Spectroaming Instaticity: The Aesthetics of Digital-Out-of-Home Media In Highly Screened Environments

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Résumé/Abstract

This essay discusses the logistics and rationales produced by Digital-Out-Of-Home media (DOOH) agencies – an industry specializing in the production and display of advertisement technologies and content alike in outdoor locations. It seeks to identify how DOOH agencies normalize, sensitize, and ultimately organize culture within the spaces of everyday life, and argues that such agencies adopt an aesthetic of transience by reshaping material relations in order to emphasize the ideals of ephemerality. Of importance are the factors of existing socio-material conditions, which are considered as sights where traces of DOOH rationales can be detected.

À propos de l'auteur/About the Author

Zach Melzer is a Ph.D. Student in Film and Moving Image Studies at Concordia University. His research, funded by FQRSC and SSHRC, focuses on understanding the social, economic, and cultural factors that inform the dynamics of screen technologies found in public spaces. Incorporating cinema studies, media studies, urban studies, geography, and cultural studies, his research aims to map out how different discourses, manifesting across disparate geographies of the modern globalized economy, give shape to ideas about public screens, their urban environments, and their role as sites of cultural mediation.

In September of 2009, Clear Channel Spectacolor – an advertising agency specializing in outdoor advertising – reached an agreement with NASDAQ, Reuters, News Corp., and ABC Sports and Entertainment to collaborate and sell their signs together. Arrogantly named Times Square Domination, this alliance essentially offers the ability to simultaneously display advertisements across more than two dozen screens in New York City's Times Square at the same time. To appropriate a term particular to the history of cinema, one can say this is a re-versioning of the block booking strategy used by the major Hollywood studios during the 1930s and 1940s. The rationale behind this deal grows out of the fear that with so many screens striving for spectatorial attention, some of the messages being displayed inevitably get unseen by their intended audience. As Ray Rotolo, a senior Vice President and Managing Director of Chrysalis, also an advertising agency focusing on outdoor advertising, is quoted saying in regards to the situation in Times Square: "The clutter factor is becoming a major issue" (quoted in Hampp 2009). Times Square Domination aims to make available the largest possible screen square footage so that companies who seek to foreground their products, by drowning out all others, can do so without having to negotiate separate contracts with different companies, thereby assuring the ease of a coordinated, albeit heterogeneous, broadcast orchestrated over dozens of screens.

Alliances such as Times Square Domination's magnitude are unusually unique. However, to be sure, this is not the first time an alliance such as this had occurred. Clear Channel already had the rights to dozens of the screens included in the alliance (note however that never were these screens used synchronously to produce one uniformed broadcast); NASDAQ and Reuters established their own "Times Square Squared" alliance in the mid-2000s; and through corporate ties and affiliations with the Disney Company, both ABC and MTV have been in similar kinds of strategic agreements with one another. What such alliances point to is thus not the uniqueness of this strategy of domination, it is rather the continuous development and maintenance of the very same technique found amongst other out-of-home (OOH) advertisements.

Locations such as Times Square, Piccadilly Circus, and Shibuya Crossing, to name the more well known examples, are centers of highly condensed advertising traffic. However, they are not the only places where such concentrations of publicity appears. Many other similar sites are likewise made up of a cacophony of imagery, combining various kinds of visual media into what is often described as an homage to

spectacle. But even a list of places such as these would not fully include all locations where contemporary marketing strategies thrive. With increasing efforts to integrate visual media into the urban landscape, moving image media are ever more being imagined as inventive and inevitably integrative components of the urban geography as well as the open spaces of everyday life. Witness the way Posterscope, a major advertising agency specializing in Digital-Out-of-Home media (DOOH), idealizes its services: "Just who is an Out-of-Home consumer […]? Everyone is. From the moment they leave their homes they are surrounded by Out-of-Home media. It cannot be turned off, it cannot be avoided" (Posterscope 2012).

