

BETWEEN THE SCREEN-SEDIMENT AND THE SHATTERED WINDOW: THE DECONSTRUCTION OF THE SCREENS LIMITS AND FRAMES IN MOVING IMAGE INSTALLATIONS

 **SARA CASTELO BRANCO**

Université Paris 1, Panthéon-Sorbonne
Universidade Nova de Lisboa,
Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas
saracath1@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT

In the view of the continuous transformations in the structures of production, distribution and consumption of images, concepts such as expanded cinema or cinema of exhibition enlarged the spectrum of cinema to the contemporary art, which has also become a space to meditate about the fate of the cinematographic device. From a trans-historical and interdisciplinary approach – going from the pictorial *perspectiva artificialis* to the pre-cinematographic instruments, cinema, and contemporary art – this paper seeks to reflect, by using the historical metaphor of the window, on the volatility and multiplicity of contemporary screens and their influence on today's modes of vision. The paper also addresses the changes undergone in the image's frames and the consequent paradigm shift in how the viewer physically relates with these images, summoning the work of the Portuguese artist Alexandre Estrela to consider the perceptive, cognitive and topological reconfigurations in the moving-image exhibition formats in museums and art galleries.

Keywords: Screen; Expanded cinema; Art installation; Artificial perspective; New technologies.

1. INTRODUCTION

Walter Benjamin wrote, in a 1928 text published in the book *One Way Street*, about the gradual alteration in the conventional ways of reading a book, which would be reaching its end by the change of a “archaic stillness” to a “dictatorial perpendicular” position, as a consequence of a dissemination of the visual formats of newspapers, advertising and film (Benjamin, 2006, pp. 42-43). Adapting Benjamin’s considerations to our contemporaneity, it is possible to affirm that our current visual experiences are deeply shaped by our relation with the virtual and technological images – by a kind of visibility in which our gaze may have been shaped by the broken and overlapping multiple windows and frames of screens (Friedberg, 2006). By using the historical metaphor of the *window*, this article seeks to reflect on the volatility and multiplicity of contemporary screens and their impact on how the viewer physically relates with the images, and considers also the deconstruction of its limits and frames in contemporary art, through the conceptualization of elements such as the out-of-field or the dynamic framing.

2. THE WINDOW – CONTINUITIES AND RUPTURES

At once a surface and a frame, the Italian Quattrocento’s *perspectiva artificialis* was originally proposed by Filippo Brunelleschi in 1413, and later developed and codified in Leon Battista Alberti’s treatise *De Pictura* (1435-36). By assuming a depiction of a three-dimensional space through a two-dimensional and virtualized image, Alberti devised an optical process, set up as a “visual pyramid”, where the painting’s rectangular frame should be perceived as an *open window* (“*aperta finestra*”) (Alberti, 1970). But this image as a view mediated “through a window” far from attesting a imitative truth of the motifs, was made, according to Anne Friedberg, in a “metaphoric index of the frame,” detached from a mimetic and transparent vision of the natural world: “the architectural window was to serve for light and ventilation. Windows [in Alberti] were translucent, not transparent” (Friedberg, 2006, p. 32). Relevance is therefore given to the framing and not to the actual image contained in it – the painting taken not as a literal copy of what is inside the window, but as a recreation of a spatial and geometric construction of that same view.

Privileging the eye above the other human senses, this Albertian theory is aligned in the way the eyes measure distance: “Know that a painted thing can never appear truthful where there is not a definite distance for seeing it” (Alberti, 1970, p. 59). In this sense, perspective is embedded in the most primordial sense of the word *space*, from the Latin *spatium*, which expresses the notion of distance and interval. Perspective is also made in a separation between the world represented and the world of the viewer, in a spatiality mediated between two points and interceded by a sort of diaphanous fold between the gaze and the represented scene.

The polysemic *renaissant* concept of *point of view* – both a spatial dimension defined by a particular angle of view, and an expression of subjectivity – seems to refer anthropocentrically to its use by the Renaissance perspective. At this regard, Brunelleschi inferred the projective coincidence between the *point of view* and the *vanishing point* through the mirror apparatus, where the observer’s monocular view would face the painting in the *vanishing point* exact position (Bousquet, 2018). This mutuality was defined by Pélerin Viator as “*point of subject*” (“*point du sujet*”): artist and observer are at the same fixed position in relation to the plane of the still image, where the stillness of the painting is also of its observer’s, who assumes the same monocular view of the painter (Damisch, 2006)¹.

1 In perspective, the coinciding place of painter and observer is concealed, and the point from which the painting is seen can never be revealed in it, allowing for it to be observed from a point in which the observer is not seen.

Even though perspective has been dominant until the 20th century, throughout art history *imperfect geometries* have come to disrupt this system. On this subject, Hubert Damisch sees the cloud of the baroque domes as a paradoxical order between the ephemeral and the material: the cloud as opposite of volume and flatness that emphasize the misty, the indefinite and the tactile (Damisch, 2002). On the other hand, the Dutch painting of the 17th century would generate, to Martin Jay, the second of three scopic regimes of Modernity, a system that changed the perspective’s universal point of view by following an optical path privileging narrative over description (Jay, 1988). Later, the Cézanne’s post-Impressionism detour, which abolished the tyranny of linear perspective, conceived an impression of landscape discordant from the rigid shapes of “things.” His pictorial objects were no longer elongated or reduced but “oriented” towards the observer, creating a “kinetic eye” effect through the use of the *inverted perspective* (Marcicic, 2017).

