

Videographic scene analyses, part 1

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As guest editor, my focus for the audiovisual essay section of the Spring and Autumn 2018 issues of NECSUS is original *scene analyses* as examples of *autonomous* and *explanatorily argumentative* videographic criticism.



My aim was to inspire the creation of videographic works that provide straightforward close analyses of specific scenes of movies – not entire films, not entire oeuvres, not poetic associational montages but focused, analytical, exploratory, and explanatory analyses that take advantage of the novel affordances of the audiovisual medium to clearly present, prove, and argue for their observations on a particular – perhaps key – moment of a film.

The selected videos are meant to be autonomous. The majority of (*scholarly*) videographic works does not aim at self-sufficiency: video descriptions

often link to and rely on ‘accompanying essays’, despite the produced work itself already being named ‘audiovisual essay’. Videos that remain unclear without their textual accompaniment – lacking in offering independent, rounded-out argumentation in themselves – could be seen as merely improved illustrations to traditional textual criticism. A self-contained standalone ‘truly audiovisual audiovisual work’[1] that is sufficiently articulate *and* informative when viewed from start to end is a viable opportunity, one that settles into a category of its own. An autonomous video might be supported by textual reflections (e.g. contextualising its production – the way this very introduction functions), but should be able to ‘work’ independently, without any written supplement.

My last criterion was to challenge makers to create explanatorily argumentative works. The produced videos are explanatory, regarding their mode and aims of communication, in which they differ from the more covert (poetic) types of audiovisual expressions. Although poetic videos also intend to communicate arguments, their primary focus is not on carrying out a straightforward explanation – a ‘thesis-driven explicit reasoning’[2]– within their audiovisual form. Clearly, explanatorily argumentative scene analyses should not shy away from aesthetic embellishments, as Davide Rapp’s more experimental take demonstrates, however their primary aim of providing clarity in communication and efficiency in audiovisual augmentation should subordinate artistic and viral ambitions to explicatory values.

Perhaps surprisingly, there were only a few videos out there that fulfilled all the requirements of this simple and rather straightforward *autonomous and explanatory scene analysis* niche (at least at the moment I set the above conditions). When approached by academic colleagues and non-scholarly practitioners, professional or amateur videographers (and the combination of these), I clarified my written criteria with some rare model examples, including Catherine Grant’s 2014 *Un/Contained – Scene Analysis of Andrea Arnold’s 2009 Film Fish Tank*, Tony Zhou’s 2015 *Drive (2011) – The Quadrant System*, Kevin B. Lee’s 2015 *Rohmer’s Guessing Games*, and my own scene analysis video, which I held back and now include with this first part of the double issue. I hope the present selection, which came out of an intense and thought-provoking reviewing process, lives up to the standards of these prototypes. I promised to offer standalone audiovisual experience. Therefore, I will stop writing and instead invite the reader viewer to *watch* the videos by Liz Greene, Patrick Keating, Davide Rapp, and myself.

Authors

Liz Greene is Senior Lecturer in Filmmaking at Liverpool John Moores University (England). Her research interests are in film sound, the audiovisual essay, and documentary film. She has published articles in a number of journals and edited collections and is the co-editor of *The Palgrave Handbook of Sound Design and Music in Screen Media: Integrated Soundtracks* (2016). Her audiovisual essay 'Velvet Elephant' was selected by Indiewire in 2015 and voted amongst the best video essays of 2015 by Fandor. 'Velvet Elephant' was subsequently screened at the Ghent Film Festival in 2017.

Patrick Keating is an Associate Professor in the Department of Communication at Trinity University (USA), where he teaches courses in film studies and video production. He is the author of *Hollywood Lighting from the Silent Era to Film Noir* (Columbia, 2010) and the editor of *Cinematography* (Rutgers, 2014). His next book, *The Dynamic Frame: Camera Movement in Classical Hollywood*, is forthcoming in 2019. His previous video essays have appeared in *[in]Transition* and *Movie*.

Miklós Kiss is an Assistant Professor in Film and Media Studies at the University of Groningen (Holland). His research intersects the fields of narrative and cognitive film theories. His writing has been published in anthologies and academic journals (*Projections*, *Scope*, *Senses of Cinema*, *NECSUS*, *New Cinemas*), and he is an editorial board member of *[in]Transition*, the first peer-reviewed academic journal of videographic film studies. His recent books are *Film Studies in Motion: From Audiovisual Essay to Academic Research Video* (co-authored with Thomas van den Berg, Scalar, 2016) and *Impossible Puzzle Films: A Cognitive Approach to Contemporary Complex Cinema* (co-authored with Steven Willemsen, Edinburgh University Press, 2017).

Davide Rapp is an architect and video maker with a Ph.D. in Interior Design from Politecnico di Milano (2014). He participated as a contributor in the 14th International Architecture Exhibition – Fundamentals (Biennale Venezia, 2014) with *Elements*, a movie montage of short architecture-related clips, conceived specifically for the introduction room of the exhibition *Elements of Architecture*, curated by Rem Koolhaas, OMA and the Harvard Graduate School of Design. His movie montages and video essays have been exhibited and performed at many international festivals (Milano Design Film Festival,

Milano Film Festival, Festival Internacional de Cine Las Palmas De Gran Canaria, Film Fest Gent).

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Videography

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Notes

- [1] Van den Berg & Kiss 2016.
- [2] Kiss 2014.