ANALYSIS AND RESYNTHESIS OF ANÉMIC CINÉMA (1926)

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ABSTRACT

Marcel Duchamp's experiments in the field of optical illusions, cinema, moving constructions and ready-mades paved the road for new artistic forms such as op-art, kinetic art, installation and, using a contemporary word, multimedia art. In this paper I present the analysis and the resynthesis of Anémic Cinéma. The analysis is based on: length, beginning transition, ending transition, movement and velocity. The resynthesis is based on these rules: instead of the original text rototrelief I used pictures of natural rototrelief (tree rings); instead of the original op-art rototrelief I used op-art drawn by myself; the first musical layer is the manipulation of an audio recording of a female voice reading the original Duchamp’s texts and the second layer is the manipulation of metallic sounds recorded by myself and inspired by Russolo's Intonarumori. The resynthesis can be downloaded from: http://link blinded.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Surrealist movement flourished in Europe between World Wars I and II. Surrealism grew principally out of the earlier Dada movement, which before World War I produced works of anti-art, but, Surrealism emphasis was not on negation but on positive expression. The movement represented a reaction against what its members saw as the destruction wrought by the "rationalism" that had guided European culture and politics in the past and had culminated in the horrors of World War I. According to the major spokesman of the movement, the poet and critic André Breton [1], who published "The Surrealist Manifesto" in 1924, Surrealism was a means of reuniting conscious and unconscious realms of experience so completely, that the world of dream and fantasy would be joined to the everyday rational world in "an absolute reality, a surrealism." Breton saw the unconscious as the wellspring of the imagination. The importance of the unconscious as a source of inspiration is central to the nature of Surrealism. Its influence in Film History is not related only to the period that Art historians call Surrealism (between the World War I and World War II), but, its basic principles and ideas can be found and recognized in modern and contemporary film production, too, and not only among the experimental movies. A brief list of Surrelistic Films could be made by: Le Retour à la raison (1923) and L'Étoile de Mer (1928) by Man Ray, Ballet Mécanique (1924) by Fernand Leger, Un chien andalou (1929) and L'Âge d'Or (1930) by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, Goitoconde (1953) painted by René Magritte and many movies by Peter Greenaway, for instance: Windows (1975), The Falls (1980) and A Zed and Two Naughts (1985) and by David Lynch, for instance: Blue Velvet (1986), Wild at heart (1990) and Lost Highway (1997).

2. MARCEL DUCHAMP

Marcel Duchamp is a French Dada and Surrealist artist, whose small but controversial output exerted a strong influence on the development of 20th-century avant-garde art. Born on July 28, 1887, in Blainville, brother of the artist Raymond Duchamp-Villon and half brother of the painter Jacques Villon, Duchamp began to paint in 1908. After producing several canvases in the current mode of Fauvism, he turned toward experimentation and the avant-garde, producing his most famous work, Nude Descending a Staircase, N. 2 (Philadelphia Museum of Art) in 1912; portraying continuous movement through a chain of overlapping cubistic figures. He painted very little after 1915, although he continued until 1923 to work on his masterpiece, The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (1923, Philadelphia Museum of Art), an abstract work, also known as The Large Glass, composed in oil and wire on glass, that was enthusiastically received by the surrealists. In sculpture, Duchamp pioneered two of the main innovations of the 20th century kinetic art and ready-made art. His "ready-mades" consisted simply of everyday objects, such as a urinal and a bottle rack. His Bicycle Wheel (1913, original lost; 3rd version, 1951, Museum of Modern Art, New York City), an early example of kinetic art, was mounted on a kitchen stool. After his short
creative period, Duchamp was content to let others develop
to the themes he had originated; his pervasive influence
was crucial to the development of Surrealism, Dada, and
Pop Art. Duchamp became an American citizen in 1955
and at the end of his life Duchamp became an idol of the
new generation of avant-garde American artists. He died in
Neuilly sur Seine, Paris on October 1, 1968. All in all,
Duchamp could be considered the bridge between early
modern movements, such as Futurism and Cubism, to
Dada and Surrealism [4].

