

## ABSTRACT IN INGLESE

### **The Environment We Live In. A Conversation with Richard Grusin** edited by Alessia Cervini and Angela Maiello

A medium is a communication tool but also defines the environment in which we live in. This latter meaning has acquired an ever greater weight in the theoretical debate of the last few years, thus obliging us to rethink the role of media in the contemporary. Especially following the epochal event of 11 September 2001, an important shift of paradigm in the media landscape and in the modalities of its understanding seems to be happening: the general phenomenon of remediation, which emphasizes the processes of citation, remix and sampling, and is therefore mainly focused on the past, has gradually been replaced by a more specific phenomenon of *premediation*, based on the elaboration of models of forecasting and therefore oriented towards the future. If social media can be easily placed within this logic, as they show the ability to connect individual profiles to the public sphere through a “control” of affections, the cinema is rather linked to the mass, therefore to an immediately collective dimension. In this sense, cinema does not enter into competition with media, but instead reveals itself capable of restoring a new auratic dimension of the aesthetic experience.

### **“The Wind Lashes Hard on the Border Line”. The Medium As a Frontier and the Case of Television** Luca Barra, Peppino Ortoleva

The multiple uses of a concept are often at the origin of misunderstandings that prevent theoretical reflection. This is also the case with the concept of medium, developed in the 1960s by Marshall McLuhan to designate a complex order of phenomena inherent to human relationships, and later passed into common language (in the plural form of “media”) to indicate a set of technical tools, especially the mass media. Starting from a typology of these uses, the essay aims to redefine the operativity of the concept of medium, no longer understood as a mediation but as a *borderline* – between the self and the world, different forms of communication and tween distinct

sensory spheres. Secondly, this theoretical reformulation is put to the test through a case study related to the contemporary evolution of the television medium, examined according to three different directions of development: high definition, interactivity and the opposition between a linear and a non-linear mode of fruition.

### **Psychedelia as Mediation**

Francesco Parisi, Pietro Perconti

In this paper, some studies on the effects provoked by psychedelic substances on cognition will be analyzed, with the aim of highlighting their role as mediators of conscious experience. After a brief survey of the contributions offered by other authors about consciousness alteration, some experimental results will be presented. Data seem to show that the access to altered states of consciousness does not depend on an increased brain activity, but on a reduction of the coordination between the different brain areas involved in the creation of phenomenal experience. Besides, psychedelic substances will be used as case studies to describe the *extensive* character of media, namely their *constitutive* role for the explanation of conscious experience.

### **The Medium as Experience**

Elisa Binda, Angela Maiello

The essay offers a theoretical analysis of the concept of medium, by comparing the theories of Simondon, Dewey and Grusin. In particular, the authors put forward the understanding of mediation as a constitutive process of human experience, that is of the relation between individuals and their own environment. Human beings cannot be placed outside the mediation; the concept of radical mediation, proposed by Grusin, points out that human beings find themselves always in the middle and, thus, they are always exposed to new forms of balance and adaptation to environment.

### **Mediation and Experience in Contemporary Documentary**

Dario Cecchi

Considering the relation between perception and medium (Benjamin, McLuhan, Kittler), the essays focus on the contemporary configuration

of the “mediation” (Grusin) that makes experience available as a form of technical process, to the point of rendering the presence of media almost transparent. In the age when media are tools of experience, their perceptual character gradually fades away. Cinema emerges now as the field where one can experiment a medial dispositive of sensibility (De Gaetano, Deleuze, Montani) where forms of representation and ritual are intermingled: this is the case for Di Giacomo’s movie, *Liberami* (2016).

### **Medium/Media, Art**

Cosetta Saba

The process of defining the concept of “medium” runs throughout the 20th century up to the present, revealing the indeterminate character that we propose to detect on a critical-theoretical level and to highlight in the extended field of relations between cinema, video and art. Through this indeterminacy – capable of reopening the discursive space around the “concept of medium” – the medium becomes a phenomenological modality, an aggregative device of heterogeneous and interconnected supports; a “memory”, a set of stratified conventions detached from the physical conditions of the vehicular support.

