media/rep/

Repositorium für die Medienwissenschaft

Margot Bouman

Move along folks, just move along, there's nothing to see. Transience, televisuality and the paradox of anamorphosis

2013

https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/13261

Veröffentlichungsversion / published version
Sammelbandbeitrag / collection article

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:
Bouman, Margot: Move along folks, just move along, there's nothing to see. Transience, televisuality and the paradox of anamorphosis. In: Marijke de Valck, Jan Teurlings (Hg.): *After the Break. Television Theory Today.* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press 2013, S. 161–177. DOI: https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/13261.

Nutzungsbedingungen:
Dieser Text wird unter einer Creative Commons - Namensnennung - Nicht kommerziell - Keine Bearbeitungen 3.0 Lizenz zur Verfügung gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zu dieser Lizenz finden Sie hier:
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0

Terms of use:
This document is made available under a creative commons - Attribution - Non Commercial - No Derivatives 3.0 License. For more information see:
https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0

DFG Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft

Philipps Universität Marburg

Move along folks, just move along, there's nothing to see
Transience, televisuality and the paradox of anamorphosis

Margot Bouman

How do we watch TV? Introduced into mass distribution after World War Two, in its first decade, economies of scale resulted in two concurrent sites of consumption for television: neighbourhood taverns, and the homes of the very wealthy (McCarthy 2001; Rose 1986). As prices for television sets fell, by the end of the 1950s television penetrated the homes of the middle class. The first wave of television scholarship consequently focused on the overwhelmingly domestic content of commercial broadcast network television (usually understood to be a family medium), the introduction of the public sphere into the home and thus the domestic sphere, and the experience of home viewing; much of it from a feminist perspective (Friedan 1964; Meehan 1983; Marc 1984, 1989; Lipsitz 1988; Hammamoto 1989; Haralovitch 1989; Boddy 1990; Leibman 1995; Mellencamp 1986). Largely absent is a systematic understanding of how the relationship between television's context (the home) and television's content (the programming) is contingent on a set of historical, institutional and economic conditions; conditions that have since changed, along with the way that television's audience watches TV.[1] What results is a set of assumptions about television's audience that continues to inform discussions of both television and its audience, even as television systematically occupies and subsequently alters new contexts.

Here is a more accurate way of asking the same question: how is the way we watch TV organized by where we are? Earlier scholarship and public commentary on television described certain contradictory experiences. First, television is watched. Second, watching television takes place inside the home in a dedicated, stable space, such as a family room, or the living room, or the bedroom.[2] Third, as a consequence of this domestic stability, watching television is something that a viewer can leave and return to repeatedly. Thus, 'watching' television becomes a different experience than going out to the movies, or a live theatrical event, or a dance performance, or the opera, where the audience is restricted from entering the building before the show's start, and prevented from staying after its end. Out of this emerges television programming that is structured on imperfect concentration—or flow and its interruptions—and the insight that domestic labour performed in a state of distraction, such as childcare and housekeeping, is facilitated by the structure of commercial network broadcast television (Williams [1974] 1992; Modleski 1984; Spigel 1992). Fourth – contrary to the third assumption – the viewer and the television set are both assumed to be stationary.

The way we have come to watch TV at home has had far-reaching consequences. Discourses produced by government policy, public health policy, adolescence studies and journalism, to name a few, all conflate the imperfectly focused way we watch television with family, domestic space, stupor, and a withdrawal from active citizenship.[3] Artists and art theorists echoed these assumptions, while joining them to the hope that artists could reconnect these audiences to a democratic impulse by awakening them from their stupor and making them absolutely attentive. Building on the programming structure of flow and its interruptions, the Korean artist Nam June Paik developed the concept of programming rupture in his early (1963) installation at the Parnass Gallery, in a letter to the New School for Social Research (1965), and then in a piece intended to be broadcast on WGBH Boston, *Electronic Opera #1* (1969). In her television action *Facing a Family* (1971), the Austrian artist Valie Export placed a family in the television studio where they sat staring into the camera, staring back at all the families in their living rooms. In *Reverse Television* (1984), the US artist Bill Viola videotaped a series of motionless 'viewers' staring into the camera, comfortably ensconced in their domestic settings. In collaboration with the Boston-area public broadcasting station WGBH, these portraits were inserted, unannounced, into the regular programming flow.

All of the above – especially Export's and Viola's work – presupposes a temporal relationship of stability between the home, its occupant and electronic media. The temporal dimension of home is better expressed through its synonym, dwelling, whose current definition derives from the Old Norse: to 'abide', or to 'stay'. In Middle English, 'dwell' shifted from 'hinder', to 'delay', to 'linger', and finally to 'make a home'. The contemporary meaning of dwelling, and home, carries forward this spatiotemporal dimension of a permanent relationship to place. All places that are 'not home', on the other hand, have in common a spatiotemporal relationship of transience with their users. The current formation of transient space finds its roots in the seventeenth century. Transient or transitional spaces describe built environments where nobody is permitted or expected to remain for very long: in the city, this includes department stores, public libraries, subway platforms, sidewalks, and public parks, as well as performance spaces. Richard Sennett writes that movement within a city was associated from the Baroque period onwards with health and good organization. Motion received even greater primacy when Enlightenment city planners made it an end unto itself, instead of, as Sennett observed, 'planning streets for the sake of ceremonies of movement toward an object [...]' (Sennett 1994: 264). The net result of this is a city, and then a broader infrastructure of transportation, labour and domesticity, which becomes defined through a series of interlocking and interwoven transient spaces. The broader network includes highways, industrial parks, airplanes, airports and rest stops. Marc Augé coined the term *non-lieu* to describe architectural and technological spaces that were meant to be consumed in passing, leaving little or no trace of their users' engagement. These non-spaces, primarily associated with transportation and communication are, for Augé, the defining characteristic of our current moment, which he describes as 'supermodernity'. Where I depart from Augé is in my presumption that all spaces outside the home are transitional,

not just a particular class of space. Thus what Augé is describing is an extreme version of a broader spectrum of temporary occupation, not a new relationship between space and movement (2008).

