

"NEW MEDIA CONFIGURATIONS - CHANGING SOCIETIES? CURRENT RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES ON SOUTH ASIA, SOUTHEAST ASIA, THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA"

Panel 1: Research, Media Art and Documentary Filmmaking

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"An intellectual history of the power point presentation: How a 'new media' machine was adapted and integrated into the art of projection; a case study of Japan and the Netherlands"

Abstract:

Projection as a method of investigation

When looking at the technical development of the (media-)projector, it is noteworthy how initially its content was synonymous to the medium. The machine used to projecting skulls, monsters, and devils was named the lantern of fear. This changed and the medium was dissociated from its initial content, which prompts the question what of its original meaning does remain. I intend to describe a separation that was gradually made between 'on-screen' magic and 'off-screen' reality, resulting in the notion of the screen as a window or canvas. I want to contrast experiments with fields of projection to the use of projection screens.

Dutch artist and proponent of the movement 'de Stijl' Theo van Doesburg said, in a new medium there is always a period of material experimentation where the medium is explored before it is used in its full worth as a tool for Gestaltung - to shape. I argue that this is not necessarily true. One could tell the story of the lantern as a tool with potential for terror and deception that ended up as a mundane device in education (diapositive and finally power point). In Europe this device was fitted with a content and context, whereas at the same time in Japan there was an existing content and context into which the medium was fitted.

I want to zoom in on the moment in its history when the lantern was used in exploring ideas of 'magic', illusion and reality. What was the relation between magic projections and the orientation of the viewer? Doesburg sees experimentation in film-art as a intuitive tendency to observe the world in an alternative dimension - "die Welt aus einer neuen Dimension ... betrachten". What happens when we research, find out, experiment, amaze, mesmerize and investigate by way of projecting like the magic lantern projectionists did?