The same years that saw Cézanne’s pictorial experiments also saw the advent of what Jonathan Crary calls a “systematic rupture” of the perspective visual paradigm in relation to the optical and epistemological regime of camera obscura, where its “linear optical system, its fixed positions, its identification of perception and object, were all too inflexible and immobile for a rapidly changing set of cultural and political requirements” (Crary, 1992, p. 137). According to the author, this disruption began with the creation of new visualization devices that reconciled the viewer with the physiological limits of vision, transforming the subject’s body in an active element.

The camera obscura and the artificial perspective were the paradigmatic instruments for the translating of the phenomenological space of vision into a virtual plane of three-dimensional representation. As a rectangular frame, the Alberti’s window operated on geometrical calculation, while the camera obscura’s mechanical device would process a perspectival image discarding its mathematical formula. In this sense, the optical principle of the camera obscura was accomplished in an architectural exchange between the *window* and the *wall*: “The projective light of the camera obscura produced a virtual image, a frame of light that – via this ‘natural magic’ – formed a virtual window upon the wall” (Friedberg, 2006, p. 61). Nevertheless, the camera obscura would create a particular gaze during the 17th and 18th centuries, which by the very architecture of its mechanism, it

2 The camera obscura proposes a phenomenological experience distinct from the one suggested by Alberti: when viewing the image formed by the camera, the viewer acts as if withdrawn from the world, contained in an indoor space, an act of seeing that is disengaged from the body. A "metaphysic of interiority" defines this position of a "interiorized observer to an exterior world, not just a two-dimensional representation, as is the case with perspective" (Crary, 1992, p. 34). Crary mentions this deconstructed and yet internalized condition of the camera obscura's viewer, who in a same time and action observes the world outside and is focused introspectively inside the device.

separated the physical position of its observer from representation, therefore disengaging the body from the act of seeing².

The emergence of a new optical regime, linked to another epistemological model, is inseparable from what Crary calls the "modernization of perception" (Crary, 2001). In the 1800's, with the spreading of urban mechanized transportation came the invention of new technologies for producing and reproducing images. The author sees the stereoscopic image as the paradigm of this enlargement of the visible field. Created in the 1830s by Charles Wheatstone and David Brewster, the stereoscope is the result of a fusion, perceived by the observer's brain, of two similar images seen from slightly different angles, prompting the brain to interpret this divergence as depth. Here, it is also the practice of distance that determines the meaning of the image representation by distancing eye and image (Plunkett, 2013). The stereoscopy-simulated depth is however different from the three-dimensional monocular and Euclidean strategy: if Renaissance perspective unified space, the stereoscope is made in a fragmented space that brings unlinked elements together. The viewer is not able to perceive the image as a homogeneous set, but only as a combination of separate areas. The observer's affinity with the image no longer is grounded in a fixed position in space, but rather come from "two dissimilar images whose positions simulate the anatomical structure of the observer's body" (Crary, 1992, p. 127). The stereoscope thus disrupts what had been for centuries considered the model for reciprocity between viewer and image by breaking the unique point of view of Renaissance painting.

3. THE "ONTOLOGICAL CUT"

Jonathan Crary suggests a discontinuity between the visuality of Renaissance perspective and the rise of photography and the cinematograph. Alluding to the Lumière brother's first films, the author mentions an evanescent world, whose "substantiality [was] irrevocably discredited" by an image that asserts "the demise of the punctual or anchored classical observer" and calls for "dynamic disorder inherent in attentiveness" (Crary, 2001, p. 148). If Crary places the first viewings of the cinematograph within this new visual order, it would be the metamorphosis of cinema into its more conventional device that would inscribe it in the presuppositions of perspective. Jean-Louis Baudry is one of the most well-known disseminators of this assumption, placing the device's concealment and body's inertia in a direct relation of cinema with the perspective images: it "is clear in the history of cinema: it is the perspective construction of the Renaissance which originally served as model" (Baudry, 1974, p. 41). Baudry also sees in the frame and screen a material relationship between "height and width, [that] seem clearly taken from an average drawn from western easel painting" (Baudry, 1974, p. 41). It should be noted, however, that authors such as Crary, but also Jacques Aumont (Aumont, 2014), diverge from this concerted integration

of cinema in a lineage of the perspective, in relation for example to the link established between the camera and a humanist ideology, that is markedly perspectivistic and, consequently, derived from a bourgeois ideology (Aumont, 2014, p. 169).

This presumed automatic use of perspective in cinema leads Anne Friedberg to summon the idea of an “ontological cut”: the framing of the moving image marks a separation between the material surface of the wall and the view contained within the screen. Bounding the viewers’ immobility with the simultaneous opening of an immaterial space virtually represented in the image, the screen becomes the threshold point of tensions between the spectator’s fixity and the images’ mobility, seen through the “windows” of film, television and computer. The author therefore speaks of a “mobilized virtual gaze” (Friedberg, 2006): another mobility of the visible made by this virtual projection, that the viewers, although sitting immobile in their chairs, establish with the screen.

