

23.05.2019 DRAFT TEXT ON METHOD

PHOTO-FILMIC GESTURE

(what) In the last seven months I've been making color photographs using the whole surface of 35mm film rolls. (how) To expose the whole film strip in a single gesture, I am rewinding or pulling the film in front of the lens with the shutter open. (why) Since the beginning of my study, I am interested in the fluidity of reality and the potential of photographic and cinematographic processes to record such characteristic.

My research alternate between three mode of production, strip-photography, reading and writing. Most of my work focuses on image-making. I explore this by testing the possibilities contained within camera (Flusser, p36). I have been exploring the role of the shutter in photographic and cinematographic apparatuses. I built and used shutter-less cameras to make photo-chemicals photographs. I scanned and animated one of the photographs in a five-minute film. I refer to my practice of strip-photography as a photo-filmic gesture (Flusser, Agamben)

Most of my images are color photographs made using kodak color negative film. I take photograph using the whole strip of film. I move the film behind the aperture with the shutter wide open. The film is moved linearly by using the rewinding mechanism of the camera. In the same time, I hold the shutter open by positioning the setting on bulb. This is a technique called strip-photography that date back to the 19th century. Reading the book *The Art of Strip Photography: Making Still Images with a Moving Camera (2011)* by Marteen Vanvolsem was decisive to understand the particular history and the specificities of this technique. He argues that strip-photography can be used to explore the time-based possibilities of the photographic image.

How to explore the fluidity of reality with photographic and cinematographic apparatuses?

It is with this question in mind that I started my research. One of the main things that photographic and cinematographic techniques are doing is breaking and fragmenting the continuity of light. They record a discontinuous sequence of frames. In cinema, technical means of projection and psychological means of identification transform the sequence of still image in a continuous reality (Baudry, (1975)). It is a very efficient illusion of continuity and therefore of reality. Can we record or represent the continuity of reality outside of this frame by frame ideology? Is continuity a characteristic of reality?

In my research I focused more on the process of creation (poietic) than the one of reception (aesthetic).

I built a medium format shutter-less camera but I extensively used my manual SLR camera from 1966, a Minolta SRT101. This camera has a manual film-advancing and rewind mechanism. It utilizes conventional perforated 36mm film. After each exposure the film is shifted into place for the next one. This is performed by means of a thumb gesture that pushes a crank and subsequently moves the reel and compress the shutter's spring. The shutter release button operates the deflection of the spring which opens the shutter. It is the frame by frame advancing mechanism. Each frame is separate in time and space. In cinema, *"these separate frames have between them differences that are indispensable for the creation of an illusion of continuity, of a continuous passage (movement, time). But only on one condition can these differences create this illusion: they must be effaced as differences"*(Baudry).

What will happen if there are no separate frames?

What interest me here is that the shutter is limited to a binary control, light or no light. This specificity, whatever the speed of the shutter, only allows the sequencing of images. It is a fragmentation of the flux of light, and this fragmentation feels like to be a fundamental structure of photographic and cinematographic apparatuses and more widely in the way we understand things. I work against this fragmentation trying to deregulate some of the processes.

Whether it is mechanical or electronic It is mainly the shutter that control the flux of light, and paces the imprinting of frames. So, the first thing I did was to remove or keep the shutter open to allow a continuous input of light in the camera. This results ultimately to an overexpose image. Overexposing a print film means to get closer to its maximal density. The film loses the ability to show tonal variations when overexpose. One way to regain control over the time of exposure was to move the film away from the light source.

I work with the rewinding mechanism. Once the film has been loaded, I advance it without exposing it until it is fully loaded in the take-up reel. From there I reengage the shutter spring and pushes the small rewind button to allow the rewinding. The shutter dial has a manual control program called Bulb. It is a momentary-action mode that holds open for as long as a photographer depresses the shutter-release button. To expose the film, I open the shutter and start rewinding with a circular gesture the film in front of the aperture. The combination of this rewinding mechanism and the manual control over the shutter is the base of the technique. The shutter's power to control the light flux is transferred to the moving of the film and the duration of the exposure is now limited by the length of film. The physical aspect of the sensitive surface determines the size of the photograph. A continuous exposure coupled with the moving of the image provide a setting for a potential continuous recording. **An unlimited supply of film and an unlimited supply of light.** The continuity of reality is approached here linking both space (film) and time (exposure). The image below shows an exposure of approximately 8sec over a distance of more that 260 meters, taken from the train. The image is 72cm long.



Fig 1: Train Window, whole film exposed over 8 seconds

EXPOSURE & SYNCHRONISATION

Moving the film in a shutter-less apparatus allows for a different type of exposure, not dictated by the usual settings found on time dials. The continuous light input creates in strip-photography what Marteen Vanvolsem called a "*dynamic exposure*" (Vanvolsem, p153). The dynamic exposure is a direct result of the speed of the film and the aperture. The exposure time is the duration of the shooting process. This are the two main parameters of control. A constant speed will give a constant exposure as variations of speed will bring variations to the exposure. The amount of exposure variation that a given film can tolerate is called its exposure latitude. In the first image I made (fig2) the variations of exposures are clearly visible in the shape of vertical lines. Those lines are created by a multitude of superimposed frames. This clearly indicate the struggle I had to perform a smooth circular movement when I rewound the film.