### **The Memory of Media**

Rossella Catanese

This essay provides a diverse landscape of the theoretical contributions to this field, in order to propose a contextualization of the “archaeological” discourse in the framework of a polyphony of researches and interpretations on media history, on the cultural analyses of media items and traces of a wide discourse on the devices and their meanings.

It is indeed possible to understand today’s media through an archaeological study, a search for the historical-cultural beddings of a series of media items of the past which include their conditions of possibility.

### **The Choc: On The Origin of McLuhan’s Concept of Medium**

Antonio Rafele

This paper aims to reconstruct the historical and theoretical context of McLuhan’s concept of medium. *Understanding Media* recollects and extends

a prominent tradition of studies, from the first romantic intuitions on the prosthetic relation between reader and work, to Simmel and Benjamin's understanding of the city, based on the modifications that the latter introduced to our perception and imaginary. The *medium* represents the outcome of a long reflection on the communicative processes, between the 19th and 20th centuries, that focus on time and the ephemeral.

### **Repeated Visions**

Alessandro Foladori

Starting from a seemingly simple question ('why do we watch a movie more than once?'), the paper investigates the specifics of technical *media* as something that can deeply change the unconscious structures of human perception. It speculates on the aesthetic and political possibility for the cinema to ensure a perceptual and emotional communication opening among people, but also to lock them up in emotional isolation. In particular, the essay historicizes the theses of Aby Warburg through contributions made by Walter Benjamin and Gilles Deleuze.

### **Remediation as Metamorphosis**

Alessandro Cappabianca

From experimental cinema to installations, from video art to artist cinema, from Chantal Akerman to Michelangelo Frammartino, from Godard to Bill Viola, the essay identifies in the practice of re-mediation a continuous gliding of aesthetic forms from one medium to another. A slip process that overcomes and undermines the traditional feature of cinema as an imaginary practice through the phases of identification and reflection, especially from the narrative point of view. It is already through the artist's eyesight that Reality changes in the Lacanian Real.

### **Handling Images as Spectres**

Jacopo Rasmi

This article displays the mediumistic quality of the cinematographic *medium*, that is its capacity to summon the ghosts of the absents by (re)negotiating historical memories. Our reflection is carried out on a conceptual level that bind together theories of the "spectral turn" (for instance: Derrida

and Agamben) and of cinema (like Epstein and Bazin). The experiences of authors as Gianikian, Ricci Lucchi and Pietro Marcello are then used to show concretely the potential of the mediumistic initiation of cinema.

### **Media Art. New Ways to Think the Medium**

Valentino Catricalà

The paper is an attempt to rethink the concept of medium through the notion of media art. As stated by Oliver Grau, ‘for more than 50 years, media art has combined the latest technologies with the big questions of our time’. Significant media art theory often analyses the current media environment through the work of artists dealing with technology. The practice of artists however, throws into question the idea of a linear evolution of cinema and media. By applying the concept of “archaeology” to Media Art studies, the essay focuses on three case studies: Thoma Wilfried’s *Clavilux*, Micheal Neimark’s *Aspen Movie Map*; Antoni Abad’s Blind Wiki project.

### **Aesthetics of Decoupage and Regimes of Belief**

Giacomo Tagliani

The spread of digital technologies seems to develop the dichotomy between “sovereign montage” and “prohibited editing” towards either an “intermedial” or an “a-medial” essay authentication. By rethinking some classical passages of film theory, the paper addresses these two forms of mediation between world and image in order to question contemporary regimes of belief. The goal of this work is to outline the ways of construction of “discursive authorities” that orient contemporary media experience and define the possibilities for the spectator to believe both in the world and in the images representing it.

### **The First Medium. Audio-Visual Technologies and Performing Arts**

Fabrizio Deriu

Contemporary audio-visual culture makes dramatically think of obsolete the 20th century’s theoretical framework which was used to thinking film and theatre as opposite *media*. Firstly, the essay reassesses the argument that theatre and *live* performing arts cannot be considered as *media* (according to McLuhan’s meaning). Secondly, a different thesis is introduced, tracing

back from Walter Benjamin's anthropological materialism which suggests that 'man in her/his corporeality is the first medium'.

