[evan meaney]

(917)881.6331

emeaney1@gmail.com

ON GLITCHING

How are we to describe the nature of that which functions through a performance of invisibility? How are we to ask questions of a system that, through its very purpose, oftentimes fools us into thinking that it is all but absent? I write to you here of digital media - of video and binary - of items which catalogue, reconstitute and pretend not to exist as to silently confer upon us that which they represent. This representative burden has been approached by others under the name ‘apparatus’ and spoken about in

the academy – still, many artists seem

we return to the experimental work of our predecessors in an attempt to determine how it is that we are to make a hand- processed video, one that incorporates the narrative of the medium into the discourse of the piece as a functioning

whole.

All

digital

media

exists

as

delineated pieces of language. Essentially, one could interpret a selection of flash video or a digital still as a container for

zeroes and ones. Binary, that mythological,

universal

language of

the

invisible

interested

in

keeping the

in their work. be seen to the

technical Notable world of

celluloid

apparatus, one that would fool us into

medium silent

exception can

thinking

that it

is nebulous

and

untranslatable. It tricks us into believing

that when we ‘export’ or ‘save as’ we are engaging in a type of alchemy – but of

avant-garde filmmaking, those

scientists who scratched and warped and, through a process of their own hands, reminded us that cinema was a medium and not just a vehicle. The concepts of glitching owe a great deal of gratitude to this dense work and the ideology it embodied. However, as film is overtaken

by the exponential proliferation of digital

course

these processes

are

just

retranslations and reinterpretations. Binary is a language just as any invented by

society and if we take language to be a

system

of

exteriorized

and

codified

thought, then glitching might be seen as the deconstructive linguistics of computer

languages. Glitching represents an

media

-

mediums

predicated

on

computational binary and coded systems of memory, rather than physical material - we seem to be once again lost in a sea of representation trying to find birth in the

understanding of that which carries us. So

attempt between

though

to understand the liminality

translation and interpretation

methodical

alteration and

systematic intervention of digital files.

Returning to the hand-made films of the previous generation, we are able to glean another meaning for use with the

glitching paradigm. Oftentimes, these

Glitching is a process of creating work that raises awareness of the means by which we communicate and ultimately exteriorize thought. It is an attempt to integrate the ‘nebula’ of video with a

concrete process of interpretation and

hand-processed

works

exhibited

phenotypic look of a abundance

the stock

expressions which took the rapidly aged filmstrip. An of scratching, the fading of

itself and imperfect color

injunction,

thereby

incorporating

the

properties of a medium into the narrative

temperature all became incorporated into

the lexicon of DIY chemical processing.

of its content.

At very least, glitch-art

functions

as

a

reminder

that

the

and an

Still

these visual

and

auditory

technology of

digital production

representations were emblematic of the natural process of time’s intervention with the medium. The scratches from a hand- processed piece may have shown up there over time due to wear and repeated viewings. Glitching, not surprisingly, has a similar chronologic approximation. You see, everything on our hard drives is slowly forgetting itself. Information is lost through compression and manipulation, but also through a file’s own forgetfulness. In this form of digital Alzheimer’s, a zero will forget that it is supposed to be one, and after a time the entire file structure will become untranslatable. While glitching represents an acute and purposeful manipulation of a file’s code, it could be argued that the file would have evolved in a similar way over time. It is in this way that glitching not only represents an inception into the structures of language but also an approximation of time’s affect on a

medium built in the hopes of an archival

information

theory

remains as

inexorable collaborator in all works of digital propagation and therefore should be treated as significant. For every file is telling a dual story, one of its accessible presentation and one which is only apparent as its internal systems, its code,

become visible.

Published in:

*INCITE! Journal of Experimental Media & Radical Aesthetics Volume 2: Counter-Archive.*

Ed: Brett Kashmere. (2010).

permanence,

unfounded.

even

if

this

hope

is