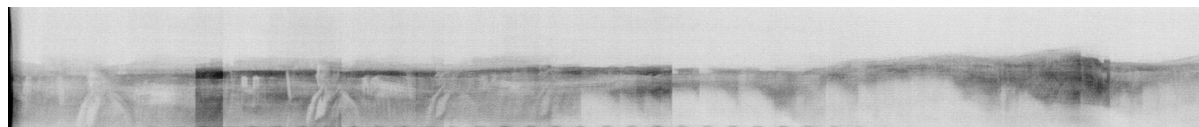


Fig 2 : Extract of first roll (1/6th of the image)

The jerking motion is visually printed onto the film. It is hard to get a smooth motion with such a small rewind crank. A larger crank gives more amplitude and therefore a smoother motion. I had the chance to build a medium format camera during a workshop, on which I stick a larger crank. As the contact sheet below demonstrates, the frame lines disappeared with a smooth motion. But I should ask myself why would I want to erase the mark of the making? For Baudry the cinematic apparatus is ideological because it hides his means of production to create an illusion of continuity. I think in my case because the technique is not based on a frame by frame recording, the mark of the making should be read through the particular depiction of the objects and the size of the images.

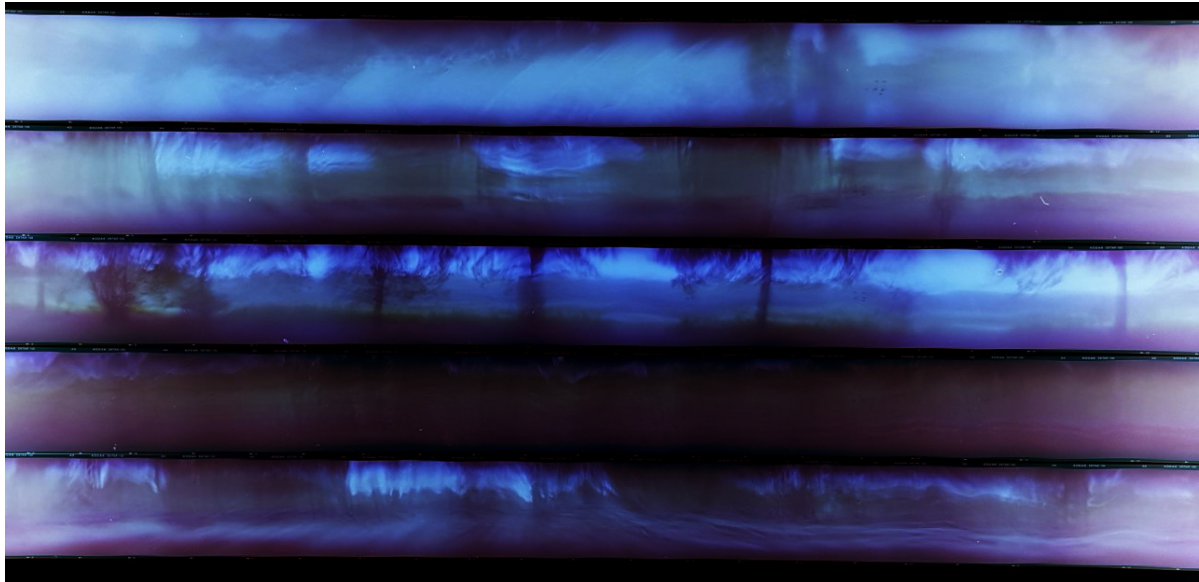


Fig 3: Medium Format contact print

Not only the movement of the film impacts the exposure, it also plays a major role in the depiction of objects. The depiction of object is relative to the movement of film, the movement of the camera and the movement of the operator's body. I believe here lays an important difference with classic photography: the photographer's body or the object of the photography must be movement. Movement is a fundamental condition for figurative depiction. Traditional practices overcome movement by the "freezing of time".

To sharply depict an object onto the film, the object and the film should travel at the same speed. This is well described in slit-scan photography techniques. This complex relation is not possible to achieve manually and only a mechanical device that will synchronize the film's speed with the object's one could potentially approach the equation. I try to match the speed of the passing landscape from a train window. I rewind the film intuitively, trying to match the different speeds. It became even more difficult when I realized that the distance of the object from the camera influences its relative speed. The background moves slower than the trees in the foreground (fig 4). Sharpness and motion variations seems to reinforce the dynamism of the image.