According to Lev Manovich, this at once fixed and moving visuality would become consolidated only during the 1910s. In the ‘primitive’ period before it, the link established by the viewer between the viewing space and the virtual space of the screen was concerted in a sense similar to the *vaudeville* experience, where spectators were free to “interact, come and go, and maintain a psychological distance from the cinematic diegesis. (...) now the spectator is placed at the best viewpoint of each shot, inside the virtual space” (Manovich, 1995, p. 20). As Friedberg points out, the progressive mobilization of the image in Modernity was assisted by a progressive imprisonment of its spectator: “as the ‘mobility’ of the gaze became more ‘virtual’ (...) – the observer became more immobile, passive, ready to receive the constructions of a virtual reality placed in front of his or her unmoving body” (Friedberg, 2006, p. 22).

In this regard, these affinities or disagreements between different systems of visuality establish a complex network of relations, where the cinema – instead of being acknowledged separately within the lineage of a particular device – is perhaps essentially the consequence of a thickness that has been materializing by the multiple combinations of these visual regimes.

4. THE SHATTERED WINDOW

Alberti’s perspective was produced by a divergence in human vision: it reduces the eye mobility and innate binocular position to a static and monocular point of view, which likewise has become the dominant mode of experiencing the moving image: a single image viewed in a single fixed frame. Today this paradigm has changed. The subject’s inert position gives way to movement, to viewing images in multiple layers and frames. The contemporary screens seem to reverse the canon of perspective that has ruled the moving image, shattering the Alberti’s metaphorical window in a fragmented and omnipresent infinity of multiple screens (Friedberg, 2006).

Friedberg addresses another condition of this deconstruction of perspective, born from the metaphor of the window applied to computers, where the single frame was replaced by a multiplicity of windows within windows. If the variations in scale, position, and angle of the cinematic camera compromise an eye mobility, they do it sequentially, and not on a same layer. Even though there have been occasional examples of multiple-frame images throughout history, it was only with the rise of digital technologies that, according to Friedberg, emerged an everyday relationship with a vernacular visual system that is fractured, multiple and synchronous in space and time. Therefore, perspective may have ended with the introduction of the computer screens, where each element in its composition is seen separately without systematic spatial correlation (Friedberg, 2006).

Nevertheless, Friedrich Kittler puts the Alberti's window and the computer windows under a same lineage, stating that this "*fenestra aperta* could be considered to be the ancestor of all those graphic user interfaces that have endowed computer screens with so-called windows for the past 20 years. Alberti's window – like Microsoft Windows – was naturally rectangular and could thus be easily broken down into smaller windows" (Kittler, 2010, p. 62). For Friedberg, these virtual screens also became popular precisely as substitutes for the architectural window – both *allegorical* (the window as a metaphorical for the screen) and *literal* (the screen as a real-life substitute for the window). Although the computer user is still *in front of* – and facing a perpendicular frame where the image is both a *background* and a *foreground* – the screen is viewed from an *above* of viewpoint. On the computer screen, the eye wanders from object to object instead of staring at a static *vanishing point* (Friedberg, 2006). The observer thus evolves to the user, as his relation to the screen is made via the interface – a term composed by the Latin prefix *inter-*, which means "within two, in the space of", and by the English *verb -face*, which expresses "facing, turning to."³ Even if suggesting this same notion of *in front of*, this new visuality is now enacted in other space relationships.

³ See the words 'inter-' and '-face' in *Infopedia* encyclopaedia: <https://www.infopedia.pt/>

5. THE SCREEN IN *IKEBANA* (2016) OF ALEXANDRE ESTRELA

The work of Alexandre Estrela (1971, Lisbon, Portugal) is developed by the unstable dynamics that images are made of: it is not just an understanding of the object, but also of an experience of the viewer that undergoes an experimental in-process state – an *image-state*, which does not end in the evidence of a first viewing, but opens itself to a re-reading of an ongoing discovery. If the filmic image is commonly flat and framed, Estrela's work diverges from this alleged flatness and immateriality of the video by intersecting it with matter, making the projection surfaces physical. Here, the screen is insubmissive, as it resists its pre-determined passive function, and acts upon the projections, building itself as an autonomous form.

Calling to mind a "performative category" unique in the screens of contemporary art, Kate Mondloch has developed a distinction between

“screen-based” and “screen-reliant” (Mondloch, 2010, p. 13). The latter takes place in a “screen-mediated art viewing”, detached from its traditionally flat and rectangular surface, and spatialized by film and video, activating space by creating an “environment” made of space, matter, duration, place and participation. Taken from the flatness of the screen to find body on glass, on the wall or on three-dimensional sculptures,



Figure 1: Video-installation *IKEBANA* (2016) by Alexandre Estrela. View from the private collection of Maria João and Armando Cabral. © Courtesy of Alexandre Estrela.

these screens get reconfigured sculpturally and spatially. This ability of the image to materialize itself from physical qualities is present in some of Estrela’s works like *IKEBANA* (2016)⁴ a video projection that outstretches the limits of its screen, expanding it materially to the surface’s reverse and obverse. In an insulated space that is not visually contaminated by the other works of the exhibition, *IKEBANA* is in a dark environment, consisting of a video projection XGA in loop, with colour and no sound, and projected on a small screen of wood leaning against a wall on the floor.