Posterscope offers DOOH as an already existing solution to a world constantly in motion. It frames its services by imagining every nook and every passageway as being a potential transience for economic profit where, at any time, an audience can be captivated and transformed from a pedestrian into a subject of dominant consumer culture. Ideas such as these envision every space in the urban environment as a junction where the tonality of consumer culture can expand, and where economic capital can be gained through the repurposing and exploiting of commonplace environments and everyday practices. Or, as is idealized in other ways by Posterscope, "Out-of-Home advertising is welcomed as a way of enhancing environments, experiences and journeys" (Posterscope 2012).

Of course DOOH media are not everywhere nor are they completely ephemeral. This is merely how DOOH producers imagine the possibilities made available through the combination of visual technologies, the urban landscape, and the actions of transience. In combining vision, urban design, and mobility, DOOH agencies aim to capitalize on existing patterns of modern day practices by configuring them anew. "Consumers spend 25% more time out of their homes than 10 years ago. Working days are longer, time spent traveling to and from places has grown and more is wanted out of leisure time" (Posterscope 2012). These are the kinds of realities of the everyday that Posterscope identifies as being imperative to establishing successful techniques for contemporary advertising. Consumers are for a large portion of their days in transit to, through, and from places. Concentrating on the UK market, Posterscope notes that an average working adult spends eighteen hours of travel to and from their home every week. These are considered valuable intervals wherein the attentive minds of consumers can be made available to advertising messages. DOOH agencies thus concentrate on this combination of imagery, temporality, and the movement through places,

by aiming to make their media assemblages the facilitators, or better, the enablers of more opportunities for greater commercial profit.

In this essay I would like to discuss the kinds of logistics and rationales produced by DOOH agencies – an industry estimated to have approximately $8 billion in global revenues (Lebangood, 2013). I seek to identify how these advertising agencies reformulate material conditions into legible components of popular culture. How do they normalize, sensitize, and ultimately organize culture within the spaces of everyday life? In short, this paper searches for the ways by which DOOH producers create an aesthetic of transience, by reshaping material relations, in order to emphasize the ideals of ephemerality. Of importance to this essay are the factors of existing socio-material conditions. Material and social conditions are considered as sights where traces of DOOH rationales can be detected. Thus, I ask, what are the limitations presented by the physical makeups of the socio-spatial environments where DOOH are found? This is not to say that the materiality of DOOH or their surroundings are deterministically limited. Rather, such physical properties serve as interfaces where particular kinds of moldings of culture can be scrutinized.

For sake of clarification, I concentrate specifically on understanding how certain logics help guide the aesthetics of DOOH media particularly when they are placed in locations such as Times Square – centers that orchestrate the concentrations of a number of various DOOH at the same space and at the same time. As a useful analytical tool I propose we think of such places as spectroams. This term is a play on the words spectrum and roaming. To look in these sites is to see a simultaneity of multiple shapes and colors streaming out of different sources, framed and reframed at every instance, continuously changing, and always in process of eradication. Spectroams facilitate an experience of the presence of shapes and colors that are in process of transforming into other shapes and colors. Thus the act of looking in a spectroam is provoked by exposures to multiple degrees of visual cues and visual kinds. A spectroam is a site where a spectrum of shapes and colors are in a seeming state of roaming around the possibilities of becoming, or transitioning, into a host of shapes and colors. Here, the roaming of a spectrum of visual wavelengths is the primarily desired activity.

In addition, the term spectroam also allow us to think of roaming itself as a multiplicity of types, each creating different degrees and scales of participation with the transforming visuals. To think of spectroam is to invoke roaming as an activity that manifests simultaneously in different ways. This is important when thinking about highly screened

environments because of the fact that screens in these sights are placed in panoramic patterns (sometimes, as is the case with Times Square, wrapping around a full 360 degrees). Such conditions mean that these sites are meant to be experienced simultaneously by hundreds of thousands of people, each placed in different relations to the images on the screens, each creating a multiplicity of kinds of spectatorial connections to the visuals being displayed. Thus spectroams are places where different degrees and kinds of roaming actions are facilitated. In addition to spectacle and spectatorship, spectroam also hints at the etymologies of "specification" as well as "speculation" ("spec." is an abbreviation of both of these words). Thus, in thinking about the connections with these etymologies, spectroam allows us to think of highly screened environments, and the experiences produced within them, as tiny roaming specs.