3. ANÉMIC CINÉMA

The spinning wheel is a recurring theme/movement in
Duchamp's works: Bicycle Wheel (1913), Nude Descending a Staircase, N. 2 (1912) and his Rotorrelief
the wheel spinning. Thus, we can guess this short film is a
moment of ecstasy or spiritual meditation. In January 1920,
Duchamp made an optical experiment with the assistance
of Man Ray. Knowing that the eye retains an image for a
fraction of a second after it disappeared, he built a
motorized machine, Rotary Glass Plates (1920). Segments
of a circle were painted on five glass plates mounted on an
electrically operated metal axis. Rubber strips connected
the axis to the motor, but, the experiment was no success.
Three years later, Duchamp tried this experiment again,
now using a turntable of a record player. He made a series
of Disks Bearing Spirals (1923) mounted on cardboard,
therefore, the revolving disks produced a three-
dimensional effect. This anticipated the spiral theme that
would later appear in Rotary Demisphere (1925) and in the
film Anémic Cinéma (1925-1926). The disks in Disks Bearing Spirals (1923) were preliminary studies for
Duchamp's (second) attempt to produce a three-
dimensional film. This time he just filmed rotating disks,
alternating nineteen Op-Art-Optical Disks, based on the
earlier Disks Bearing Spirals. Nine of these disks were
inscribed by puns, white letters pasted on black cardboard
disks and that denotes his interest in visual phenomena,
too. Anémic Cinéma alternates shots of moving spirals and
shots of texts mounted on disks in slight relief. The texts,
which we read from the outside inwards, involve complex
word play that may suggest to us a set of erotic scenarios,
creating an almost hypnotic effect. On one level,
Duchamp's minimizes the element of silent films: words,
then images. Duchamp sharply bifurcates the film viewing
activity into two: reading words on a screen and viewing
images, moving spirals, whose motion produces the play of
depth and flatness that is a given of cinematic illusion. On
another level, the combined reading and viewing of silent
films conventionally give rise to a third activity: our
imaginative world and that is what film semioticians term
diegesis. The language of Anemic Cinema provokes us to
conjure the space of a diegetic world that it refuses to
show. What it does show, between its spiraling puns, is the
pulsation of those intervening spiraling abstract forms.

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Table 1. The structure of Anémic Cinéma

Legenda. tt=beginning title, op=op-art, t=text, tc=ending title
This is the only film directed by Marcel Duchamp and, as with similar avantgarde works made by Man Ray, Hans Richter or Fernand Léger, there’s no plot, only moving shapes and objects, in an attempt to deny the vision of art as contemplation and ecstasy.

4. ANALYSIS AND RESYNTHESIS

In the original movie [3] the total number of sequences is 21: 2 title sequences (beginning/ending), 10 rotorelief sequences (op-art) and 9 textual rotorelief. Table 1 shows the formal structure of the original movie analyzed according to these parameters: length, beginning transition, ending transition, movement and velocity. The average duration of the 10 op-art is 17 seconds and 20 frames. The average duration of the 9 textual rotorelief is 12 seconds and 08 frames and, therefore, the overall average duration is 15 seconds and 01 frames. The average velocity of the 10 op-art is one round in 77 frames (3.08 seconds), 0.32 round for a second. The average velocity of the 9 textual rotorelief is one round in 162 frames (6.48 seconds), 0.15 round for a second and, therefore, the overall average velocity is one round in 119 frames (4.78 seconds), 0.21 round for second. The sentence written on the 1st textual rotorelief is: *Bains de gros thé pour grains de beauté sans trop de bengué.* The sentence written on the 2nd textual rotorelief is: *L'enfant qui tète est un souffleur de chair chaude et n'aime pas le chou-fleur de serre chaude.* The sentence written on the 3rd textual rotorelief is: *Si je te donne un sou, me donneras tu une paire de ciseaux?* The sentence written on the 4th textual rotorelief is: *On demande des moustiques domestiques (demi-stock) pour la cure d'azote sur la cote d'azur.* The sentence written on the 5th textual rotorelief is: *Inceste ou passion de famille, à coups trop tirés.* The sentence written on the 6th textual rotorelief is: *Esquivons les ecchymoses des esquimaux aux mots exquis.* The sentence written on the 7th textual rotorelief is: *Avez vous déjà mis la moëlle de l'épée dans le poêle de l'aimée?* The sentence written on the 8th textual rotorelief is: *Parmi nos articles de quincaillerie paresseuse, nous recommandons le robinet qui s'arrête de couler quand on ne l'écoute pas.* The sentence written on the 9th textual rotorelief is: *L'aspirant habite javel et moi j'avais l'habite en spirale.* The resynthesis is based on these rules: instead of the original text rotorelief I used pictures of natural rotorelief (tree rings); instead of the original op-art rotorelief I used op-art drawn by myself; the first musical layer is the manipulation of an audio recording of a female voice reading the original Duchamp’s texts and the second layer is the manipulation of metallic sounds produced and recorded by myself and inspired by the sound of Russolo’s Intonarumori.

5. THE VIDEO FORMAT

The resynthesis is presented in MP4 and the Zip archive (676.4 MB) of the video-file can be downloaded from: [link blinded].

The specification of the video-file are: video format MP4, compression H.264, frame size 1280 x 720, field dominance upper field first and sound MPEG-4 AAC, stereo, 48Khz and 256kbps. The frame is divided in two parts (Figure 1). The left one shows the original version of *Anémic Cinéma* and the right one shows the resynthesis.

![Figure 1. A frame from the video file.](link)

6. REFERENCES