Cinema as ‘Found’ footage in experimental Argentine video

Clara Garavelli, University of Leicester

Abstract

This article explores the use of cinema in Argentine artists’ videos. In an age of open access to myriad moving images, the production, distribution and consumption of films and videos have reduced their costs and become a common popular activity. This contemporary visual excess seems to be dominated by postmodern processes of citation and resignification of objects and images in circulation, taken mainly from the mass media and the Internet. Accordingly, this article aims to examine experimental Argentine video productions that not only cite but also use cinema as an inter-trans-medial *dispositif* and thus as a source of renewal of video art. It studies ways in which video has moved from its dialogue with television to that with the cinematographic, from addressing archives or ‘found’ footage to problematizing, in a Bourriaudian vein, the use of ‘cultural artefacts’.

Keywords

video art

found footage

experimental Argentine video

artist’s cinema

Collage/Décollage

Appropriation

Andrés Di Tella

Gustavo Galuppo

Gabriela Golder

Throughout history, artists have been inclined to use freely cultural objects that have preceded them and that have contributed to their artistic and intellectual development. This invocation has materialized many times in different strategies that challenge the notion of ownership by creating new works out of someone else's productions. Although refashioned under the contemporary approach of postmodern pastiche, citation, recycling, collage and appropriation of various previously informed visual elements to create new artworks are artistic modes of production that date back to the early twentieth-century avant-garde movements. However, the artistic field's own processes of development, from the experimentation of the avant-garde and the loss of the Benjaminian aura,¹ to later periods of conceptualization and declarations of the 'death of art', in addition to digital advances and the development of the Internet and communication media, entail what various art historians and critics have termed the period of 'images of images' (Noé 2007), the 'inter-image' (Bellour 2009), and the advent of new hybrid or 'post-produced' productions (Bourriaud 2005). Hence, as it is argued here, the old avant-garde techniques seem to acquire new meanings in this overly visual, intercommunicated world.

The practice of using visual fragments and taking them as the foundation for new works has also occurred in films since the very origin of cinema itself (Yeo 2005: 13). Jay Leyda, one of the pioneer film theorists to write about the so-called 'compilation' film –

a film made of previously released material – has explained how in 1898 one of Lumiere's cameramen constructed an account of the Dreyfus affair out of a combination of shots that were not directly connected to the actual event (1964: 13–14), thus illustrating how, from the beginning of film, images of different nature have been resignified to convey new meanings.² Nonetheless, this resignification has not happened without friction. How the audio-visual material is treated and received, what sorts of elements are put into play and which are the sources they come from have divided scholars. Those coming from the documentary sphere are concerned with the transparency of the images (Arthur 2000: 65), while those belonging to the experimental/artistic fields tend to challenge the actual notion of authenticity and transparency. Thus, the former advocates for an integrity of the archive, employing terms such as 'archival footage' or the aforementioned 'compilation film', while the latter seeks to challenge any sort of indexicality and resorts to expressions such as 'found footage' (Baron 2014a: 8; Arthur 2000; Weinrichter 2009a: 14–20).

The contemporary revival and outburst of found-footage films and theory, manifested in the proliferation of excellent studies of authors like William Wees, Paul Arthur, Patrik Sjöberg, Jaimie Baron and, in the Hispanic world, by Eugeni Bonet, Antonio Weinrichter, the volume of Leandro Listorti and Diego Trerotola, and even the creation of specialized bilingual journals like *Found Footage Magazine*,³ call into question the practices that have taken place within the Arts. Although recycling, citation and (mis)appropriation are not recent innovations, as Nicolas Bourriaud has acknowledged, 'the difference resides in the articulation' (2005: 7). The cultural and artistic paradigms have changed, moving away from the radicalism of the historical avant-garde to a disillusioned late capitalism, where notions of creation, authorship and originality are re-examined (Weinrichter 2009a: 19; Bourriaud 2005: 7).