This work is composed by a quick succession of photos that trigger a three-dimensional illusion: a bouquet of dried flowers appears, and its shadow is projected on a surface with two eyes that stare at the viewer (actually two holes), suggesting a space behind the projection plane. When we enter the exhibition, *IKEBANA* seems to be a simple video-projection, but as we physically come close to the screen a materiality is revealed. A three-dimensional object piercing the screen (the dried flowers) creates an illusion of depth, thus invoking the Japanese Ikebana floral arrangements, whose translation (‘live flowers’) seems to refer ironically and symptomatically, to this particular and dynamic nature of images. This issue is triggered by the presence of the shadow in the video that doesn’t correspond to the flowers, mobilizing a spatiotemporal delay between the matter and its silhouette, between the object’s materiality and the video image and shadow’s.

It is also from this circumstance that some of the artist’s video projections take us to another kind of space-time experience, where the simultaneity of a flat screen (the fleeting flow of the moving image) and the object (the static nature of the sculpture) seeks to influence in

4 *IKEBANA* was presented in the exhibition *Baklite*, curated by Sérgio Mah at CAV, (Coimbra, Portugal), from December 17th, 2016 to March 12th, 2017.

an experience different from the ordinary in the face of the projected image, which sees its spatial and temporal dimensions transformed by the combination of the delayed, evasive and deferral time of film with the direct, in-person and *in loco* experience of object. This work exists thus in this condition of the screen in being simultaneously *window illusion-inducing and material object*.

5.1 CONTEMPORARY SCREENS AND THE ART INSTALLATION

By separating two distinct spaces that coexist, the frame isolates a virtual space that coincides with the space of world experience. This is the particularity that Manovich identifies in the “classical screen”, a flat and rectangular surface determined by frontal vision that acts simultaneously in the body space and in the opening of a window into e representation space: “this screen describes equally well a Renaissance painting (recall Alberti) and a modern computer display. Even proportions have not changed in five centuries, they are similar for a typical fifteenth century painting, a film screen and a computer screen” (Manovich, 1995, p. 3). Manovich points out to the appearance of yet another kind of screen in the twentieth century: the “dynamic screen”, which differs from the classic model by adding a time-based density that did not exist before. Propagated through cinema, television and video, this “dynamic screen” transforms the viewer-image relationship, engaging in a particular “viewing regime” that, even though already implicit in the “classical screen”, is effectively put in evidence here: the image seeks a complete illusion, and a spectator focused on the representation and detached from physical space (Manovich, 2001). Oscillating between an cinematographic visuality of full complete fusion with screen space, or a television visuality where the very act of seeing is often merged into domestic activities, this visual regime has seen its stability challenged with the emergence of the computer screen, where coexisting windows tainted what had been the dominant image: *the single window* (Friedberg, 2006).

Almost an unavoidable intermediary of our relationship with the world⁵, the screen presents itself today in the most diverse shapes and sizes: “the flat screen, the large screen and the mobile mini-screen; the screen on you, the screen with you; the screen where we do everything and where we see everything. Video screen, miniature screen, graphic screen, portable screen, touch screen: this incoming century is the one of the pervasive and multiform, planetary and multimedia screen” (Lipovetsky & Serroy, 2010, p. 10)⁶. These distinct patterns mobilize the ways of seeing, something that is visible in the diversity and mutability that shapes the contemporary displays of the moving image that converge now into a model of interactivity and confluence between cinema, television and computer. According to Matteo Treleani, the real paradigm shift on the screens comes from the actions the observer is allowed to take: from the *vision* we move on to *usage*, to the possibility of stopping and interacting directly with the audio-visual flow. It is from this background that the

5 If for centuries the frame was the device that covered most of the visual information, today's computer framed screens continues to be the main tool for accessing information: “we may debate whether our society is a society of spectacle or of simulation, but, undoubtedly, it is the society of a screen” (Manovich, 1995, p. 2).

6 From the excerpt in Portuguese: “O ecrã liso, o grande ecrã e o mini-ecrã móvel; o ecrã sobre si, o ecrã consigo; o ecrã onde se faz tudo e onde se vê tudo. Ecrã vídeo, ecrã miniatura, ecrã gráfico, ecrã portátil, ecrã táctil: o século que se anuncia é o do ecrã omnipresente e multiforme, planetário e multimidiático

7 From the excerpt in French: "L'écran, finalement, nous aveugle, car l'analysant, on perd facilement de vue la relation que les contenus et les applications entretiennent avec l'espace qui les entoure."