Finally, I offer this term in line with what Nanna Verhoeff calls "screen fields" and "composite dispositif" (2012, p. 104-107). She writes, "screens participating in screen fields compete with one another for attention and recognition. Yet […] they collaborate as well: they reflect each other, and they complement each other" (p. 104). Borrowing from anthropology, Verhoeff compares the field of relations made up between screens in places of transit with the kinds of relations Pierre Bourdieu identified in his study of scientists. Just as the scientists compete with one another for intellectual recognition yet also consider each other collaborators, so do screens found in transitory places. Screens placed on routes to and through places, Verhoeff argues, adapt patterns of simulation and de-simulation with one another, in ways that are analogous to the patterns adapted by scientists in Bourdieu's studies. They do so in order to both be a part of a continued modality of perception – that of a passing, almost ambient-like, landscape – yet at the same time to also jump out of the scenery in order to foreground themselves over others. Out of such patterns, a singularly orchestrated machine-like apparatus is formed. This is what Verhoeff calls a "composite dispositif". If the term "screen fields" is used to describe the relations produced between screens, "composite dispositif" aims to identify these relations as a system of heterogenous parts each working in different ways, ultimately amounting to an arguably plateaued, identifiably patterned, or perhaps a somewhat coherent arrangement.

My use of the term spectroams does not aim to discount neither of Verhoeff's "screen fields" nor "composite dispositif." I offer it to describe a particular configuration of screens in highly screened environments – places that are not necessarily only for transience (though

they clearly do this) but also for the celebration of an immersion within transience itself. Saying that these are places of worship would not be exactly true, for these are not places of religious devotion. However they can be places of adoration, veneration, and admiration. They differ from other places of transience for they aim to be more than simple byways, or facilitators of travel. They aim to be unique attractions that attain symbolic characteristics in themselves, not merely "non-places" such as airports or hotel rooms, to use a phrase coined by Marc Augé (1995) to describe places produced in the context of "supermodernity". Places such as Times Square are tourist destinations that are experienced as unique attractions. Although they are designed in certain ways to erase their pasts, in other ways also aim to emphasize the conservation of their histories. Thus they serve as places that aim to be packaged as idiosyncratically remarkable instances wherein time and space are experienced slightly differently from other instances of everyday life. In other words, this is where ephemerality is given a degree of reverence.

To be sure, there is nothing phenomenologically unique to spectroams. In other words, there is no experience that is uniquely found only in them. Different degrees of relations, different constructions of change and of a sense of ephemerality in the cultural landscape occur everywhere and through every media. Simply put, because nowhere and never can there be a cultural event that is perceived or experienced the same by all spectators or participants, then the perception of experience – any kind of experience – will always attain, to a certain degree, an element of incompleteness closely akin to ephemerality. Moreover, concerns with the production of attention within the constructs of ephemerality can be found in many aspects of daily life. Not only DOOH media, but also objects such as flyers sent to the home advertising weekly sales at the supermarket, television broadcasts, rapidly changing webpages such as news sites, Facebook, and Twitter, seasonal fashions in clothing, as well as changing tastes in music, movies, and television shows, are only a few instances where the brief impermanence of passing drifts are found in everyday popular culture.

Furthermore, a history of such concerns with the problematics of attention within the context of ephemerality in culture has been integral to the many contexts of modernity. For example, the production of daily newspaper print from the turn of the twentieth century faced the problems of organizing information into degrees of social importance. Or to suggest another example, the rapidly changing visuals to the landscape of city streets brought about first by crowds of streetwalkers and horse-drawn vehicles, and later by pedestrians, automobiles, motorcycles, and

bicycles, exemplified the repeated presence of change in urban landscapes. Or to suggest an example that deals more directly with moving image media, the "rebus films" made and seen in Germany during the Weimar decade, which served as training grounds for what were thought to be rapidly changing, psychically distracting and attention dividing, modern urban environments. As Michael Cowan suggestively put it:

> Taking up this modernist preoccupation with simultaneity, the rebus films […] inscribe[d] the demand for divided attention into their game format, not only through the collages on the screen but also through the medial division of screen and puzzle card. Unlike print rebuses and crosswords, the filmic puzzles demanded a form of spectatorial attention to be operating in two places at once. In order to solve the puzzle, the spectator's gaze was required to travel continuously from the screen to the card (where viewers wrote their response) and back again without missing an essential clue, and thus to perform both actions in a state of continuous distraction. (2010, p. 213)

In short, ephemerality has always been integral to modernity. The contemporary media landscape has no special claim over it. Nevertheless, there are varieties of ways by which discursive frameworks are assembled and attached to this notion. Each avenue and each instance of modernity materializes, and configures with, ephemerality differently. These assemblages do not remain present throughout, nevertheless they do delegate residual histories that aid in either the maintenance or the renovation of existing cultural formations.

DOOH and "Flow"

A productive way of conceptualizing DOOH is by understanding them as instances of modernity wherein a sensibility of what Raymond Williams (1974) described as flow has been reformulated. In his study, Williams used the concept of flow to describe how American and British television programming, during the 1950s through the 1970s, were structured around the patterns of a cultural formation aiming to become at once both mobile as well as private – a formation that Williams called "mobile privatization." He argued, television belonged to the same socio-historical context that was also witness to the ballooning of appliances and automobiles consumption, the mushrooming of the suburbs, the multiplication of the baby-boomer generation, the booming post-war economy, as well as to the burgeoning of a middle-class. Each of these

developments markedly shared qualities that on the one hand aimed to give greater autonomy over one's own life, yet on the other hand ensured that continuous movements and exchange between bodies, subjects, and capital, persisted. Parallel to these circumstances, television networks designed their programming to be aligned with similar notions that also aimed to give audience the sense of autonomy and continuity, all the while making sure that this audience remained captivated to each network's separate television broadcast. This was done by infusing programming with an orchestrated abstraction of space and time that gave the sense of a current of transmission as well as a sweeping of presence all at once.

This sense of flow, however, was also structured in relation to patterns of daily life both within and outside of the home – for example, the organization of activities of labour, children's school attendance, as well as recreational and leisured activities. The infusion of flow was thus marked not only by fluidity and liquidity, but also by an embedment within, and an engrossment of, patterns of daily life. In order to keep an audience captivated yet also give them the sense of mobility – a tension that was present and structuring all realms of the American and British societies, not just television – television broadcasters programmed their telecasts so that different segmentations of a single broadcast were infused with a sense that was at once both continuous as well as one that noted marked changes. These notable marked changes in the broadcast can be thought of as flag-posts signaling the patterns of social rules and regulations already in existence prior to the placing of television screens in domestic spaces. For example a change in programming to more adult oriented content during the evening hours was aligned with the temporalities of children's sleeping patterns, or more specifically with the control of domestic spaces that parents withheld over the young. As such, the model of flow aimed to not disrupt the normative social structures already in place, however it did so in ways that gave mobile privatization an appearance that was specific to the soio-material conditions attributed to television.

To be sure, as Anna McCarthy (2001) argues, understanding the material conditionings of television viewing differs according to its physical location within spatio-material contexts. Television viewing in a doctor's waiting room is not the same as it is when being watched in a pub, nor is it the same when it is placed in a living room. Each of these types of places accentuates systems of social codes and regulations in ways that are particular to those socially designated locales. In other words, a doctor's waiting room is made up of discrete configurations and

enunciations of larger existing social realities that are not necessarily coherent with those found in a pub. Placing television screens in divergent locations means placing them within varying degrees of, and in relations to, patterns of social configurations. Television programming has thus not only been dominantly, to invoke a term used by Lisa Gitelman, working towards the "protocols" of being at once located in the home as well as in imagined relations to mobility (2006, p. 7). They have also been, as McCarthy's research has shown, gathered in relations to a host of places and thus have been adjusted to fit into a host of mobility types. This leads McCarthy to conclude that "it is impossible to single out one mode of spectatorship to define the relationship between screen and environment, regardless of the latter's particular features. Rather, the diffuse network of gazes and institutions, subjects and bodies, screens and physical structures that constitutes the televisual place sustains quite particular effects in each place" (2001, p. 3).