It is in these disciplines' blurred boundaries – i.e. between the Arts and Cinema – that we find the experimental videos we are concerned with in this article – productions that explore the ethos of 'relational aesthetics'⁴ and 'found footage', as well as the various forms of production, distribution and consumption of moving images. The emergence of video as a medium of artistic expression in the early 1960s responded to the counter-cultural imperatives of the time (Elwes 2005: 2) and to the development of new technological devices that captured electrical signals and transformed them into visual images (Bonet et al. 2010; Hall and Fifer 1990; Joselit 2002). Many art historians have also pointed out that video art precedes the actual use of video technology by artists and traced the origin of this art form to works that were actually created in film, such as the seminal work by Wolf Vostell *Sun in your Head* (1963), which consists of single-frame sequences of images taken from a TV set that suffer periodic distortions while captured with a 16-mm and Super 8 camera. Accordingly, video art originated as a conceptual artistic form that had a love–hate relationship with television and its mass-mediatization of culture and everyday life. What is also significant about works like this one by Vostell, and about video art itself, is that it establishes a dialogue of media and it challenges the conventions of the moving image. Although Vostell's work illustrates that you cannot define experimental video by its medium, as Marita Sturken (1996) has suggested, it cannot be denied that it depends on technology and that technological changes alter a part of its aesthetic. The fact that in recent years analogue technology has practically disappeared and that it has been replaced by digital and communication technology changes the way we understand the dialogue of media put into play by many of these productions.

The progressive extinction of the celluloid has generated a nostalgic revival for the materiality of the image and the film *dispositif* – i.e. a nostalgia for not only the

traditional device that reproduced moving images but also for the power structures behind the apparatus (Albera and Tortajada 2015: 21–45). It has become quite common to see in the white cube of the gallery space the presence of old film projectors, which resembles the fascination for the basic principles of the moving image in the early days of cinema. This new advocacy within the Arts for film in its ‘purest’ form has encouraged once again the rethinking of the viability of video as a creative artistic medium and as a challenging instrument of other media, including cinema itself.⁵ How video art has mutated with the artistic and cinematographic fields is an aspect that the videos under review in these pages engage with when using cinema.

In the last decades, cinema has become a recurring inspirational source for video art. It is used not only as primary source for new productions, in a found-footage-film style, but also as a referent that contributes to its language resignification and to its repositioning within the Arts and audio-visual fields, respectively. The exhibition and publication in the United States of *Cut: Film as Found Object in Contemporary Video* (2004–2006)⁶ demonstrated the need for written work that delves into the complexities of using someone else’s work – particularly of images originally created for use in films – in the construction of new moving-image artworks. In Argentina, from the beginning of the new millennium, video has spread at great speed. As a means of artistic expression, it has often referred to other media – including cinema – as an inherent element of its practice and formation. The artists who will be analysed in what follows problematize the culture of shared forms as defined by Bourriaud (2005) in their (mis)appropriation of moving images and in the relationship they establish with spectators, the film industry and the Art institution.

Between archive and a hard place: *Collage/décollage/appropriation*

When re-examining the origins of video art, John Hanhardt concluded that the techniques of collage and ‘décollage’ are basic strategies of this art form that consist of the overlapping of media technologies. In carrying them out, video art turned itself towards engagement with ‘social and political issues through the manipulation of the material world’ (Hanhardt 1990: 73). At the beginning, as it will be discussed in this section, video turned to TV and media imagery to contest its power. The archives that artists engaged with belonged to the media sphere, and their manipulation aimed at challenging the social and political implications of the mass-mediatization of culture caused by the proliferation of television. This idea of adapting or changing media cultural artefacts to suit the artist’s own counter-cultural purposes entails a rethinking of the use of archives, particularly within the realm of the moving image. Jaimie Baron, when analysing the contemporary practices of found-footage film, recently coined the concept of ‘inappropriation’ to refer to the essence of this film practice, which depends ‘on the viewer’s perception of something ‘out of place’ and therefore, in some way, improper or inappropriate’ (2014b: 2). This concept is also suitable to comprehend artistic video practices. How the archives are then handled and received – in other words, if there is ‘something’ really out of place, appropriated or in free circulation – is a notion that has challenged scholars, artists and spectators’ perspectives on productions that use previously shot film material.