The distinctions between the users of these transient spaces can also be expressed through temporal relationships. Workers return for a portion of each day to their place of work, depending on the duration and form of their employment. Commuters pass through a set combination of transitional spaces on a regular basis as well, albeit for shorter periods of time. Consumers on the other hand – of culture (tourists), goods (shoppers), services (client, patient), enter a country, shop or waiting room, linger, and do not regularly return. Not only is 'not home' defined as a place where people do not dwell, or cannot stay, but furthermore people who are exclusively defined by these places are themselves characterized as either transients, or homeless. Paul Virilio describes a further radicalization of the primacy of movement when he argues that the freedom of a pedestrian's coming and going was replaced in the twentieth century by an obligation to move (2009). Thus, what distinguishes one transient space from another is not only the speed at which movement takes place and how long the temporary stoppages are, but also how it is controlled, and who is controlled. This obligation is reinforced not just through passive vectors such as city planning and architecture, but more actively by corporate and government agents. Transience here acquires a particularly brutal overtone when a transit employee feels empowered to bring her baton smashing down on a subway seat beside a sleeping transient, forcing him

Fig. 1: Example of 'stop and release' herding pens used by the New York City Police Department for mass demonstrations. In this image the police have just pulled out the barricades to control the flow of the crowd following the appointed path in a protest against the looming war on Iraq that took place on February 15, 2003. Photo by author.

awake and into motion. And 'Move along folks, just move along, there's nothing to see' is a now-familiar phrase used by police both real and fictional to prevent the flow of pedestrian traffic from clustering around any number of unsanctioned or traumatic events: a political protest, unlicenced street performers and vendors, a recently committed crime, a wounded man. This phrase has been refined by the New York Police Department into a complex crowd control system of barricaded walkways and 'stop and release' herding pens that are brought out for mass protests, assemblies and celebrations. Used in 1998 on New Year's Eve around Times Square as part of a broader preparation for the millennium celebrations, they have been subsequently brought out for mass demonstrations protesting the World Trade Organization meetings in 2002, the looming war on Iraq in 2003, and the 2004 Republican convention.

These political, architectural and urban forces form the discursive environment that television enters when it expands into transient space. As I observed at the outset, notwithstanding the overwhelming focus on domestic content and context, since the 1940s, television has formed at the very least a minor part of these transient spaces (McCarthy 2001). However, on these surfaces television has more recently swelled into every imaginable space of commerce, labour, domesticity and transport. In coffee shops, restaurants, laundromats, bars, and waiting rooms, television sets are perched on shelves, suspended from ceilings, hung on walls. Across every form of transportation system, television has expanded and fragmented. LCD screens blanket the exterior and fenestrate the interiors of airports and train stations, airplanes, trains, and municipal buses. Televisions now punctuate the outdoor landscape of public thoroughfares.

Not only has television fully penetrated transient spaces, but the emulsifying effect of the televisual has altered the build environment. The commercial strip that springs up outside of mid-sized communities and clusters around highways; the shopping mall; the freeway, and the franchise hotel are all identified as televisual spaces for their reproduction of television's illusionistic production and modular structure. For example, Michael Sorkin describes a new type of exurban environment, defined by 'hermetically sealed atrium hotels cloned from coast to coast' and the 'disaggregated sprawl of endless new suburbs without cities' (Sorkin 1992: xi). For Sorkin, both share the structural forms of television – the modular interchangeability of its commercial programming – as well as what he identifies as television's placelessness. The alteration brought about by televisuality takes place psychically, as well as physically. Chris Rojek describes a process of 'restless movement' between virtual and actual, televisual and referent when writing about the manner in which 'cinematic events are dragged on to the physical landscape, and the physical landscape is then reinterpreted in terms of the cinematic events' (Rojek 1997: 54). In other words, both the televisual Times Square and the actual Times Square changes our interpretations of each.

Following Anna McCarthy's 2001 *Ambient Television*, scholarship has begun to focus on television found in what I describe as transient spaces, and others describe as public spaces. For example, Andrea Press and Camilla Johnson-Yale study how the content of the daytime talk show is integrated into African-American hair salons (2008). Joy Fuqua looks at the introduction of television into