8 From the excerpt in French: "Sa propre chambre obscure. Gardant à l'esprit que chacune de ces installations implique un dispositif singulier, qui définit à proprement parler son invention, et que toutes se donnent sur une relation variable entre matière et idée, expérience et concept, trauma et durée, on a cru pouvoir distinguer plusieurs niveaux ou modes (...) au gré desquels ces œuvres se développent."

author addresses the conceivable set of contemporary screens that have emerged in the 1990s. For Treleani, the "intimate screens" ("écrans intimes") of smartphones, computers and tablets assume an idea of *union*: either by the physical link between body and vision, or by the coexistence of different media. This leads Treleani to point out that these screens no longer represent things: they are true "visibility devices" ("dispositifs de visibilité"), that cease to be objects of the eye, to become only "seen". Action no longer takes place just onscreen, but also outside of it: "The screen, finally, blinds us, because one easily loses sight of the relation that the contents and the applications maintain with the space which surrounds them" (Treleani, 2018)⁷. These screens ask us to act and perform actions, unlike the cinema that, although it demands certain actions from the viewer, is confined to a place that doesn't get mistaken with everyday life. This public ubiquity of the screens is shaped in an experience that albeit being collective (urban and shared) is also personal and portable (intimate and individual) due to the miniaturization of the devices. In this context, the screen gets further apart from its conventional frame to join a kinetic visual regime that breaks the perspective. Lastly, Treleani argues that perhaps the contemporary screen can be understood merely as a "residue of an old device" (Treleani, 2018), a manipulation mechanism, instead of a representation one, which will be one day replaced by another, more adapted to their new functions.

As a device that also generates different visualities, moving images installations since the 1960s and especially from the 1990s onwards, have been involved in a dynamic of multiplication, dissolution or continuity of screens and their frames. Thus, moving images installations appear as an indicial place – clashing with, or prophesying, the screen chronologies previously mentioned. If contemporary spatio-temporal experience is based more on the multiple and the simultaneous than on the singular and the sequential (Friedberg, 2006), the different visual apparatus in art installations have worked primitively on several possibilities of the screen, perhaps announcing this fragmented and accelerated regime. Regarding this multidimensionality, Raymond Bellour declares that unlike cinema, the art installation keeps on creating its "own camera obscura. Keeping in mind that each of these installations involves a singular device, which defines its invention, properly speaking, and that all relate to a variable relation between matter and idea, experience and concept, trauma and duration" (Bellour, 1999, p. 292).⁸

On the other hand, Anne Ring Petersen uses the "*passage-work*" metaphor to assert the installation's calling to act with thresholds, borders and connections between different disciplines, discourses and modes of experience, working in stages between the visual and the audio, the haptic and the synesthetic perception (Peterson, 2015, p. 33). Bellour also works the *passage* in the concept of "inter-images" ("*entre-images*") that arise from the relation between the cinematographic changes in the 1990s and the rise of video and television images (Bellour, 1999). Video image would stand out as a lead figure of this movement by creating reconfigurations and intersections between technical images. A situation

that is increasingly manifest under today's age of computer, where one can reflect on the cinema of the last decades opening up not only to new technologies, but also to galleries and museums – a phenomenon that can be designated as the “diverse social uses” of moving images (Aumont, 2013). Bellour, however, qualifies this circumstance as an “aesthetics of confusion” (“esthétique de la confusion”), whereas the passages between imaginary modalities multiply and confuse themselves, and in view of the very diverse experiences proposed by the installations, the only principle of differentiation seems to arise from the resistance of the more conventional model of cinema. Thus, when reworking the figures from which the films designed their forms of expression “by both duplicating cinema and differentiating itself from it, the installations thus also make cinema enter into a history that exceeds it” (Bellour, 2008, p. 407). But even if Bellour sees on the art installations what may be the effect of “the so-called ‘crisis’ within cinema and to the difficulties of contemporary art, of which installations are probably the most vivid manifestation” (Balsom, 2013, p. 15), he also uses the *installation* metaphor to designate the very constitutive process of cinema: “Cinema can thus be viewed (...) as an installation that succeeded in capturing for itself alone the energy appropriate to the animated image, dominating it for half a century until the advent of the competition of what television has been for so long, a ‘projection-without-projection’” (Bellour apud Leighton, 2008, p. 407).

5.2 AN *IMAGE-STATE* AND A *EX-CENTRIC MOVEMENT*

The word “installation” comes from the Latin *installare*, from *in* + *stallum* (“put in place”): setting up an object within a frame. Based on the ambiguity that follows the word since its inception, Claire Bishop confronts the terms “installation of art” and “art installation”. By wanting to make the viewer aware of the *set up* (installation) of objects in space, the *art installation* immerses the body in the work's spatiality: “Installation art creates a situation into which the viewer physically enters, and insists that you regard this as a singular totality. Installation art (...) addresses the viewer directly as a literal presence in the space” (Bishop, 2005, p. 6). As seen, Estrela's work often goes through a kind of *image-state* arisen from this interpellation of the viewer: in *IKEBANA*, the gaze takes place in the time and spatiality built between the movement of a first viewing and that of a second viewing, when we approach the video-installation. If, on the one hand, the work maintains a rectangular frame that separates real space from the image virtual space, on the other, it tridimensionalizes and expands the elements from the screen surface. The frame is no longer just an object of geometric circumscription, but a field of gradations (performed in front, in the middle and in the back). In this way, the perspective's “manifesting by distancing” (and the very Latin notion of *spatium*) is transformed in a *heuristic of approximation*.