For instance, it is noteworthy that the aforementioned work by Vostell, *Sun in your Head*, one of the foundational pieces of video art, includes as part of the televised-intervened images a sequence of the Plaza de Mayo square seized by Peronist supporters, precisely at a time when Peronism was proscribed in Argentina. If we focus on the historical value of this sequence, the TV archive footage that Vostell reworked heightens the contestatory nature of this piece, particularly for an Argentine audience.

In this vein, if video art has been television's awareness of self (Valentini 2010; Fargier 2010), in this particular case it also serves to address collective self-awareness of the veiled nature of media images under an oppressive regime in Argentina. Yet, considering Vostell's intention to subvert the institution of television and expose its co-optive power by removing it from its usual setting and by manipulating the formal qualities of electromagnetic images (Meigh-Andrews 2006: 9–10; Hanhardt 1990: 72), the archive distorted in this piece tends to lose its documentary status. This is because, in semiotic terms, it might be argued that the signifier is the target of Vostell's aesthetic and ideological explorations, rather than the signified.

The finishing statement of this video in the form of intertitles that show the word 'décollage' highlights this objective and opens up as well an array of questions about the dialogue of media that lie at the heart of experimental video and its treatment of 'appropriated' images. For Vostell, 'décollage' represents the tearing apart of an existing image rather than the piecing together of multiple images. Even though the stripping of images in *Sun in your Head* responds to abstract ideas that reflect on the medium's specificities – by altering the electromagnetic waves of a TV set while recording them on film, before the actual technology of video recording was popularly available – the level of subversion of this work, as suggested, also depends on spectators' recognition of the images that are brought into play, regardless of the artists' intention. Accordingly, it is not only how those images are treated and where they are coming from that are important aspects to consider when reviewing the strategies of video art, but also the historical context of reception.

Although the TV footage might have been 'found', in the literal sense of the word, the fact that these images were 'appropriated' should also be explored. They lacked ownership or authorial presence, and this fact of not belonging to a recognizable entity

empties the act of appropriation – because the actual verb ‘to appropriate’ implies that one takes for oneself something that belongs to someone else. Moreover, the video consists of altered archives, media disruptions that do not respect the quality of the original transmission. Thus, it uses images created – or, rather, destroyed – by Vostell, filmed by him in their already transformed state. Hence, questions of what is the primary material used in this video, to what extent we can recognize an archive – and if we do, to what degree it can be argued that it is ‘misplaced’ – are provoked in the creation of a circular dilemma that shows the signs of a hybrid, uncertain contemporaneity. As Bourriaud noted when defining these types of works as ‘post-produced’ productions, ‘notions of originality (being at the origin of) and even of creation (making something from nothing) are slowly blurred in this new cultural landscape’ (2005: 12).

Sun in your Head’s objective to deconstruct the symbolic meaning of media was also one of the primary intentions for the dawn of video art in Argentina. We can see this aim in the first single-channel videos created in the country at the end of the 1980s. *The Man of the Week* (1988), for example, by Boy Olmi and Luis María Hermida, satirizes a testimonial TV show. As Argentine media scholar Rodrigo Alonso (2005) explained, Olmi and Hermida followed the steps of the programme’s insidious investigation technique, but in this case, in spite of their endless data collection, the absurdity of the topic led them nowhere. Similarly, another classic video of this time to challenge TV imagery is *Reconstruyen crimen de la modelo/They Reconstruct the Model’s Crime* (1990), by Andrés Di Tella – who has become an established documentary film-maker – and Fabián Hofman. Their video alters the time of the images taken from a sensationalist news programme about the murder of a model and manipulates the sound of the original show in order to destabilize the viewers.