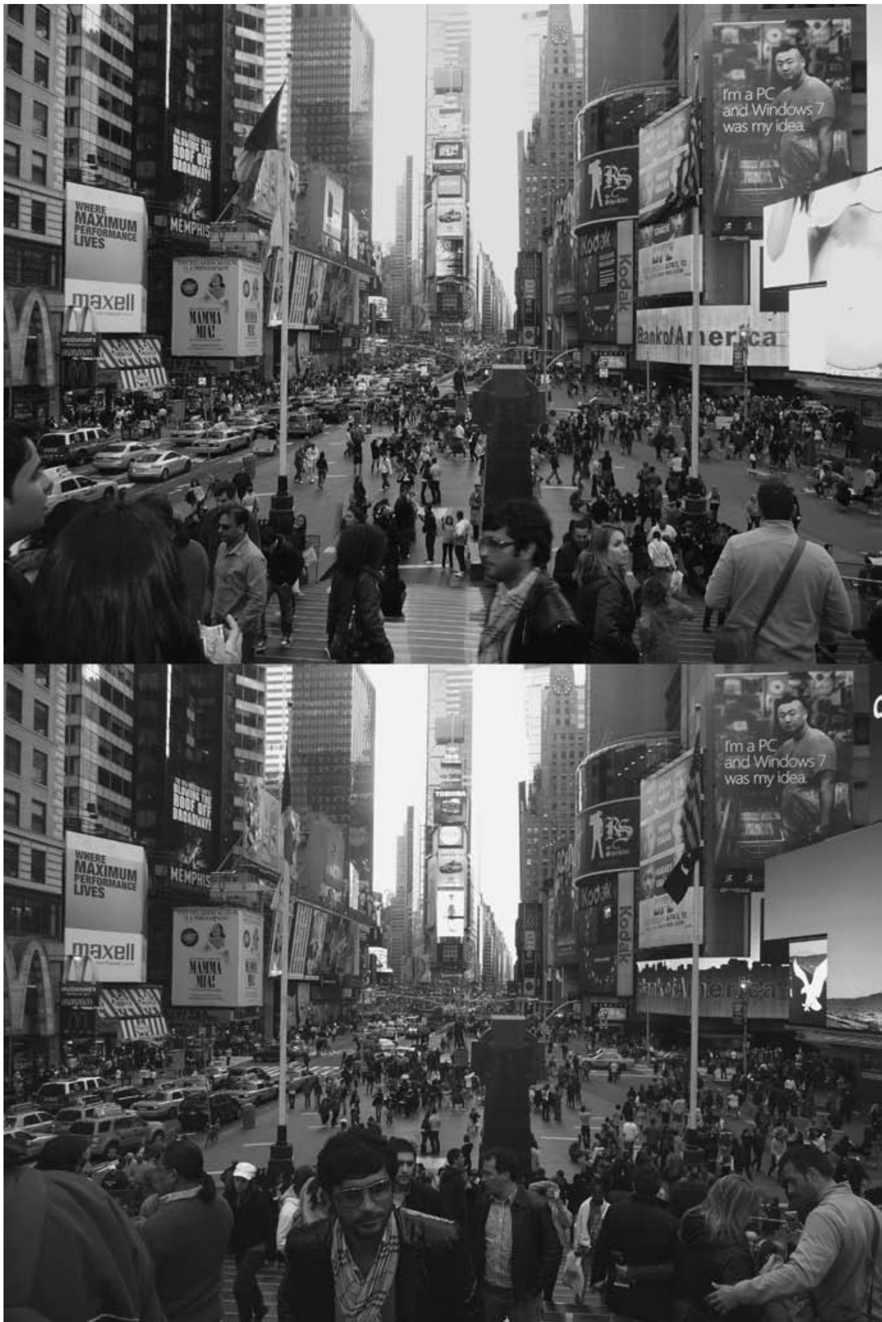

Fig. 2: The iconic example of expanded television, Times Square, NYC. Notable in these two photographs, taken within seconds of each other, is the transient nature of the foot traffic, motorized traffic, and images that fenestrate the surrounding architecture. Photo by author.

the hospital setting: by building on received notions about nurses' labour and patient comfort, manufacturers persuaded hospital administrators of the benefits of television (2003). Holly Kruse postulates that the recent and planned renovations of horse racetracks that incorporate simulcast monitor-viewing spaces accommodate different forms of social interaction that resemble sports bars. This, for Kruse, raises questions about how technology organizes space and about the nature of our experiences in physical spaces created to accommodate interactive media (2003). Given that transience controls and defines both people and spaces; determines who is watching whom, and what is being built; how outdoor spaces such as walkways and parks, squares and arcades are being designed, and for whom, television cannot be 'watched' in these new spaces the same way we watch it at home. However, McCarthy and these authors choose the stationary aspect of these spaces, when they focus on their temporal nature at all. While the very act of calling attention to the fact that users of these spaces are obliged to stop – and therefore watch television – indirectly assumes an a priori condition of movement and transience, they do not consider the new viewing conditions produced by the overriding obligation of people to move. McCarthy considers the corporate privatization of daily life through the deployment of television in waiting spaces such as doctor's offices, train terminals and airports. In these spaces, McCarthy argues, 'corporate television time' helps produce a spatial experience of 'publicness', while managing these captive populations with television, inoculating them against the frustration and boredom of waiting (2004). Like McCarthy, Peter Adey indirectly assumes a prior condition of transience by addressing the immobilities that airports impose on passengers in part through the strategic placement of television throughout the terminals and gate areas, and the resulting forms of spectatorship. Adey argues that the airport has become not a space merely to travel through, but is now also designed to hold people in specific spaces, a change that has in turn been dictated by airline and airport regulation and economics (2007). How does the transient nature of these new spaces shape our experience of television? The relationship between television and architecture? Television and urban planning? Television and transportation systems? If remaining still in an environment where movement is controlled acquires a different meaning, how does the merging of television into a built environment that is organized by transience produce new conditions of watching that goes beyond forced immobility? In these new contexts, where the viewer has limited control over a fixed space that is so necessary to the experience of 'watching' television at home, the televisual model of flow and its interruptions that originated from a domestic context acquires new dimensions, through the paradox of anamorphosis.