In this sense, Estrela creates an *image-state* based on a spatiality between the viewer and the object that disrupts the rigid paradigm of the

perspective viewer by adding to it variations of point of view, movement and scale – transforming the subject’s body in an active element. If today, as stated by Friedberg, the subject’s inert position gives way to movement and to viewing images in multiple modes, *IKEBANA* creates precisely “diverse visibility regimes: see from afar, see closely, see very clearly or on an approximate way, see through, see diagonally, see partially” (Parfait, 2001, p. 165). Based on an analysis of the “power of the center”, Rudolf Arnheim demonstrates the existence of two visual systems, *the centric* and *the eccentric*, present in architecture, painting and sculpture. If film stresses



Figure 2: Video-installation *IKEBANA* (2016) by Alexandre Estrela. View from the private collection of Maria João and Armando Cabral. © Courtesy of Alexandre Estrela.

9 From the excerpt in French: “En s’inscrivant dans l’espace de la théâtralité, le cinéma s’est construit sur l’oubli du déplacement du spectateur, déplacement qui ressurgit, aujourd’hui, à la faveur de la migration des images en mouvement depuis les salles de projection vers les espaces d’exposition et de la révolution numérique qui bouleverse nos pratiques visuelles.” On the question of the spectator in the moving image installations in the last decades, see: Balsom, E. (2013). *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press; Bellour, R. (2012). *La Querelle des Dispositifs. Cinéma – Installations, Expositions*. Paris: POL; Michaud, P. (2006). *Le Mouvement des Images*. Paris: Centre Pompidou; Païni, D. (2006). *Le Temps Exposé: Le Cinéma de la Salle au Musée*. Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma; Elwes, C. (2015). *Installation and the Moving Image*. New York: Columbia University Press; Connolly, M. (2009). *The Place of Artists’ Cinema: Place, Site and Screen, Intellect*. Bristol/Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

10 These two authors linked the “darkness of the theatre, the immobility of the spectator, and the hypertrophy of vision at the expense of decreased motor capacity to a regressive state that enables identificatory processes and sets up a transcendental subjection position, shot through with idealism” (Balsom, 2013, p. 50).

a fixed frontally that inevitably works towards a center – even when internally *unframed* – the kinetic and spatialized condition of the installation de-centers the screen to a spatial condition re-centered on the relation between body and work (Arnheim, 2009). As the viewer pervades the space, the attention is shifted from the illusion of the screen to the space around it and to the mechanisms and physical properties of the moving image. This allows for an ex-centric movement in relation to the *IKEBANA*’s screen, where, like in the ex-centric motions in mechanics, the rotation axis is placed off-center or in a different center: it is intended to transform a continuous rotation movement into a different kind of movement. In this regard, Philippe-Alain Michaud points out that the contemporary re-emergence of body displacement towards the moving image has promoted a change in what had been the dissolution of the spectator’s movement: “By entering in the space of theatricality, the cinema was built on the oblivion of the spectator’s movement, a displacement that resurfaces today, thanks to the migration of moving images from the projection rooms to exhibition spaces and the digital revolution that is shaking up our visual practices” (Michaud, 2006, p. 46).⁹ According to Erika Balsom, this notion of a passive cinematic viewer played a significant role in the history of film theory, through authors such as Christian Metz or Jean-Louis Baudry¹⁰. However, it should be noted,

that the contemporary discourses where the notion that the spectator of the cinema is passive, while the spectator of the gallery is inherently active, rests on a mystification and on a “spurious mapping” of binary elements, where “the positing of a strict determinism between the architecture of exhibition and a critical spectator disallows any questioning into the ideological determinations of the gallery space since the gallery is de jure a space of demystification (...) the oversimplified model of gallery spectatorship mythicizes both cinematic spectatorship and the exercise of power into ahistorical constants, ignoring their status as historical contingencies that change over time” (Balsom, 2013, p. 51)¹¹.

11 The positioning of the viewer in the history of cinema has gone through several theoretical approaches, like historical, aesthetic, semi-linguistic, gender or socio-cultural studies, among others. Even considering the importance of these studies, a bigger and complex study on the evolution of audience will not be developed in this text given its dimension limitation.

5.3. OUT-OF-FIELD AND THE DYNAMIC FRAMING:

According to André Bazin, cinema and painting differ primarily in relation to the frame of the image: while the cinematographic montage reconstitutes a horizontal temporal unit, time in the pictorial painting is given in its depth. Film, through editing, builds its image from a timeline that the author designates as *horizontal*, in a given time. But in the painting, this unit presents itself in *depth*, in the time yet to be made. Unlike the frame of the painting that “polarizes space inwards”, isolating the image from its surroundings (in a *centripetal* image), the cinematographic screen expands to the boundaries of the frame (in a *centrifugal* image), thus exploring the *out-of-field* (the *unseen*) because it’s not restricted by the image’s frame. In this sense, Bazin also addresses the difference between *frame* and *mask*: the French word *mascara* (*cache*, from *cachei*, to *hide*) is the name of a photography and filmic technique that designates the black paper or the filter that hides part of the film to be exposed (Bazin, 2005, p. 105). By hiding a fragment of the photographed or filmed scene or object, this shows only “a part of reality”. These questions would be problematized by Jacques Aumont, who does not differentiate the pictorial frame from the cinematographic screen, inasmuch as both can incite a *centripetal* or *centrifugal* relationship: although there is a *centrifugal* possibility, it is always restricted to a physical and visual limit, that is, the dimensions and proportions of the height and width of the image (Aumont, 2014).