For the twentieth anniversary of *Reconstruyen crimen de la modelo*, Di Tella (2010) himself stated that the word ‘reconstruyen’ – to ‘reconstruct’ – that appears in the title implies a specific manipulation of newsreel footage that was previously manipulated. The TV directors and producers of the news programme created a biased version of the murder case to attract audiences – arguably a common strategy of news broadcasting. Thus, in this video, Di Tella and Hofman tried to reuse the already manipulated images in order to dissect their referential indexicality and challenge their alleged truth. They do so, according to Di Tella, by following ‘the logical grammar of the found footage film’ (2010). This remark raises more questions on the viability of video as an artistic medium and its inherent dialogue of media in the age of transmedia, since video has the capacity to break with any canonization efforts or the establishment of a specific ‘grammar’. This is an aspect that illustrates how the different schools of thought have a strong influence on the way we experience these works that are constructed in between film and video. Although in many ways this example resembles Vostell’s video – such as in the intention to undermine the discourse of television to make us uncomfortably aware of its functions to shape our understanding of the world – this piece heavily relies on the sense of the already seen and the acknowledgement of ‘inappropriated’ archives – to use Baron’s terminology. As such, the boundaries between non-fiction and experimental film and video seem to be increasingly redundant in aesthetic terms, depending more and more on channels of distribution, exhibition and on the tradition and historical circumstances of each art form.

The dialogue with the media and the attempt to question and subvert its power in society both have been the ethos of experimental video in Argentina, remaining so to the present day. Due to the great depression of the late 1990s and the subsequent social and political unrest of December 2001 – which was a highly mediatized series of events

that saw the president declaring the State of Siege on national television while people continued taking to the streets, banging their pots and pans, and which caused the ousting of several heads of government amidst a profound sociopolitical and economic crisis – there was a boom of these sorts of videos that questioned media discourses. This upturn mainly arose from the popular belief that the media was not portraying the reality of the people but serving the interests of the dominant classes. Accordingly, experimental videos came to reinstate the counter-cultural function of its origin, but on this occasion not with the aim of going against the media but to denounce its rampant manipulation in order to rescue and democratize it.

An iconic work of this highly active period, which received numerous awards and significant visibility, is Gabriela Golder's *Vacas/Cows* (2002), which is based, like the aforementioned videos, on a sequence taken from the news that was reworked by the artist.⁷ In March 2002, a local TV channel showed a truck full of cows on its way to the slaughterhouse that had overturned on the side of the motorway; the neighbours of that deprived area of Rosario decided to butcher the animals there on the road to take the meat home – at a time when meat prices were rising and it had thus become unavailable for most of the population. In Golder's video, the close-ups of people carrying dead animals, the slow motion movements with flickering effects, the sound alterations with the addition of a penetrating grave non-diegetic music, the colour adjustments that resemble the savage red and yellow tonality of tauromachy and even the constant use of a silent black screen are all common techniques employed in video art that attempt to deconstruct the power of the media discourse. The pixilation of the images reminds the audience of the mediated nature of the images used as 'primary' material and, therefore, hints at the constructed essence of the archive being 'inappropriated'.

Along the same lines, Sebastián Díaz Morales' *Lucharemos hasta anular la ley/We Will*

Fight Until the Law is Annulled (2004) plays with the media coverage of the manifestations against the sanction of the law that tried to regulate public demonstrations and street vendors. However, instead of appropriating televised material, the artist used the newsreel his brother shot of the cameramen and reporters covering the event in order to show the origin of news images.⁸ During post-December 2001 events, when *piqueteros*/picketers were receiving a lot of media attention, Díaz Morales focused on how each protestor was surrounded by multiple cameramen and projected their white silhouettes on a black screen, breaking the traditional mode of cinematic projection – the white screen, black room – and aestheticizing a moment of political unrest. When this video was exhibited at the Gallery carlier/gebauer in Berlin, Wim Peeters declared that ‘*Lucharemos* reflects this condition of mediatized protest turning it into a state of hyper-protest’ (2005, original emphasis). Accordingly, Díaz Morales’ treatment of a simulated TV archive is highly videographic in its exposure of media influence, and in its fragmentary status and adjustments of time, yet also cinematographic in its exploration of the materiality of the images and exhibition tropes.