### **Olivier Assayas: on the Off-Screen of the "New Images"**

Pietro Masciullo

Olivier Assayas is often considered to be one of the direct successors of the Nouvelle Vague's aesthetic revolutions. After all, his cinematic style has always been in debt to a Bazinian phenomenological realism (ever since *Desordre*, 1986). But this conscious "aesthetic realism" has been increasingly blending an equally aware reflection on cinema as a memory device (*Irma Vep*, 1996), as a medium which is able to explore the perturbing powers of the digital *pictorial turn* (e.g. in his last two movies *Sils Maria* and *Personal Shopper*). Thus, this essay aims to analyze Assayas' recent filmography in order to investigate the aesthetic mediations that allow cinema to be able to persist into the new millennium.

### **The World and the Screen. Starting With a Letter From Émile Zola**

Michele Guerra

In a letter from 1864, responding to the solicitations of an aspiring writer, Émile Zola outlines some reflections on the concept of screen, used as a metaphor to interpret the artistic creation. If every work of art can be thought of as a window open to the world, the artist's vision is like a screen that interposes itself between the eyes of the spectator and external reality, each time conveying an image more or less deformed. Studying the operation of the screen, and distinguishing its different types (classic, romantic, realist), Zola reveals the centrality of a theme – that of mediated experience – that the cinema, thirty years later, would collect and transform into its own constitutive data. In this way, the reflections of the French writer can be linked to a debate on the contemporary mediascape, and they still seem useful for reading some of its most problematic aspects.

### **The Poet As Medium in the Cocteau's *Orphic Trilogy***

Stefania Schibeci

Starting from the analysis of the *Orphic Trilogy*, this essay focuses on Jean Cocteau's "media's theory". The latter conceives the poet as the me-

dium par excellence, because she is able to be a way between the visible and invisible world. She can also cross the “zone” that divides them. Moreover, this essay aims at demonstrating that the intermediality of the entire work of Cocteau anticipates some fundamental principles of contemporary media’s theory. Indeed, Cocteau does not make any distinction between theatre, cinema, composition or drawing, defining all these arts as “poésie”. Hence, his whole work is marked by an intermediality that promotes encounters between different media, because the poet, as the one crossing two worlds, has to use all media as adequately as possible to express herself. By anticipating Marshall McLuhan’s media’s theory, he asserts that some artificial devices, as the cinematograph, work as artificial extension of our senses.

### **Medium and the Optical Unconscious: Ragghianti’s *Michelangiolo*** Alessandra Chiarini

This essay analyzes C.L. Ragghianti’s *critofilm Michelangiolo*, in order to investigate the existence of a correlation between Ragghianti’s radical interpretative project of art history through the cinematic medium, and Walter Benjamin’s concept of “optical unconscious”. The medium will be understood as the place where the aesthetic experience takes shape, but most of all as the means that leads the art historian, and with him the spectator, to a territory of intermediation (and indeterminateness) which marks a new beginning for the work of art.

### ***The Shining* or Media as Technologies of Clarity** Enzo D’Armenio

This essay we analyzes Stanley Kubrick’s *The Shining*. Our investigation is guided by the following hypothesis: the film presents a critical examination on media that draws attention to the differences among themselves and their internal organisations. The essays insists on the sequences that work unveiling and disproving media’s modes of operation. Taking inspiration from Émile Benveniste’s and Marshall McLuhan’s theories, we argue that such betrayal of media technologies reveals what typifies them at their very core: the relationship between technics, humanity and subjectivity.

## ***Be Now Here: Towards an Archaeology of Vision***

Samuel Antichi

By taking into account Michael Naimark's installation *Be Now Here (Welcome to the Neighborhood)* – at the Center for the Arts at the Yerba Buena Gardens in San Francisco in December 1994, whose production concept was to assemble an experimental camera system in order to film stereoscopic panoramas, then to go to four different places and to record throughout the course of a day from a single position –, the aim of this paper is to adopt a media-archaeological approach in order to highlight how forgotten and neglected pre-cinematic media could offer innovative insights into the historical formation of forms of immersive spectatorship. Moreover, the essay investigates the relationship between human agents and the nature of medium itself.