Anamorphosis is a perspective system that appears in a drawing by Leonardo da Vinci in the late fifteenth century. Anamorphic perspective manipulates the image in such a way as to make it appear illegible when viewed from the same vantage point as the one required by one-point perspective. One-point perspective had been developed in the early fifteenth century by the Italian architect Filippo Brunelleschi, and resulted in mathematical clarity and a sense of unity between the viewer and the image. As the apocryphal story goes, Brunelleschi conducted

an experiment in Florence, in which he had viewers look through a small hole in the door of the Duomo at a mirror in which was reflected the Baptistry. The mirror was removed, revealing Brunelleschi's painting of the same subject using one-point perspective. To the viewer, the painting and reflection were nearly indistinguishable. Frequently embedded in one-point perspective paintings, murals, prints and drawings, these anamorphic images can only be seen by 'looking awry', or by looking at an image from an angle that distorts the one-point perspective. Anamorphosis is most commonly associated with Renaissance and Baroque easel painting, Hans Holbein The Younger's *The Ambassadors* (1533) being the most prominent example.

In this double portrait of what is presumed to be Jean de Dinteville, Seigneur of Polisy on the left, and Georges de Selve, Bishop of Lavaur on the right, the two men stand front of a richly patterned green curtain, and on both sides of a wooden table. Over the table hangs a carpet thought to originate from central Anatolia, a region in modern day Turkey. On the table are objects associated

Fig. 3: Hans Holbein The Younger, *Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve ('The Ambassadors')*, 1533. © The National Gallery, London.

with science, exploration, music and religion: on the table top is a celestial globe, a quadrant, a torquetum and a polyhedral sundial. Among the objects on the lower shelf is a lute with a broken string, a Lutheran hymnbook, and a terrestrial globe. Objects, furniture and men are represented using one-point perspective. An image is also painted in using anamorphic perspective, and shows up initially as a grey and beige smear across the center of the bottom half of the painting. However, when viewed from an angle, or from awry, the smear transforms into a skull. The skull was an image frequently included in Renaissance painting, and was intended to remind the viewer that time was fleeting, and that all earthly accomplishments, wealth or rank would be washed away before the inevitability of death. Holbein does not introduce this *memento mori* in the primary perspectival system, but indirectly through anamorphosis, staining the viewer's awareness and causing her or him to shift their position in order to ease the itch, to solve the puzzle, to see what else is present in the image field.

Like anamorphic perspective in easel painting, television and the televisual introduces an incommensurable visual system into transient spaces. While it also does so in the home, because movement and stillness is more rigidly controlled, in transient spaces this incommensurability produces different outcomes. In a restaurant, when a cooking show is being broadcast at one end of the dining area and a football game at the other, the restaurant patron – immobilized in her seat –is torn between agreeing with the cooking show judges' assessment of a contestant's dish, following (or being irritated by) the progress of a football game, observing the inattention shown by other restaurant patrons to their families or their food, and making an extra effort to maintain her attention on her dish, and her dining companions. While walking down a street, a pedestrian will notice in passing a televisual advertisement screening above a subway information sign, but will miss either the beginning or the end of the narrative, prevented by the flow of pedestrian traffic and her desire to keep moving. Television in transient spaces would thus appear to exacerbate a pre-existing state of distraction by dividing attention across yet another media form. In addition to 'distraction', equivalent English terms are scattering, dispersal, and dispersion. A state of distraction is semi-conscious, its temporality is non-linear, and its context is the everyday and thus shared by leisure and labour. Described by Walter Benjamin in the 1930s, architecture has always represented the prototype of a work of art that is absorbed by a collective in a state of distraction. Most importantly, Benjamin stresses that this form of reception is embedded in a routine: 'Such appropriation cannot be understood in terms of the attentive concentration of a tourist before a famous building', but instead must be understood as a familiarity that is acquired with the individual work of architecture, through the force of habit slowly established over time. Such an individual thus gains 'the ability to master certain tasks in a state of distraction' such as moving through transient spaces (Benjamin [1936] 1973: 240).

When writing about anamorphosis, Hanneke Grootenboer poses the first of two paradoxes that it produces: do we understand the deformation produced by anamorphic perspective to be secondary to the system of one-point perspective, or does the opposite hold true (Grootenboer 2005: 99)? In other words, the nar-