Even though some of McCarthy's historical examples are of broadcasts that were not programmed specifically for places outside of the home – that is, broadcasts of sports events displayed on television screens located in taverns during the 1940s were exactly the same as the ones being displayed on television screens in homes – she still correctly maintains that the presence of the tavern had some impact on the ways the broadcasts were being watched. More importantly, this presence of the conditioning of viewership by the spatio-material circumstances where they are found, furthermore presents itself as proof that not only has the modality of spectatorship been, for quite some time, multiple, it also signifies that ideas about ephemerality and flow have been present throughout many instances of modernity. However, in contrast to McCarthy's research on television screens, I argue that in DOOH media we can in fact find a modality that is present between screen and environment, albeit a modality that aims to maintain a heterogeneity of subjects, bodies, gazes, screens, physical structures, and institutions.

DOOH reshape the concept of flow in ways that are particular to the socio-spatial configurations of each location where they are found. In other words, just as they do with television, the ideals of ephemerality and flow materialize in varying ways in each location. The current media landscape and the kinds of relations being created by the proliferation of screen technologies both inside as well as outside of the home – mobile-phones, computer screens, DOOH media, as well as the still present television screens, to name a few in the broadest terms – demands that we rethink how the concept of flow fits into these contemporary cultural contexts. Thinking about how to re-conceptualize Williams's seminal

work on television, Kathleen Oswald and Jeremy Packer argue that a cross-media system such as our current one is not concentrated on a flow that is "fixed on one transmission," but rather one of a system of activation that is "fixed in transmission through multiple screens that guide subjects through all of time and space" (2012, p. 277). This proliferating screen landscape, they add, emphasizes a modality that is closer to being "on-demand" than to what Williams described as the modality of broadcast. In the modality of on-demand, access to the flow of a broadcast can be segmented in numerous ways thereby allowing instantaneous reconfiguration of the flow itself. In other words, flow has not disappeared, it has rather been remodeled, and reconfigured in ways that still aim to maintain a captivated audience. To be certain, however, the techniques being used for the captivation of an audience through DOOH media, especially in spectroams, are structured around patterns not of attention but rather those of distraction. DOOH producers use techniques that aim to captivate not only attention but rather to also focus on the practice of its release. In a sense, this is also to say that DOOH agencies aim to make attention more expansive. However they insistently do not only do this. Rather, they aims to give practices of distraction materialized forms of participation.

To illustrate we can look at the ways images are displayed through the Times Square Squared Alliance (NASDAQ and Reuters screens). Here the visuals being broadcast on screens found on the corner of 42nd Street and 7th Avenue are matched with different images found on separate screens located on the corner of 42nd Street and Broadway. The space between these screens – including the prominent focal point of Times Square, the Times Tower which hosts other dozens of screens – is treated as a glue that is explicitly visible in order to emphasize the integration of moving patterns. This integration is a way to illustrate a solidification of capital exchange, where the two competing companies – NASDAQ and Reuters – can effectively work side by side, aiding one another, and ultimately contributing to the framework of capitalist strategizing. If there was a morality to come out of this embodiment of Times Square – which is necessarily a part of the space's constructed fiction – it is that economic competition works because it establishes ties between seemingly unrelated market forces. Mythicizing the necessity and inevitability of corporate conglomeration such as this, is one of the side effects of synergistic strategies prevalent during the 1990s. The very same strategies that led to the massive takeovers of giant global entertainment companies, a strategy that itself is reminiscent of

imperialist methods of governance, where laissez-faire practices of foreign entities dominate all sectors of the industry.

The screens of Times Square Squared Alliance, which for the majority of the day act as separate message displays, and therefore contribute to a mindset of attention grabbing that depends on impulses of roaming distraction, are through this alliance, at particular moments throughout the day, made coherent with one another. They thereby expand (through unification) the display of single messages that go beyond the guidelines of the normative single separated screen frame formation. In these edifices of distraction, a sensitivity to an act of roaming is highlighted. This act of roaming is, in a sense, an effort to give structure to the cacophony of visual experience. Roaming creates patterns of attention. In other words, it works as a stabilization, or a structuring of the invisible – that is, incalculable – diagrams of haptic and distracted forms of participation. In addition, such sensibilities manifest not only through the spatial designs of these highly screened environments, but also through the visuals displayed on the screens themselves.