## **Pipilotti Rist and the Art of Revelation**

Elena Marcheschi

With a career started in the 1980s among postmodern inputs and apost-feminist afflatus, in her single-channel works as in her installations and environmental projects, Pipilotti Rist has applied the concept of remediation as a common denominator, re-reading through experimental logic the television and cinema practices with different outcomes: by reinterpreting the languages and functions of the media, reformulating the concept of exhibition space, configuring a hybrid spectator posture in the works of art that propose themselves as places of aesthetic experience. With the sensitivity and awareness of the media and technologies, Pipilotti Rist virtuously expands boundaries, making her art a means to reveal devices, the aesthetic experience and the world.

## ***Be Kind Rewind, the Cinema From the bottom***

Massimiliano Pistonesi

The article analyzes Michel Gondry's *Be Kind Rewind* (2007) to understand the evolution of cinema as a medium in the 21st century. As matter of fact, *Be Kind Rewind* retraces the development of cinema as a medium, choosing as the core of its storytelling the VHS technology intended as a spreadable media and sharing culture. The article underlines how the passage from the film theater to the VHS technology as a medium of moving



images made the cinematic culture much more widespread and reproducible by the spectators/consumers.

### **The Threshold of Desire: *Inception***

Nicola Turrini

*Inception* by Christopher Nolan questions the relationship between dream and reality, in particular in terms of *continuum*, confusion of borders and the *medium* in which these forms of experience take place. Immersing in a dream does not only mean settling in a place of transit but also accepting a singular condition of passivity, in which everyone is captured by their own images and desires. A singular point of crisis, in which the ambiguous passage between dream and reality shows an archaeological trait: what would happen if we try to think the dream as a paradigmatic medium of immersive experience in general – which today is a fundamental techno-aesthetic vector not only of cinema but also of visual experience?

### **Filming with Smartphones. On Gerrets' *People I Could Have Been and Maybe Am***

Alessandro Marini

*People I could have Been and Maybe Am* is not the first film ever shot with a mobile phone, yet the author's aesthetic awareness leads us to consider it as a sort of manifesto. On the one hand, Gerrets emphasizes Alberti's paradigm of transparency while, on the other hand, he "remediates" the frame enclosing the picture and resorts to significant self-explanatory processes. This essay, based on a wider reflection on the nature of representation itself, highlights the ambiguous coexistence in the film of immediacy and opacity: an ontological indeterminacy which is a clear equivalent of the unsuccessful research moving its characters.

### **Postmedial Spectres. Sexuality and Singularity in *Ex\_Machina***

Mirko Lino

This essay analyzes the film *Ex\_Machina* (2015) by Alex Garland, referring to the categories of sexuality and spectrality as hermeneutic tools for the comprehension of the very articulated human-media interaction. *Ex\_Machina* deals with the "naturalization of the technological experience" through

an embodiment process of an I.A., Ava, whose artificial body is shaped as very feminine. The essay includes *Ex\_Machina* within the contemporary sci-fi cinema fascinated by themes, topics and figures of the “technological singularity theory”. Ava could be considered as a postmedial figure taking charge of a reconfiguration of the human-artificial relationship, which is declined in the terms of an ambiguous indistinguishability.

### **Parallel Worlds and Game-like Realism: Sion Sono's *Tag***

Stefano Locati

Sion Sono's *Tag* is part of a transmedial narrative universe, which in Japan is called *media mix*. Thanks to its layered narrative structure, *Tag* provides an acute meditation on media convergence. Through the mechanism of parallel worlds and metalepsis, Sono brings the narrative structure of the film medium in the foreground, exploring what Hiroki Azuma has called “Game-like Realism”. The case of *Tag* allows to reason on the repositioning of cinema within the *media mix*.

### ***Personal Shopper*, When the Medium Does Not Mediates**

Nausica Tucci

Not just because its protagonist, Maureen (Kristen Stewart), is a medium, Olivier Assayas' *Personal Shopper* finds its place within the renewed theoretical framework built around the reflection on the concept of medium. More precisely, the philosophical problem of ‘being one and/or also the other’, as explained in the last sentence of the film, makes it fall in the dualistic character that takes the mediation in the Christian-western tradition (because being a medium means to be, like Christ, an intermediary between God, the afterlife, and the human).