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## Self-InterFaces on Screen

In my paper, I will use photographic images of people in front of screens to historically develop how the mediated face has invaded domestic environments via the screen. Today in video conferencing and video calls, these faces are brought into a reciprocal relationship and become the standard of privileged, contagion-free communication under post-pandemic conditions. A reduction of the body to the face<sup>1</sup> is central to this kind of communication. Focusing on photographic testimonies<sup>2</sup>, will address the screen as the subject of the near human surroundings, rather than more generally addressing the *screen*<sup>3</sup> as canvas or the projection.

In this respect, the paper will be about images of humans in front of the television and the computer, which can be even a smartphone.

The fact that these two technologies are inseparable today is due to the alliance they have formed. A computer (laptop, smartphone, desktop...) is as much a TV as the TV is a computer. It is now capable of running programs, sensory detection (camera etc.), and data processing.

The images in question in my paper are stills of a relationship between people and their screens, which have themselves become mobile. They draw attention to a communicative awareness to the screen that has changed considerably in the last 90 years or so. It is a long way from analog transceivers to the touchable interfaces of networked universal computing machines with integrated cameras. The arrangements of the apparatus, which regulate the relationship of the human being to the screen and thus also shape the communication relationships among each other today, are to become visible in this way. I will work out how

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<sup>1</sup> "The face is a surface [...]. The face is produced only when the head ceases to be a part of the body, when it ceases to be coded by the body, [...]." (Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 170).

<sup>2</sup> However, these can also be screenshots or screencasts, which for me belong to photographic practices (Gerling, Winfried. 2018. *Photography in the Digital. Screenshot and In-Game Photography*. In *Photographies*, 2018 11(2-3): 149-167.).

<sup>3</sup> It will not be possible to go into the long history of terms often used synonymously with the *screen*, such as the display as something unfolding, and the monitor as something monitoring (Gerling, Winfried. 2022. *Screenshotten*. In *Historical Dictionary of Media Use*, edited by Heiko Christians, Matthias Bickenbach and Nikolaus Wegmann. Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau.).

The noun *scree* already exists in Middle English and from the end of the 15th century. In the early twentieth century, *to screen* is also used as a verb to indicate the "process of filtering and excluding unwanted effects" (Frohne, Ursula. 2013. *Screen*. In *Kunst-Begriffe der Gegenwart von Allegorie bis Zip*, edited by Jörn Schafaff, Nina Schallenberg and Tobias Vogt, 255-264. Cologne: König, 257).

On the complex history of the computer display: Thielmann, Tristan. 2018. *Der einleuchtende Grund digitaler Bilder. Die Mediengeschichte und Medienpraxistheorie des Displays*. In *Display / Dispositiv. Ästhetische Ordnungen* edited by Ursula Frohne, Lilian Haberer and Annette Urban, 525–575. Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink.

the screen and thus the integrated so-called webcam is linked to the spheres of the private and working world and connects them in a new way in the (post-)pandemic situation.

The photographs of Lee Friedlander, in particular, were the occasion to reflect on this relationship (“The Little Screens”, 1969 and “At Work/Boston”, 1985). Friedlander was very prescient in firstly drawing on the medial intrusion of the human face into private spaces, and later very attentively observing the instructions and observations of the monitor to the workers sitting in front of it.

An approach via photographs of people in front of screens is informative for the development of video conferencing, since the images can be used to show how the screen establishes itself differently as a counterpart to be communicated with in the home and in the office, and how the office and the home enter into an instructive unity with the introduction of the PC. These images are, in the best sense, testimonies of a subjugation into the physical bond with the screen, even if it becomes mobile.

I will exclude the selfie as a type of image. It is, of course, also an image of the human being in front of the screen, but its reflection and discussion is so far-reaching and leads in other directions that I deliberately do not include this type of image here. However, the aspect of presenting oneself via connected cameras - quasi simultaneously - is an essential aspect of this kind of communication.