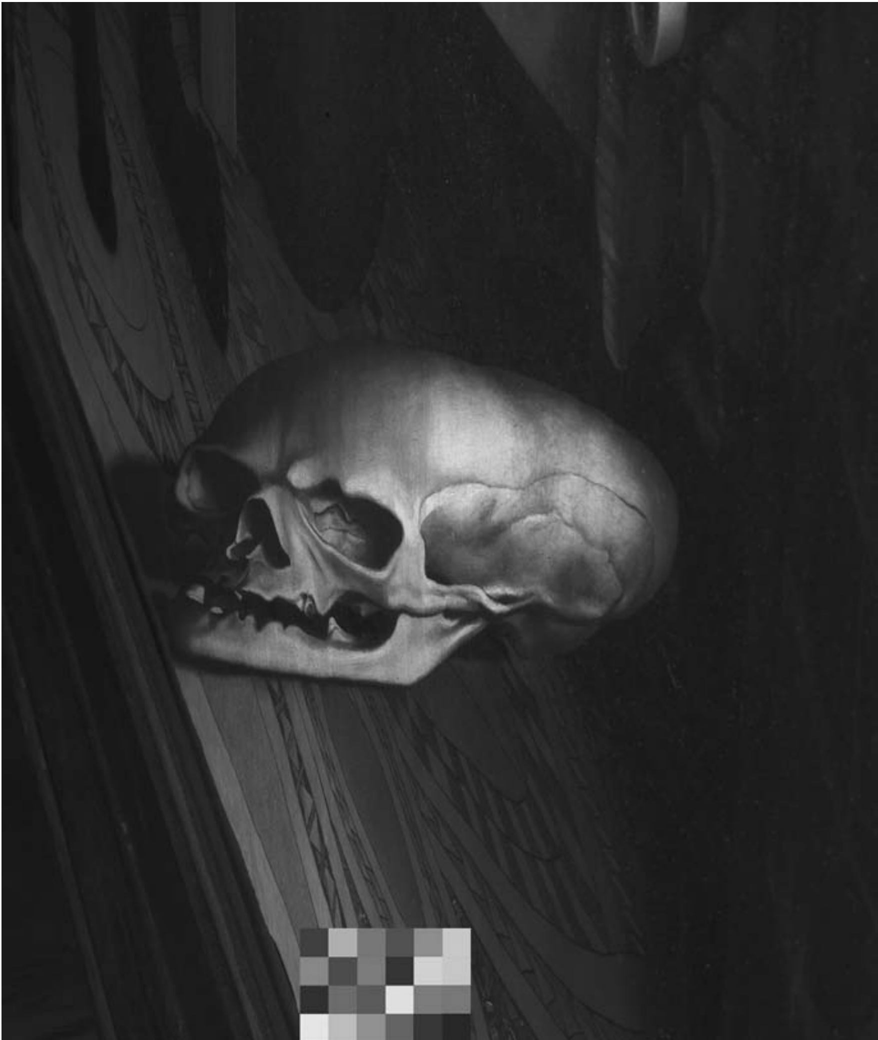

Fig. 4: Detail of Hans Holbein The Younger, *Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve ('The Ambassadors')*,1533. © The National Gallery, London.

rative of Holbein's *Ambassadors* that I provided does not necessarily stand. A visitor to the National Gallery in London, where the painting is on display, could approach it from another gallery and see the floating skull first, and then the men, the interior, the objects. What is true is that both perspectival systems are not simultaneously viewable. Either one or the other must produce a certain degree of confusion, of obfuscation. Or, as Grootenboer puts it: 'Leaving the standardized point of view will provide us with the capacity to unearth the distortion within this picture as well as in our perception' (Ibid.). As I observed, this confusion of meaning takes place in the interstices between the viewer's body and the image. Furthermore, anamorphosis is not confined to easel painting. Grootenboer

describes anamorphic perspective embedded into murals painted onto the walls of cloisters and corridors, such as Emmanuel Maignan's *St Francis of Paula*, a 1642 fresco painted in a corridor of the Trinità dei Monti church in Rome, Italy. These anamorphic images are only perceptible at the threshold of these corridors. Because of the transient nature of the space, the viewer would be obliged to only pause momentarily, absorb the anamorphic image, and then move on. Here, Grootenboer notes, 'the viewer makes the image move' (Ibid.: 106).

Fig. 5: Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz, Hole in Space: A Public Communication Sculpture, 1980. © Galloway/Rabinowitz, 1980-2011.

In transient spaces, the anamorphic paradox that results from the confusion between the two visual and haptic systems, or the televisual and the architectural, creates a sense of confusion between whether to stop or to move, to pay attention or not: does one ask for another seat at the restaurant away from the television, disturbing other patrons and the wait staff; or does one stop at the top of the stairs leading to a subway to watch the end of the advertisement's narrative, creating temporary chaos for the other commuters. Historically, anamorphosis also conceals dangerous political messages, or erotic imagery: with every secret there is a moment of revelation. Its perspectival logic, therefore, 'invests in revelation as much as obfuscation' (Grootenboer 2005: 102). In a similar fashion, refusing the obligation to move in order to watch TV produces its own revelations, and depending on the context, potentially political consequences. In times of collective crisis, or celebration, people gather around television screens in transient as well as domestic spaces to watch an unexpected disaster unfold, or historically momentous events such as election results. In 1980, Kit Galloway and Sherrie Rabinowitz investigated this confusion between two systems with their public video installation *Hole in space: A public communication sculpture*. Galloway and Rabinowitz did not draw on the dominant model of distraction prevalent in transient spaces. Rather, they produce an interruption, or a rupture and a new model for the interrelationship between television, its new space, and audience *avant la lettre*. On November 11, 13 and 14, 1980 they established a two-way live satellite connection at street level between a site in the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York City and the Broadway Century City department store in Los Angeles. Video cameras, speakers and rear projection screens were

installed in display windows at each location. Each screen displayed life-size images of passers-by from the other location. For two hours on each transmission evening, passers-by drawn to the work's window sites in each city discovered a peephole through which they could see, hear and talk with strangers 3,000 miles away. There was no initial publicity, and no signs or instructions were posted nearby for the pedestrians.

In the video compilation of the event exhibited after the fact, the artists screened a record of the work by cutting between showing the Los Angeles and New York City screens side by side, and highlighting a selection of the dialogues that took place between Los Angeles and New York City. The document stresses a series of reunions, chance encounters and games. The prevailing affect is one of wonder over live communication taking place between two points on either side of a continent. In the beginning of one such exchange, in the left-hand screen passersby from Los Angeles have paused, on the right a group in New York City. A woman to the far right of the Los Angeles group clustered around the shop window stands up on her toes and shouts, 'Where are you?' Overlapping replies ensue: One man: 'where are we?' Another: 'We're in front of Lincoln Centre in New York City.' Disbelieving, the woman in LA repeats: 'You're in New York? Are you, are you in New York?' Her pleasure over this revelation overcomes her, and she slaps her knee and whoops in wonder and disbelief. The rest of the segment is given over to interviews of pedestrians at the scene. A man in New York City compares the LA crowd to members of Broadway musical The Chorus Line. When asked to comment on the installation a woman in LA summarises the confusion produced by two incommensurate visual systems by replying: 'They're in New York? I'm in Los Angeles, right?'