Based on the same sociopolitical circumstances that inspired Golder’s work, another important case that deals with these frontier dilemmas or, in other words, with the intricacy of the use of archives between collage, ‘decollage’, found-footage film and experimental video is Gustavo Galuppo’s *El ticket que explotó/The Ticket that Exploded* (2002). In this video, Galuppo seized images from the media that showed the police repression during the December 2001 events and reassembled and altered them to create a free adaptation of one of William Burroughs novels. Galuppo redefined its main line of enquiry by adjusting the characters and key features of the events that were disrupting the country at the time. His incorporation of newsreel taken from TV programmes and subsequent alterations of those images and sound aimed to challenge

the media discourses in a similar vein to that of Di Tella and Hofman or Golder's works. Yet, Galuppo also used old North American films in this video, a move that allowed him to make as well a strong statement against all the totalitarian regimes that, according to him, justified their despotic reactions as serving a greater good. The choice of Burroughs' novel as the backbone of this work is quite significant in this context too, for the author is known for his Dadaist literary technique popularly called the 'cut-up technique', which consists of the dismembering of a lineal text and its rearrangement into a new fragmentary and non-lineal piece. *El ticket que explotó* follows a similar procedure within the anti-establishment realm of experimental video. Nonetheless, the video's appropriation, use and reuse of cinematic found footage and archival material – i.e. of material that is not just from television and that focuses on film history and materiality – locate this work at the margins of film and video art.

In his book on found footage film, the Spanish scholar Antonio Weinrichter stated that

When video art and, afterwards, *screen art* begin to appropriate cinematographic material, it is normal that they repeat the same appropriation techniques first explored by experimental cinema [...]; but the meaning of this operation cannot be the same: in fact, it is not just the manipulation of the typical representations of *found footage* film, but also the appropriation that one medium makes of the other. (2009a: 19, original emphasis, own translation)

This is evident in Galuppo's video: by putting together classic American films with newsreel footage and applying traditional videographic aesthetic techniques, each medium challenges the other, questioning the meaning and destination of moving

images. This is an aspect that will be further explored in the next section through other videos that use just film as the basis of their semantic construction, where the reference to television lies only in the fragmentary nature of the disposition and reception of the images.

Even though we see an intervention of existing images in all these works, and we can think about the process of ‘appropriation’ of audio-visual material from the media in Vostell’s terms of ‘dcollage’, Bruce Conner, one of the pioneers of found-footage film, mentioned that collage – or ‘dcollage’ in this case – is not the most suitable term to use when we talk about film. He said that because film employs time, movement and a sense of spatiality, instead of talking about collage we have to discuss the complexities of the ‘montage’ (quoted in Weinrichter 2009a, 2009b). When it comes to video art, this latter concept is also problematic, since the electronic essence of the image led many scholars to coin the term ‘vertical montage’ to differentiate this editing practice from the film process of ‘horizontal montage’ – i.e. the linear cutting and putting together of shots in sequences. However, the fact that now both film and video are digitized makes this distinction more problematic, forcing us to think in terms of the traditional aesthetic tropes that pervade each art form, such as overlapping or interferences of media images as inherent strategies of video art.

Nevertheless, as Galuppo’s case exemplifies, there is an increasing dialogue between mediums that blurs the boundaries of film and video. Although experimental video keeps challenging the media and continues the strand inaugurated in the 1960s, in recent years we have witnessed a proliferation of works that are more inclined to explore these institutional interconnections. The dilemma of whether or not the artwork respects the indexicality of the (in)appropriated archives, as we will analyse in the next section, seems to be surpassed in these new types of works. Their reference to various films and

film cultures demonstrates an implicit understanding that these videos are aimed at knowledgeable and cinephile spectators who would easily recognize how the ‘primary’ material pervades the piece.

Cinema as ‘found’ archive

Contemporary video continues to use transgressive gestures that aim to destabilize the power of the images that surround us and of the institutions that create or support them. The curator of the exhibition ‘Cut: Film as Found Object in Contemporary Video’, Stefano Basilico, declared that videos nowadays prefer to mine the illusion of the representation (2005: 29). In order to do so, artists not only draw from news programmes – as was customary from the very origin of this art form – but from films too, which are part of our daily life and, as Basilico has also suggested, are imbued with the power to communicate and shape reality. This growing interest for film in video artworks derives from the crisis that the medium is going through since the expansion of the Internet and the end of the celluloid era. Now that the frontier between these two modes of production has started to disappear, it seems that video productions have assumed once again their counter-attitude with the aim of updating and reviving cinema, in spite of the decline of its traditional form.