To further explain, I would like turn attention to a somewhat unique example of DOOH media in practice. It is unique because, unlike other spectroams, this particular one is designed as one unit through and through. This example manages to integrate advertising with ambience, by orchestrating a number of screens, and by producing a uniformed and coherent thematic structure to the practices of distraction.

DOOH In-static

During the 2003 to 2005 Christmas holidays, the Bahnhofstrasse Association in Zurich Switzerland commissioned the Gramazio and Kohler Architecture and Design group to illuminate their famous commercial street. Aiming to attract consumers and tourists in invigorating ways, the design group created *World's Largest Time Piece* – an artifact that consisted of two hundred and seventy-five tubes of light, and that stretched more than one kilometer long. We can think of each of these tubes in this project as separate screens, where each was made up of a diameter of fifteen centimeters and a measurement of seven meters high. Together the screens held eight thousand and eight hundred distinct LEDs. The lights were programmed to turn on and off following an algorithmic sequence. Most notable, however, was the fact that there were approximately twelve feet of empty space between each screen – a significant distance amounting to the length of a VW Beetle. The resulting visual imagery, made up through the combination of screens and the spaces between them, looked like waves of lights ephemerally

and transiently moving through the cold urban night. Even with all the empty space between the screens, *World's Largest Time Piece* still managed to invoke the properties of movement both through and throughout the lights that appeared in every screen. Not only between the screens, but also movement outside of each screen.

We can also think of the tubes in *World's Largest Time Piece* as individual frames, and within each of these frames we are able to indeed find movement. But this would not do any justice to the piece as a whole. Even though *The World's Largest Time Piece* is filled with many gaps between each light, we can still detect a continuity of movement passing not only through the thin tubes but also through these gaps between them. We thus need to think of the frame of this piece, even though no one was able to perceive this full frame at once, as one that stretches the full kilometer-long installation, passing thorough each fillable space. *The World's Largest Time Piece* thinks about movement not only within the frame but through the frame and outside of it. That is, it speaks to a perception that is attentive to movement inside as well as outside of a given border. To be sure, it is not that *The World's Largest Time Piece* is frame-less but that it rethinks the dynamics of the frame, and thus a conception of movement manifests outside of its borders. To clarify, the realms outside of what I am referring to as the borders, in this example, still refers to the spaces found within the borders of the total artifact. *The World's Largest Time Piece* is the full one kilometer long frame whose screen is seven meters high by one kilometer wide, which amounts to a screen ratio of approximately 143:1. The appearance of movement between images can only be understood as being found within these borders. Yet what is particular to this conception of the screen is its dissection of itself into two hundred and seventy-five sets of lights separated by two hundred and seventy-four, or two hundred and seventy-six (depending on which way one chooses to enclose the frame, either by the tubes of light or by the empty spaces outside of them) gaps of empty space.

As a useful analytical tool we can think of moving images such as this as in-static. With this term I mean that the images are not fixed – as in, they are not-static and they are without borders – yet, at the same time, these are moving images that can only be found within constant and unchanging borders – and for this reason we must recognize that they are within-borders. That is, that they are within a static object, and that therefore there is always a part of their make-up that is static. In contrast to what Justin Remes (2012) identifies as the "cinema of stasis" – wherein the stillness of photographic frames, as opposed to the sense of

movement thought to be phenomenologically created sequentially between them, becomes the primary aesthetic force – in-static images emphasize the sequential movements that occur between screen borders breaking through cinema's conventional frames of projection. The in-staticity of *World's Largest Time Piece* is expressed by the fact that while the frames and the screens are static, the projected images moving through these borders are not.