Fig 4: Extract of a "good" synchronization



Fig 5: Completely out of synchronization

The impossibility of synchronizing with the reality is of importance for me because it pushes away the idea of a perfect representation of reality ruled by sharpness, fixity and balanced exposure. Paradoxically it seems like

elements are connected by motion blur while the relation with the object is sort of disconnected. But does one need to synchronize with the world, especially the less predictable variables of the natural one? For Chris Welsby (2011), natural and elemental processes should be given the space and time to participate in the process of representation. In his film *Seven Days* (1974), he explores interconnectedness between the cinematic process and the environment by synchronizing the camera with the rotation of the earth. Maybe this is what Vilem Flusser (1991) meant by investing our knowledge into our vision to create new perspective on the world?

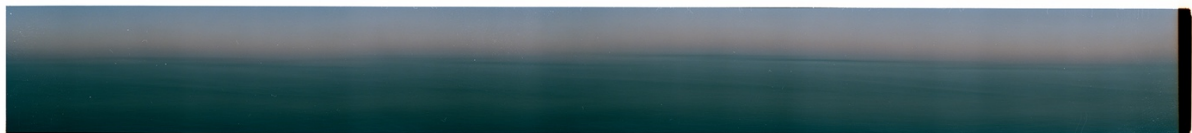
PERSPECTIVE, BODY & GESTURE

Separate objects like tree or houses can be seen connected together, linked in the image by drooling colors and shapes. Solids appear to be melted, as if the photographic surface regain its liquid quality, its state of emulsion. The liquid state is achieved by deregulation of the traditional norms and values (Bauman, (2000)). Does strip-photography deregulate the norm of central-point perspective?

Movement is a condition to depict object but it is also a condition to change point of view and perspective. For M. Vanvolsem, *"The continuous movement of the film and the camera while recording means that there is no longer any centrally focused viewpoint. The central perspective is abandoned here in favor of a variable perspective"* (p155). Variation of perspective is best exemplified by images that contain artificial construction (fig 6) than images containing natural phenomena (fig 7) & (fig 8)



(fig 6: A village from the train window)



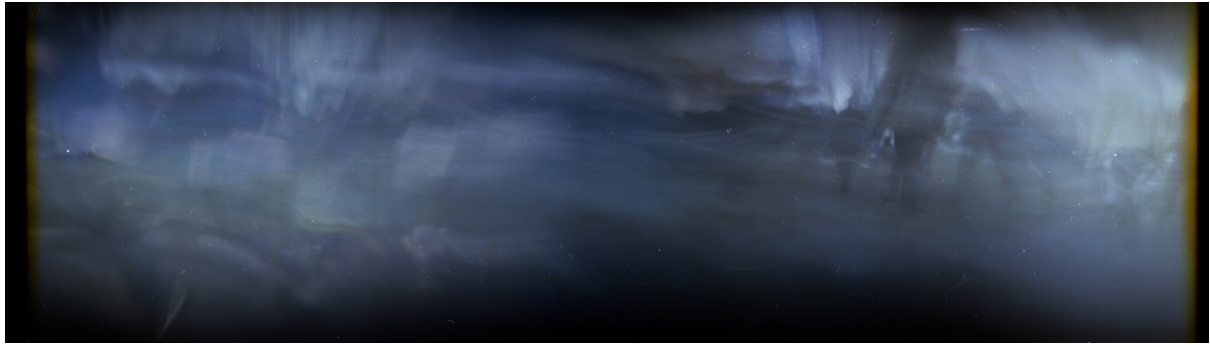
(fig 7: The north sea & horizon from the ferry)



(fig 8: The north sea & waves from the ferry)

Here I would like to link both Zygmunt Bauman's "Liquid Modernity" and Henri Bergson's "Matter & Memory".

"(...)matter resolves itself into numberless vibrations, all linked together in uninterrupted continuity, all bound up with each other, and traveling in every direction like shivers(...)" (Matter and Memory, pp.208-209)



(TO DEVELOP IN THIS PART)

- **Reference to Chinese scroll paintings, the use of perspective and reading methods (R.Petrucci)**
- **Multi-point perspective & the global world / increase of physical and mental mobility (P.Virno)**
- **Comparison with VR perspective & Embodiement (Charity VR refugee experience)**
- **Gesture: analyzing gesture**
- **Comparing the flux of separate images on Instagram**

Gesture can be approach as the “*wide variety of ways in which humans give what is usually regarded as willful expression to their thoughts and feeling through visible bodily action*” (Kendon, (2001). It is our corporal engagement with the world through practical actions (Kendon)

For Vilem Flusser , “a gesture is a movement of the body or of a tool connected to the body for which there is no satisfactory causal explanation.”

To me strip-photography enable another type of relation with the reality: a photographic gesture embracing movement, intuition and asynchronism. Following Vilem Flusser, I consider the gesture of photographing as an inclusive gesture. If photography represents something it is less reality than a set of relationships between elements. Those relation are of dialectic nature, aim / position , subject / object , photographer / apparatus. For Vilem Flusser , the gesture of photographing is a gesture of philosophing.

How can we use gestures in a way to produce other perspectives, non-western point view?

Does strip-photography help our understanding of contemporary mobility?

What kind of meaning can we produce with this technique?

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