Among the many videos created in the last years in Argentina that have looked at cinema for the renewal of its language, there are those that appropriate film footage to operate a nostalgic resignification of key historical films and directors. Kindred spirit to Douglas Gordon’s famous *24-Hour Psycho* (1993)⁹ is *Vert1Jete2* (2012) by Carlos Ramacciotti. The video puts together different fragments of Alfred Hitchcock’s film *Vertigo* (1958) with sound and shot angles that resemble Chris Marker’s *La Jetée*

(1962). Following the strategies of cutting, rearranging, looping and altering the classics is also Cecilia Rosso's *Auch Zwerge haben klein Angefangen* (2007), in which the artist appropriates fragments of Werner Herzog's *Even Dwarfs Started Small* (1970). Likewise, *PN=N!* (2007), by Iván Marino, takes the torture scene of Carl Theodor Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928) and through a series of algorithms constantly deconstructs and reconstructs its different stages. This silent French film was also the focus of another well-known artist's video entitled, precisely, *La pasión de Juana de Arco* (Macchi 2003). The use of stills from Carl Dreyer's film forces the viewer to reflect on the materiality of the images at play.

This latter artist, Jorge Macchi, has created other pieces that respond to a different trend of videos inspired by film culture: those that question the rules and structures of narrative film. Videos such as *Super 8* (1997), *La canción del final/The Song of the End* (2001) and *Fin de filme/End of Film* (2007) interrogate, through simple formal gestures, some of the basic conventions of classic narrative film. In this fashion, Nicola Costantino's *Trailer* (2010) also engages with some of the industrial practices of mainstream cinema through the creation of a fake movie trailer that sees her and part of her well-known sculptural works being caught up in a suspense drama story.

Costantino, a recognized artist who has created several works from her own body and personal experiences, has also conceived productions that belong to a different process of citation, besides the above-mentioned strategies of appropriating film footage or challenging the set grammar of narrative film. Good examples of these are the film reenactments of *Metropolis* (2011) and *Nosferatu* (2009). Both videos follow the same aesthetic strategies of her other art pieces, where the artist's distinctive physical features blend with popular characters or adapt in an auto-referential way to different semi-autobiographical situations. Accordingly, the former video consists of a single close-up

shot of the artist's face interpreting the android Maria, of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927). The latter reinterprets the scene where Murnau's Nosferatu attacks a girl who is peacefully sleeping in bed – a girl who is played here by Costantino herself.

These film adaptations and re-enactments are also the focus of Daniela Cugliandolo's *Nosferatu 2000* (1999), which uses actors to give her own view of Murnau's main obscure character; of *Pneurosis* (2000–2001), which creates a shower scene to play sarcastically with another psychoanalytical problem than the one portrayed in Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960); and of *In fellini* (2012), where *Felliniesque* gestures desacralize the classics of the Italian film director. Other distinctive cases of this group of videos are Mauro Guzmán's trilogies. Following a trashy and extravagant aesthetic, Guzmán and his group of performers restage famous sequences and construct characters inspired by film classics, yet which are carefully changed to make an ironic remark on key figures of the Argentine art world. The so-called *Trilogy of Terror* started in 2006 with *I Feel like Linda Blair* (Guzmán, 2006), followed by *Carrie, the Power of the Mind* (Guzmán, 2007) and ended with *Rosamaria's Baby* (Guzmán, 2008). In 2008 Guzmán also embarked on the production of the *Trilogy of Tragic Love*, which comprises *Nazareno Cruz y el Arte/Nazareno Cruz and the Arts* (Guzmán, 2008), *La Nancy* (Guzmán, 2008) and *Boquitas pintoras/Little Mouths Painters* (Guzmán, 2008), all names that are rephrasings and adaptations of classical Argentine films. Lastly, in 2009 he made the *Animal Trilogy*, which included *Linda vs. Tiburón/Linda vs Shark* (Guzmán, 2009), *Linda y los pájaros/Linda and the Birds* (Guzmán, 2009) and *Linda Kong* (Guzmán, 2009), all of them based on well-known films centred on animal attacks.