French philosopher Henri Bergson described how the experience of absolute stasis is impossible. He wrote,

> [T]here is no feeling, no idea, no volition which is not undergoing change every moment: if a mental state ceased to vary, its duration would cease to flow. Let us take the most stable of internal states, the visual perception of a motionless external object. The object may remain the same, I may look at it from the same side, at the same angle, in the same light; nevertheless the vision I now have of it differs from that which I have just had, even if only because the one is an instant older than the other. My memory is there, which conveys something of the past into the present. My mental state, as it advances on the road of time, is continually swelling with the duration which it accumulates: it goes on increasing – rolling upon itself, as a snowball on the snow. Still more is this the case with states more deeply internal, such as sensations, feelings, desires, etc., which do not correspond, like a simple visual perception, to an unvarying external object. But it is expedient to disregard this uninterrupted change, and to notice it only when it becomes sufficient to impress a new attitude on the body, a new direction on the attention. Then, and then only, we find that our state has changed. The truth is that we change without ceasing, and that the state itself is nothing but change. This amounts to saying that there is no essential difference between passing from one state to another and persisting in the same state. (1911, p. 4)

For Bergson, the experience of absolute stasis, whatever are its historical conjunctures – whether found in the psychical, material, social, or cultural realms – is impossible simply because the actions of process are always prominently and primarily present. Process is, for Bergson, beyond taking the form of memory or consciousness. "In reality, the past is preserved by itself, automatically" (Bergson 1911, p. 7). In other words, the past occurs with or without attention being given to it, and in doing so, folds and unfolds infinitely. Thus, Bergson concludes, the state of change is an inescapable and essential component of all experience.

I do not propose to deny Bergson's observations completely. However, I do have an objection to thinking about reality solely in terms of constant change. Bergson's observations can be stretched across all of history, and perhaps therein lies some of its strengths. Clearly change is a dominant aspect that we cannot do without – especially when talking about modernity, a culture significantly defined by the presence of rapid change. However, the conceptualization of the whole of history – natural, social, or cultural –simply as something that is in a state of change, does not aid us make sense out of the existence of constellating homologies, repetitively in process of structuring and restructuring existing social relations, and duplicating patterns of implosion.

World's Largest Time Piece aims to loosen the grips normally associated with the patterning of attention, and in doing so strengthens what is thought to be the liquidities of distraction. By rethinking captivity within a frame to captivity through the frame, it offers a material reflection of the ways that flow has been remodeled from being 'fixed on transmission' to being 'fixed in transmission'. But this is not to say that the broadcast model of flow has been completely done away with. Uses of DOOH media such as this have the characteristics of both the fixed on one transmission broadcast model as well as the fixed in transmission on-demand model. On the one hand, they cannot be said to be fully following the flow of broadcast for they consist of the simultaneous broadcasting of a number of transmissions at the same time. However they also do not precisely follow the flow of on-demand, for the simultaneous transmissions of different broadcasts at the same time do not resemble the same degree of captivation that is apparent in the on-demand model. Simply put, the audience is not completely in charge of the broadcast. Instead what is present in uses such as this, is the assimilation of both.

DOOH producers aim to shape culture in ways that are akin to Bergson's philosophy. But this should arguably be seen more as a tactic than as an in-circumscribable aspect of modernity. The writing on Posterscope's website is only one indication of the way the embodiment of change is warmly embraced by DOOH agencies.

> The way in which consumers see Out-of-Home advertising is unique. They are not sat directly watching it, reading it, listening to it or surfing on it. They are in fact seeing Out-of-Home advertising in their peripheral vision when they are on a journey somewhere or in an environment. (Posterscope)

This advertising agency recognizes that this modality of transience, of being one with movement, is not incalculable, or at least no unprofitable. Posterscope offer seven tips to better understanding this modality of peripherally visioned audience:

1. Your customer will see your [advertisement] from an average of 10 meters away so consider how legible the copy will be.
2. Your customer only has an average of 10 seconds to see your [advertisement] so generally 7 words is enough.
3. Where you place your [advertisement] can give context and add prominence so think about where it will be seen.
4. The greater the contrast in colors on your [advertisement] the more likely it is to stand out.
5. Customers engage with celebrities, they like to be intrigued and entertained.
6. Having your product displayed on the [advertisement] will improve store recall.
7. Having more than one variation of [an advertisement] will enhance brand recall, awareness & purchase consideration. (Posterscope)

Within each of these tips we can detect attempts to grasp at the practices of distraction facilitated by instances of transience. These are ways by which DOOH agencies aim to transform moments of distraction, from inattention to those of acute awareness. They do so by recognizing how there are undeniable constraints – the ads will be seen from ten meters away, for an average of ten seconds; audience will only read a maximum of seven words; contrasting colors are effective grabbers of attention, etc. These are, in short, some examples of how processes of ephemerality are idealized as cultural inevitabilities that are best dealt with by letting them persist, yet but by nevertheless trying to capitalize upon them.