Even though many images are not framed or delimited, the viewer got used to acknowledge them as having visible and visual limits because of the image’s dimension (Aumont, 2014). Although Gilles Deleuze states that framing is above all a limitation, he also recognizes that its limits can be understood in two ways: one, mathematical; the other, dynamic. If in the first case the picture is made in geometric variations, in the latter it follows a “physical or dynamic conception” that suggests “imprecise sets, which are now only divided into zones or bands. The frame is no longer the object of geometric divisions, but of physical gradations” (Deleuze, 1986, p. 14). Anticipating characteristics that involve the contemporary relationships of the viewer with the screens, Deleuze invokes the electronic and numerical images, where there is a gradual annulment of the perspectival regime because the out-of-field has been diluted in an increasingly kinetic

experience: “The new images no longer have any outside (out-of-field), any more than they internalized in a whole; rather, they have a right side and a reverse, reversible and non-superimposable, like a power to turn back on themselves. (...) And the screen itself, even if it keeps a vertical position by convention, no longer seems to refer to the human posture, like a window or a painting, but rather constitutes a table of information, an opaque surface on which are inscribed ‘data,’ information replacing nature, and the brain-city, the third eye, replacing the eyes of nature” (Deleuze, 1989, p. 265).



Figure 3: Video-installation *IKEBANA* (2016) by Alexandre Estrela. View from the private collection of Maria João and Armando Cabral. © Courtesy of Alexandre Estrela.

As in the notions of *out-of-field*, the screen in art installation also enhances the parts that are not seen, although projecting them onto the space to be taken by the visitor. The installation generates a kind of space, where its main characteristic is an action transforming space itself: “Not only is it constituted as a space in itself; it is a maker of space” (Bruno, 2014, p. 101). Likewise, moving images when used in installation never just represent a place; they also “take place” (Uroskie, 2014, p. 6).

By three-dimensionalizing and expanding the elements from the screen surface, *IKEBANA* follows on Deleuze’s definition of the cinematic out-of-field, since there is a trans-screen dimension that points to something existing elsewhere. Whether in the holes’ negative space on the screen surface, or in the dried flowers coming from it, it is nevertheless an expansion to the “outside”. Through different degrees, relationships and intensities, *IKEBANA* allows the visitor to see through a certain *frame*, isolating the imagined world from the everyday by creating a formal composition in a space where the works of art are placed in relation to each other and with the observer’s body. Being the articulation of the space and body that produce part of the content of *IKEBANA*, the *frame* becomes a sort of fourth-dimensional square, as if we are immersed into the interior of its space and acting on it from within.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The history of cinema has been continuously punctuated by moments where its identity and condition was questioned and redefined by the advent of new technologies, which have been in part inverting the way the moving images are produced, distributed and perceived by viewers. Rather than questioning the convergence of the media to a digital homogeneity, it is important to look at how the boundaries between media are being articulated, and how these warnings seem to refer not to its disappearance, but to the fading of its hegemony: “a hegemony, moreover, of a certain kind: its domination” (Gaudreault & Marion, 2013, p. 13). In this sense, the institutionalized model of seeing cinema becomes just one among many others, where “the pathos-filled ballad of its mythical disappearance is turned into a joyous paean, into an ode to its dramatic increase and infinite proliferation” (Dubois, 2010, p. 3). Concerning this aspect, many of the uses of moving image in art show not a resistance, but “a marked affinity with more generalized transitions in visual culture brought about by the ascendance of digital media.” (Balsom, 2013, p. 18). Consequently, over the last three decades, the art have also become a place for reflecting on the anxieties, stemming from the diverse and complex transitions in contemporary visual culture, regarding the fate of the film’s materiality or the cinema as institution – as well as the viewing limits and frames of moving images.

In this context, the screen in Alexandre Estrela’s work – as both *window illusion-inducing* and a *material object* – opens up to a field of possibilities in an ambition to “go beyond the frame”: it’s no longer the *open window* (Alberti), *nor the window open to the world* (Bazin) – but a kind of passage to the other side. Applying the Treleani metaphor to installation art, the screen, instead of being the *residue* of an ancient device, may have become here mainly *sediment*; a matter made of different layers, yet maintaining a moving nature, an intrinsic instability born from these different extensions. It is the notion of *sediment* as the sum of the whole echoed in the way contemporary art keeps on using potentially the screen in its most diverse shapes, continually confronting it with what remains, with what will come and what it has already been. And if our way of seeing the world influences the way we understand it, “as we spend more of our time staring into the frames of movies, television, computers, hand-held displays (...) how the world is framed may be as important as what is contained within that frame” (Friedberg, 2006, p. 1).