For Rabinowitz, the 'video image becomes the real architecture for the performance because the image is a place. It's a real place and your image is your ambassador, and your two ambassadors meet in the image. […] It becomes visual architecture' (Durland 1987). With this comment, Rabinowitz merges the image with urban architecture, predating Beatriz Colomina's observation that modern architecture is an extension of electronic media and vice versa (1994). Commenting about *Hole in space*, the media theorist Gene Youngblood observed: 'People have kind of a phantom limb sensation, it's actually visceral' (Durland 1987). The act of wandering through the city fuses with what Samuel Weber distinguished as television's unique ontology, the jolt of experiencing temporal simultaneity across two different spaces, and predates the possibility of live mobile communication produced through cell phones, or internet-based video phones (Weber 1996).

On the second night of the three-night life of the work, participants begin experimenting with the interactive possibilities. A man and a woman flirtatiously 'pass' drinks back and forth between Los Angeles and New York City. Their exchange creates a social space that is, in the words of Elaine Ho, at once displaced and intimate.

(NYC): Hey where you goin'?
(LA): Huh?
(NYC): Where you goin'?

(LA): Where am I going? I'm staying right here with you!
(NYC): Oh I like that baby! Oh I like that girl, we gotta be together sometime!
(LA): Hey baby don't let me catch you!
(NYC): Say what baby?
(LA): Don't let me catch you inside my building.
(NYC): Hey girl I'm coming over to look for you personally baby.
(LA): Oh yeah?
(NYC): Oh yeah!
(LA): I got your number huh?
(NYC): I hope you do girl!

Ho goes on to observe that the 'the protective layer shielding city dwellers dissolves into an unabashed fascination with the other' (2011). Rather than describe it as a dissolution of layers, I would link the exchange to other urban social spaces such as a club or a festival where distraction is replaced by attention, movement slows, and exchanges become more complex. In other words, the work is not a departure from exchanges that take place in transient spaces, but rather a shift in temporality that results in a sense of hilarity, euphoria, and even transcendence.

As Grootenboer observed about anamorphic perspective more generally, 'Such art possesses the rare quality of being able to disrupt or even shock our accustomed ways of looking and of laying bare the prejudices such looking involves' (Grootenboer 2005: 100). The 1980s is an interstitial period between avant-garde television's explosion onto the countercultural and artistic scenes in the late 1960s and the early 1970s, and video installation art's institutional reification in the 1990s. In the early 1980s, Galloway, Rabinowitz and Youngblood were unblushingly enthusiastic about the utopic potential held out by *Hole in space*. For Galloway, *Hole in space* was a model designed to 'liberate people's imaginations,' a transgressive act that took the revolution into the marketplace (Durland 1987). By attaching revolutionary potential to a work that elicited fascinated attention from its audience, a work that stopped them in their tracks. Youngblood links *Hole in space* back to the earlier avant-gardist moment in video art, experimental television and Marshall McLuhan's communication revolution of the 1960s, and forward to an uncertain revolutionary future, when a 'decentralized, two-way, special-audience system' would be possible (Durland 1987).

That a decentralized, two-way, audience-specific form of communication has been realized in the interim period between 1980 and the present goes without saying. And that its consequences have been revolutionary also brooks no argument. However the revolution has gone in directions that were not predicted by Youngblood. Rather, one of the consequences has been the increasing privatization of transient spaces, which is itself made possible by a second paradox of anamorphosis. Without referring directly to television or architecture, Slavoj Žižek uses the paradox of anamorphosis to describe the influence of the backdrop against which our everyday movements take place.[4] We are not directly aware of our surroundings, yet they feed into and inflect the way in which we move, think, feel, and act. In addition to television and architecture, many forms of media are

currently woven through the fabric of transient spaces. This second paradox of anamorphosis results in a form of mobile privatization; not the corporate privatization of public space referred to by McCarthy and others, but also the partial disconnection of individuals from their immediate surroundings and their attendant responsibilities through daydreams. Michael Bull considers this through the use of the Sony Walkman and the relational qualities attached to sound. Through this, subjects relate to and gain a sense of control over their surroundings, others, and themselves (2004). Mimi Sheller and John Urry stress a paradigm shift in the interrelationship between public and private life that is physical (the dominant car-centred system whose spatial systems are simultaneously private and public), informational (in the form of electronic communication via data, visual images and texts) and mediatized (the exposure of 'private' lives on public screens and the public screening of media events) (Sheller and Urry 2003). Stephen Groening argues that the capacity for cell phones to receive and broadcast television programmes has created a set of contradictory impulses for its users. They move through the world, while disconnecting from it and its subjects and connecting to the corporations who provide the television programmes (Groening 2010). Likewise, Patrick Allen suggests that as a result of this plethora of alternate media, the subject is dissociated from their space as a 'real' or 'authentic' experience, and is 'caught up in a world of private messages which are not connected to any single location or scene' (Allen 2008: 29). This disconnect results from incommensurate visual systems. Margaret Morse uses Benjamin's term when she describes it as a 'phantasmagoria of the interior'.[5] Morse notes that the experience of watching television is related to the experience of driving on the freeway, as well as going to the mall. All three consist of interdependent two- or three-dimensional forms. In Morse's words, these act as loci of an attenuated 'fiction effect', where the partial loss of connection to the present is experienced (Morse 1990: 193). Scholarship considering the introduction of new forms of media into transient spaces emphasizes the shift in subjective understandings of public and private.