Ephemerality plays an important role in the organization of DOOH's aesthetics, both in form as well as in content. However, it is only a seemingly felt sensation that is brought about as an ideal of continuity. Although DOOH media may seemingly embody a presence that is ephemeral – that is seemingly both always in process, always potentially present, yet always in passing, and therefore also always potentially disappearing – it is important to remember that ephemerality itself is an ideal produced in modern culture. This is an ideal that aims to develop a particular organization of social participation, but it is also one that at once aims to both duplicate as well as to reshape culture. Thus it is an

ideal that embodies a dual movement – to both mirror (as in maintain) as well as to rework (as in change) cultural norms. This is what Stuart Hall once called, modernity's "dialectic of cultural struggle". As Hall writes:

> There is a continuous and necessarily uneven and unequal struggle, by the dominant culture, constantly to disorganize and reorganize popular culture; to enclose and confine its definitions and forms within a more inclusive range of dominant forms. There are points of resistance; there are also moments of suppression. This is the dialectic of cultural struggle. In our times, it goes on continuously, in the complex lines of resistance and acceptance, refusal and capitulation, which make the field of culture a sort of constant battlefield. A battlefield where no once-for-all victories are obtained but where there are always strategic positions to be won and lost. (1981, p. 233)

DOOH agencies embrace such dialectics, but arguably not in the ways that Hall perceived of them. DOOH agencies imagine a disorganized and reorganizing culture that seemingly limits and redefines itself into dominant forms as a given reality that can be managed and made profitable. In doing so, DOOH agencies attempt to capitalize on the battlefield that Hall holds as a generative of social struggle.

Conclusion

I aimed to discuss here an aesthetic of public screens found in highly screened environments. Because highly screened environments consist of dozens of displayed messages, each competing for greater attention from one another, such environments can therefore be said to be structured around states that are not of attention, but rather those of distraction. Messages displayed in these sites are designed with the knowledge that, in order to attract attention from spectators, they must primarily also function as a distraction to the concentrations and musings brought about by other competing screens located in extremely close proximity to them. On the one hand there exists an attention to the processes and practices of attention. This aids develop visible patterns of economic decisions and therefore maintain the systems of consumer and capital exchange. However, on the other hand, there is simultaneously also an attention to the processes and practices of distraction which also exist squarely within the threshold of economic exchange, but are nevertheless never fully integrated into a visible, knowable, and therefore calculable, aspect of the system of consumption. It is untraceable not because it has no function,

or because it has no material qualities, but because there is no history of it being written in the present. That is, there is no knowledge being produced about it even though it clearly is an integrated proponent of this calculation. It is an aesthetic therefore that gestures towards a tension between the construction of attention and that of distraction.

On the contrary, however, this is precisely the kind of realm that I am arguing is being integrated into the organizations and calculations of DOOH media. It is insufficient to only recognize that there is either only a messy formation to the experiences of these environments, or that there is only a highly stringent pattern of participation. We need to recognize that there are two kinds of patterns that are simultaneously in processes of formation. And these processes of formation are not only dependent on the relations between the invisible acts of distraction and those of the visible (because they present an ideal figure that can be integrated into a calculation of marketing's return on investment) acts of attention. Figured in are also the more situated experiences of participation. Although these situated positions can be conceptualized as standing on the peripheries of the ideal twin-logics of attention and distraction, they must be recognized to be obtaining an equal power over the structuring of such environments. As in, instead of a structuralist understanding that would analyze a principled order that grows out of a dichotomy between attention and distraction, one that defines situated subjectivities as replaceable objects that do not hinder the stability of a structure's foundations, what is needed is a trichotomous understanding of structure. One that recognizes patterns of stability as well as patterns of change, as well as one that integrates an agency that helps sway and be swayed by these two dichotomies.

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