5. REFERENCES

- Alberti, L. B. (1970). *On Painting*. Yale University Press.
- Arnheim, R. (2009). *The Power of the Center: A Study of Composition in the Visual Arts*. University of California Press.
- Aumont, J. (2014). *A Imagem. Olhar, Matéria, Presença*. Edições Texto & Grafia.
- Aumont. (2004). *O Olho Interminável*. Cosac & Naify.
- Aumont, J., & Marie, M. (2009). *Dicionário Teórico e Crítico do Cinema*. Edições Texto & Grafia.
- Aumont, J. (2013). *Que Reste-t-il du Cinéma? VRIN*.
- Balsom, E. (2013). *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art*. Amsterdam University Press.
- Baudry, J. L., & Williams, A. (1974). Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus. *Film Quarterly*, 28(2), 39-47.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1211632>
- Barthes, R. (1975). En Sortant du Cinéma. *Communications*, 23, 104-107.
- Bazin, A. (2005). *What is Cinema?* University of California Press.
- Bellour, R. (1999). *L'Entre-images 2, Mots*. Images. P.O.L.
- Bellour, R. (2012). *La Querelle des dispositifs. Cinéma – Installations, Expositions*. P.O.L.
- Bellour, R. (2013). Cinema Alone/Multiple Cinemas. *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media*, 5, 1-28.
- Bellour, R. (2008). Of An Other Cinema. In: Tanya Leighton (ed.), *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader* (pp. 406-422). Tate.
- Benjamin, W. (2016). *One-Way Street*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Bishop, C. (2005). *Installation Art – A Critical History*. Tate.
- Bousquet, A. (2018). *The Perspectival Eye*.
<http://www.glass-bead.org/research-platform/the-perspectival-eye/?lang=enview>
- Brea, J. (2010). *Las Tres Eras de la Imagen – Imagen-Materia, Film, E-Image*. Akal/Estudios Visuales.
- Bruno, G. (2014). *Surface: Matters of Aesthetics, Materiality and Media*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Crary, J. (1992). *Techniques of the Observer – On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. The MIT Press.
- Cray, J. (2001). *Suspensions of Perception. Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*. The MIT Press.

- Damisch, H. (2002). *A Theory of /Cloud/: Toward a History of Painting*. Stanford University Press.
- Damisch, H., & Bann, S. (2016). Hubert Damisch e Stephen Bann: uma conversa. *ARS (São Paulo)*, 14(27), 16-53.
<https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2178-0447.ars.2016.117618>
- Deleuze, G. (1986). *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze, G. (1989). *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Dubois, P. (2010). *Exhibited Cinema*. Available.
<http://www.univ-paris3.fr/cinema-et-art-contemporain-32747.kjsp>
- Friedberg, A. (2006). *The Virtual Window – From Alberti to Microsoft*. MIT Press.
- Gaudreault, A., & Marion, P. (2013). *The End of Cinema? A Medium in Crisis in the Digital Age*. Columbia University Press.
- Jay, M. (1988). Scopic Regimes of Modernity. In: H. Foster (ed.), *Vision and Visuality*. Seattle Bay Press.
- Kittler, F. (2010). *Optical Media: Berlin Lectures*. Polity Press
- Lipovetsky, G., & Serroy, J. (2010). *O Ecrã Global. Cultura Mediática e Cinema na Era Hipermoderna*. Edições 70.
- Manovich, L. (1995). *An Archaeology of a Computer Screen*. Kunstforum International. NewMediaTopia, Soros Center for the Contemporary Art.
- Manovich, L. (2001). *The Language of New Media*. The MIT Press.
- Marcikic, I. J. (2017). Inverse Perspective in Cézanne's Art. *Revista FME Transitions*, 2, 301-306.
- Michaud, P. (2006). *Le Mouvement des Images*. Centre Pompidou.
- Mondloch, K. (2010). *Screens. Viewing Media Installation Art*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Païni, D. (2002). *Le Temps Exposé – Le Cinéma de la Salle au Musée*. Cahiers du Cinéma.
- Païni, D. (2013). *Le Cinéma, Un Art Plastique*. Éditions Yellow Now.
- Parfait, F. (2001). *Vidéo: un Art Contemporain*. Éditions du Regard.
- Peterson, A. R. (2015). *Installation Art Between Image and Stage*. Museum Tusculanum Press.
- Plunkett, J. (2013). 'Feeling Seeing': Touch, Vision and the Stereoscope. *Journal History of Photography*, 37(4), 389-396.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03087298.2013.785718>

Treleani, M. (2014). *Bientôt, La Fin de L'Écran*.

https://orbilu.uni.lu/bitstream/10993/20015/1/Inaglobal_mars2014-libre.pdf

Uroskie, A. (2014). *Between the Black Box and the White Cube: Expanded Cinema and Postwar Art*. The University of Chicago Press.

Wasson, H. (2007). The Networked Screen: Moving Images, Materiality, and the Aesthetics of Size. In J. Marchessault & S. Lord (eds.), *Fluid Screens, Expanded Cinema*. University of Toronto Press.

Article received on 26/04/2019 and accepted on 22/05/2020.

[Creative Commons Attribution License](#) | This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.