For Žižek, this form of anamorphosis is itself the form of fantasy through which subjective forms of reality are made available. Thanks to the subjective nature of this frame, it is saturated with desire, becoming Žižek describes as 'an element which 'sticks out', which cannot be integrated into the given symbolic structure, yet which, precisely as such, constitutes its identity' (Žižek 2001: 89). Thus, television, through anamorphosis telegraphs fantasy to the viewer, while leaving her or him barely aware that it has been communicated. As Tony Myers puts it: '[…] an anamorphosis is […] the materialization of a surplus knowledge. […] Anamorphosis is, therefore, a form of suspense – it suspends the ostensive meaning of a picture or situation' (Myers 2003: 99). In other words, the disengagement that takes place in these new televisual spaces results in an individual's interior narrative moving him or her away from the preexisting spatio-temporal context. This realm of fantasy compensates for the dislocation from both work and home.

Now that it can no longer be considered a medium consumed exclusively, or even primarily in the home, how do we 'watch' TV? Watching television and experiencing the televisual in transient spaces produces two outcomes that are dis-

tinctive to these spaces. On the one hand, television is not part of the routine(s) required by transience but rather stops people in their tracks so that they can pay attention. Depending on the context, this act of stopping either flouts the dominant imperative to 'move along', or it is used to help tolerate enforced stillness. On the other hand, television in transient spaces intensifies the state of distraction described by Benjamin by both making it impossible to fully concentrate on anything else, and by augmenting the fantasy life possible for users of these transient spaces. Both attention and distraction are best conceptualized through the paradoxes of anamorphosis described by Grootenboer and Žižek. Finally, the paradox of anamorphosis exposes the falsity of the historical opposition of attention and distraction.

Notes

1. Lynn Spigel has both contributed substantially to this literature on programming content, as well as proving to be an influential exception with her focus on context, or the spaces where we watch TV. Beginning with her study of how the arrangement of the domestic interior shifts to 'make room for TV,' Spigel denaturalizes domestic TV's primary spatial context (1992, 2001a).
2. With every rule there is an exception: in this instance portable television sets in the 1960s (Spigel 2001b). Notable is Spigel's assumption that 'domestic' space accompanies the television set beyond the confines of the home. This rests on her analysis of the programming content, which was in turn shaped with the domestic site in mind.
3. One of the most frequently repeated quotations is of course the former Federal Communications Commission chairman Newton Minow's introduction to his book, *Equal time*, in which he referred to the state of television programming as a 'vast wasteland' (1964). Behavioural studies on users of the internet refer back to the claims made about TV in the 1960s that television watching takes place at the expense of interpersonal and social interactions: 'The term *couch potato* has become part of our daily vernacular, with the implication that long hours spent viewing television are a trade-off for other activities, especially interpersonal and social ones' (Nie 2001). These associations between television, passivity and the viewer's exclusion from citizenship are drawn out in essays from journalism studies (Lewis and Wahl-Jorgensen 2005); and between television, bad food choices and passivity in adolescence studies (Van den Bulck 2000).
4. Žižek used this phrase when describing the backdrop against which the narrative action of the film *Children of men* takes place, and the manner in which it feeds into and shapes the primary narrative: 'If you look at the film too directly: the oppressive social dimension, you don't see it. You can see it in an oblique way only if it remains in the background […] it's against the background it throws the light on signs of social oppression and it's the same I think in this film. [...] this fate of the individual hero remains a kind of a prism through which you see the background even more sharply […]' (2006).
5. Morse might have been better served using Benjamin's phrase 'phantasmagoria of the marketplace,' which he uses to describe the Paris arcades, the precursor to the shopping center. A 'phantasmagoria of the interior,' Benjamin writes, is 'constituted by man's imperious need to leave the imprint of his private individual existence on the rooms he inhabits' (Benjamin [1939] 1999: 14).

References

Adey, Peter. 2007. "May I have your attention': airport geographies of spectatorship, position, and (im)mobility'. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 25 (3): 515–536.

