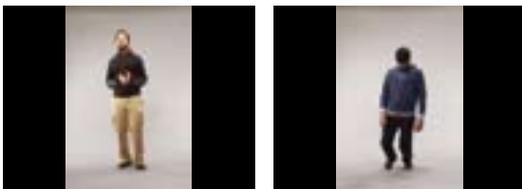
Duration: 2'57"

Rail



Duration: 2'03"

Freund Hein



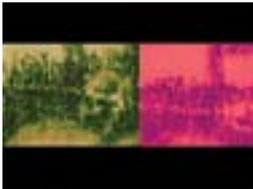
Duration: 4'18"

Child



Duration: 9'19"

in:visible frenzy



Duration: 2'56"

My Own Personal Portable Panopticon



Duration: 3'01"

Gender Transmission



Duration: 9'30"

Two at a Time



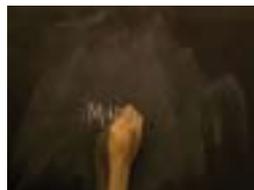
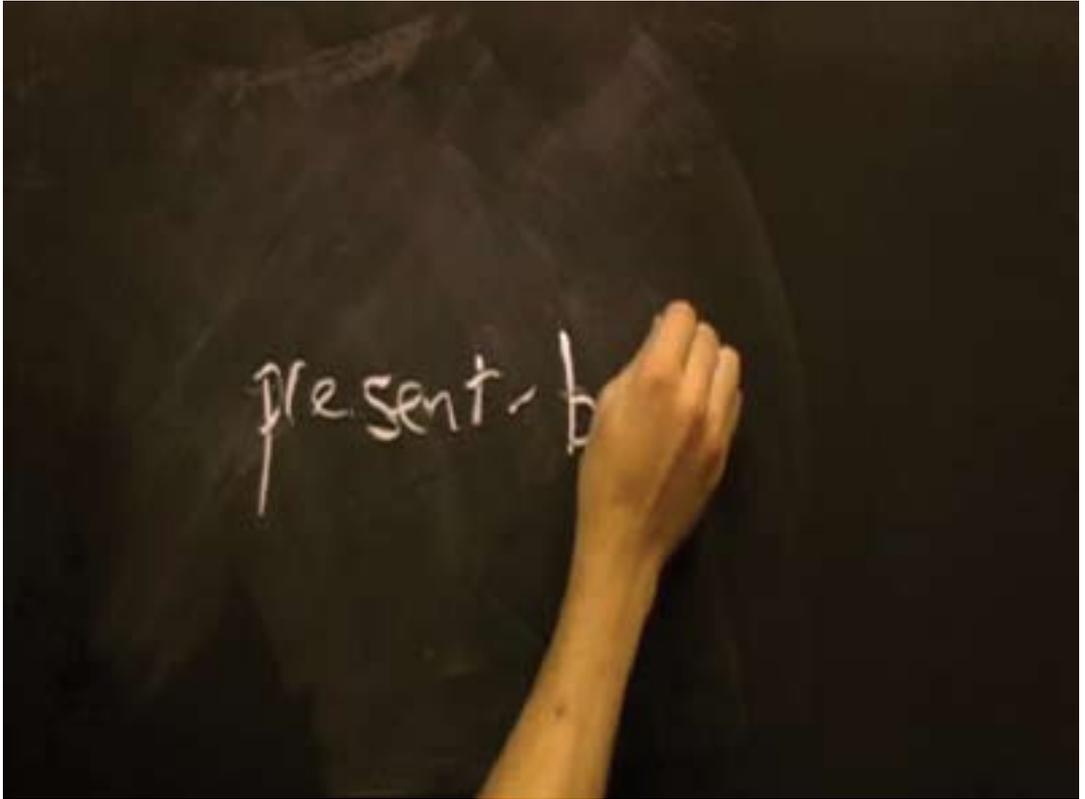
Duration: 3'23"

Microball



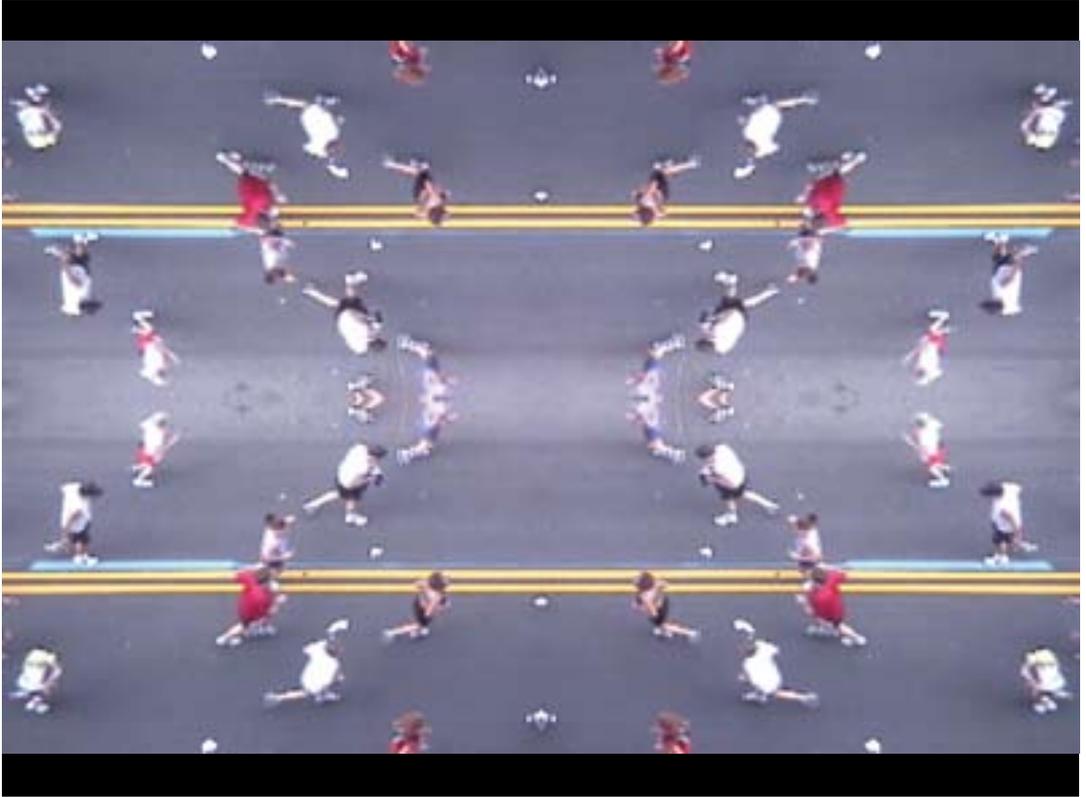
Duration: 1'28"

Untitled



Duration: 5'07"

And They Took To The Streets (The Run/Hands Away)



2 channel

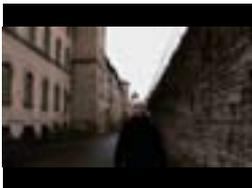
Duration: 7'36"

World Music 2



Duration: 10'17"

From the series 'Uber Memoria'



Duration: various

Meet the Artist



Duration: 16'53"

Changed



Duration: 1'37"

Gerry and Theodore



Duration: 14'34"

Participants

Ziad Al-Halabi (SY)
www.allartnow.com

Muhammad Ali (SY)
www.allartnow.com

Sonia Armaniaco (CH)

Paulo R. C. Barros (BR)
www.paulorcbarros.com

Neil Beloufa (FR/DZ)

Orit Ben-Shitrit and Harold Moss (US)
www.orit-ben-shitrit.com + www.flickerlab.com

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