

Helsinki Photomedia 2020

Altering space-time in composite photographic images: Can time have more than one dimension?

The role of photographic art in the present media environment must surely be to illuminate this environment, and to keep open the door to alternative visualisations of space and of time – alternative ways we can relate to the world through images. Before the advent of digitality photographers were constrained by the ‘iron cage’<sup>1</sup> of machinic perspective. Now they can at least explore alternative spatio-temporal structures, albeit at the price of participation in a fluid and highly exploitable media environment.

Vilém Flusser speaks of turning ‘... the automatic apparatus against its own condition of being automatic’.<sup>2</sup> My strategy in this has been to use the programmes of the ‘apparatus’ not necessarily in the way that was intended, and only if they serve some single goal that I have set down beforehand, so as not to be swept away by a deluge of imaging tools. For *The Street*, for example, a ‘moving picture’ that I showed at Helsinki Photomedia 2014, the single task was to flatten the space of a moving image into an orthographic projection.

This flattening of space entails increased complexity in the dimension of time. The many photographs, videos, and animations involved produce a plethora of different ‘times’ running concurrently. These run at different speeds, jerkily or more evenly, in loops and in loops within loops. The key factor in all these ‘times’, however, is that they run concurrently in a single image, independently of any lived, historical time. Just as an orthographic projection creates a viewer placed in many positions in space, so these multiple times position her simultaneously at many points in time. This breaks the connection between perspectival space and linear time and throws doubt on the assumption that time is just another dimension. Cannot time, like space, be polydimensional?

For Helsinki Photomedia 2020 I would like to present some new ‘moving pictures’, my own and by other artists, that challenge the space-time of traditional photographic images. While most of our ‘contemporary visual abundance’ slips so quickly into oblivion, it appears from these works that photographic space and filmic time can be refashioned in ways that slow down both eye and mind, remain longer in memory, and even, debatably, generate impressions that are recalled as lived experiences.<sup>3</sup>

We all participate, like it or not, in the ‘operative’ images of our media environment.<sup>4</sup> Our desires and fantasies are being trawled, algorithmed, and fed back to us. But while this is going on we can avail ourselves of some of the digital gadgets in this environment and use them for our own purposes.

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<sup>1</sup> The expression is from Adam Jasper, 2016, ‘God’s eye view...’ in T. Stoppani et al, *This Thing Called Theory*, Routledge, pre-publication draft, p.6.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Joanna Zylińska, 2017, *Nonhuman Photography*, MIT Press, p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> See my ‘Perspective and Memory in Photographic images’, *Membrana /4 “Augmented”*, Ljubljana, Nov. 2018. See also László Tarnay, ‘On the Metaphysics of Screen Violence and Beyond’, *Apertúra*, Szeged, 2008.

<sup>4</sup> See especially Aud Sissel Hoel, 2018, ‘Operative Images...’ in *Image - Action – Space...*, ed. L. Feiersinger et al, De Gruyter online.