Allen, Patrick. 2008. 'Framing, locality and the body in augmented public space', in *Augmented urban spaces (design and the built environment)*, A. Aurigi and F. de Cindio (eds.). London: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.
Augé, Marc. 2008. *Non-places: An introduction to super-modernity*, 2nd ed. Translated by John Howe. New York: Verso Press.
Benjamin, Walter. [1936] 1973. 'The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction', in *Illuminations*, H. Arendt, translated by H. Zohn. New York: Schocken Books.
Benjamin, Walter. [1939] 1999. 'Paris, the capital of the nineteenth century', in *The arcades project*, translated by H. Eiland and K. McLaughlin. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
Boddy, William. 1990. *Fifties television: The industry and its critics*. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press.
Bull, Michael. 2004. 'Sound connections: An aural epistemology of proximity and distance in urban culture'. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 22 (1): 103-116.
Colomina, Beatriz. 1994. *Privacy and publicity: Modern architecture as mass media*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
Durland, Steven. 1987. 'Defining the image as place: A conversation with Kit Galloway, Sherrie Rabinowitz and Gene Youngblood'. *High Performance: A Quarterly Magazine for the New Art Audienc*e. No. 37. Accessed January 5. www.ecafe.com/museum/hp_gy_1987/hp_gy_1987.html.
Friedan, Betty. 1964. 'Television and the feminine mystique'. *TV Guide*. Radnor: Pennsylvania, February.
Fuqua, Joy V. 2003. "You take care of the patients, we'll take care of their TV': Attending to hospital television'. *Television and New Media* 4(3): 231-256.
Galloway, Kit and Sherrie Rabinowitz. 1980. *Hole in space: A public communications sculpture*, video documentation.
Groening, Stephen. 2010. 'From 'a box in the theater of the world' to 'the world as your living room': Cellular phones, television, and mobile privatization'. *New Media & Society* 12: 1331-1347.
Grootenboer, Hanneke. 2005. *The rhetoric of perspective: Realism and illusionism in seventeenth-century Dutch still-life painting*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
Hammamoto, Darrell Y. 1989. *Nervous laughter: Television situation comedy and liberal democratic ideology.* New York: Praeger.
Haralovitch, Mary Beth. 1989. 'Sitcoms and suburbs: Positioning the 1950s homemaker'. *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 11: 61-83.
Ho, Elaine W. 2011. Catalogue entry for *Hole in space*, Netherlands Media Art Institute. Accessed February 6. http://catalogue.nimk.nl/art.php?id=931.
Kruse, Holly. 2003. 'Social interaction, the arrangement of interior space, and racetrack renovation'. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 27 (4): 330-345.
Leibman, Nina. 1995. *Living room lectures: The fifties family in film and television*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
Lewis, Justin and Karin Wahl-Jorgensen. 2005. 'Active citizen or couch potato? Journalism and public opinion', in *Journalism: Critical issues*, S. Allan. (ed.). Berkshire: Open University Press.

Lipsitz, George. 1988. 'The meaning of memory: Family, class, and ethnicity in early network television programs'. *Camera Obscura* 6(1): 78-116.
Marc, David. 1984. *Demographic vistas: Television in American culture.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
Marc, David. 1989. *Comic visions: Television comedy and American culture.* Boston: Unwin Hyman.
McCarthy, Anna. 2001. 'TV, class and social control in the 1940s neighbourhood tavern', in *Ambient television: Visual culture and public space*. Durham: Duke University Press.
McCarthy, Anna. 2004. 'The rhythms of the reception area: Crisis, capitalism, and the waiting room TV', in *Television after TV: Essays on a medium in transition*, L. Spigel and J. Olsson (eds.). Durham: Duke University Press.
Meehan, Diana M. 1983. *Ladies of the evening: Women characters of prime-time television.* Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow.
Mellencamp, Patricia. 1986. 'Situation comedy, feminism, and freud, discourse of Gracie and Lucy', in *Studies in entertainment: Critical approaches to mass culture*, T. Modleski (ed.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Minow, Newton. 1964. *Equal time: The private broadcaster and the public interest.* New York: Atheneum.
Modleski, Tania. 1984. 'The rhythms of reception: Daytime television and women's work', in *Regarding television: Critical approaches – An anthology,* A. E. Kaplan (ed.). The American Film Institute Monograph Series, Vol. 2. Frederick: University Publications of America.
Morse, Margaret. 1990. 'An ontology of everyday distraction: The freeway, the mall and television', in *Logics of television,* P. Mellencamp (ed.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Myers, Tony. 2003. *Slavoj Žižek*. New York: Routledge.
Nie, Norman N. 2001. 'Sociability, interpersonal relations, and the internet: Reconciling conflicting findings'. *American Behavioral Scientist* 45(3): 420-435.
Press, Andrea and Camilla Johnson-Yale. 2008. 'Politic talk and the flow of ambient television: Women watching *Oprah* in an African-American hair salon', in *New directions in American reception study*, P. Goldstein and J. L. Machor (eds.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Rojek, Chris. 1997. 'Indexing, dragging and the social construction of tourist sights', in *Touring cultures:Transformations of travel and theory*, C. Rojek and J. Urry (eds.). New York: Routledge.
Rose, Brian. 1986. *Television and the performing arts: A handbook and reference guide to American cultural programming*. New York: Greenwood Press.
Sennett, Richard. 1994. *Flesh and stone*. London: Faber and Faber.
Sheller, Mimi and John Urry. 2003. 'Mobile Transformations of 'Public' and 'Private' Life'. *Theory, Culture & Society* 20(3): 107-125.
Sorkin, Michael. 1992. 'Introduction', in *Variations on a theme park: The new American city and the end of public space*, M. Sorkin (ed.). New York: Hill and Wang.
Spigel, Lynn. 1992. *Make room for TV: Television and the family ideal in postwar America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Spigel, Lynn. 2001a. 'Media homes: Then and now'. *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 4(4): 385-411.

Spigel, Lynn. 2001b. 'Portable TV: Studies in domestic space travels', in *Welcome to the dreamhouse: Popular media and postwar suburbs*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Van den Bulck, Jan. 2000. 'Is television bad for your health? Behavior and body image of the adolescent "couch potato".' *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 29(3): 273-288.

Virilio, Paul. 2009. *Speed and politics: An essay on dromology*. Translated by Mark Polizzotti. New York: Semiotext(e).

Weber, Samuel. 1996. *Mass mediauras: Form, technics, media*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.

Williams, Raymond. [1974] 1992. *Television: Technology and cultural form*. Hanover: Wesleyan University Press.

Žižek, Slavoj. 2001. *Enjoy your symptom!: Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and out*. New York: Routledge.

Žižek, Slavoj. 2006. 'Interview', in Bonus Features, *Children of Men*, Blu-ray edition. Directed by Alfonso Cuarón. Universal Pictures.