Lastly, cinema has also been approached by contemporary video from a macro-structural perspective. How cinema is experienced and exhibited has been the centre of attention of many video artists, who attempt to find alternatives to the traditional white

screen and black room of mainstream cinema. Díaz Morales' work, analysed above, is a good example of these endeavours for its projection of images on a black screen in the white cube of a gallery space. Taking this idea a step further, Christian Delgado and Nicolás Testoni projected a series of urban film sequences on different farm animals. Under the rubric *La habitación infinita/The Endless Room* (Delgado and Testoni, 2010), we find a series of videos where the artists go beyond the traditional bi-dimensional screen of the dark room with the aim of exploring the influence of cinema outside the metropolis that originated it. Of the series of several videos under this title, number six uses small shots of eyes taken from Dziga Vertov's famous *The Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) and makes multiple projections of them on a horse in the middle of the night, following the rhythm of bells in the background. In this way, the artists deconstruct the vertovian kino-eye and show that life itself goes beyond what can be captured with a movie camera and that cinema is not anymore only associated with urban progress and modernity.

As has been discussed, none of these videos that look at cinema do so randomly. All of these artists make carefully planned decisions about what material they want to appropriate and modify or which aspect of the film industry they would like to subvert. The process of finding footage by chance and reusing it has only taken place in very few cases so far. This is a strategy used, for instance, by the collective *Arteproteico*, mainly due to economic constraints. Formed in 2001 by Armando Frezze, Lucas Sileoni and Federico Caram, at first this collective lacked film stock or even a video camera, which led them to use footage they received as a gift. Accordingly, *2050 cartas de amor/2050 Love Letters* (2001) employs a Norwegian home movie given to them by one of their friends. It alters the sequence structure and original sound to remove its intimate essence and convey instead a more general statement about marriage and its

decadence. *Cabeza rayada/Scratched Head* (2002), on the other hand, uses footage they literally found in a dustbin. The poor state of conservation of the film stock allowed for a more hands-on approach and, consequently, the piece took on new meanings after the manual burning, scratching and painting of the found celluloid. Unlike the aforementioned videos that conceptually addressed contemporary film culture and the new cinephilia, these latter works are more interested in exploring specific images in an analytical way and to make aesthetic virtue out of economic necessity.

The works of the artists briefly analysed in these pages deal with the use of ‘found’-footage film in experimental videos and in so doing they operate conscious political and aesthetic choices aimed at breaking the traditional conventions of audio-visual products. Video, in the 1960s and 1970s, has acquired specific characteristics as a means of artistic expression. In spite of the multiple declarations of its death, video is still a powerful artistic form that breaks institutional and aesthetic boundaries. Its appropriation of images from various sources, such as cinematographic material, attempts to renew its marginal quality and contestatory language. It is not so much interested anymore in exploring the specificity of the different mediums or formats, but the relationship between ‘media’ – understood as the different languages and institutions generated by specific mediums. When analysing Douglas Gordon’s *24-Hour Psycho* video, Eivind Røssak has stated that the new generation of film and video artists ‘focus more on the circulation, power and assemblage of images in a new mediascape. They investigate relations, processes and the rhetoric of the image, [...] rather than focus in iconoclasm’ (2014). The videos mentioned in these pages delve precisely into this contemporary image ecology, defined by Bourriaud (2005) as the culture of ‘sharing’, where art can be a form of apprehending the world through multiple

negotiations.

Eleonora Vallazza (2012), analysing found footage as a practice of video art in Argentina, concluded that with the new visual technologies at hand, such as mobile phones or YouTube, we could all be found-footage film-makers and this could potentially mean the imminent end of this art form. A similar conclusion was reached as well by Weinrichter (2009b), when he claimed that it used to be easy to trace the steps of found footage to film-makers such as Esfir Shub, Joseph Cornell or Bruce Conner, but today it is such a generalized and hyper-present artistic practice that it seems trivial to historicize it. Nonetheless, he also warned us to avoid falling into the trap of fetishizing the process and encouraged us to think about the different institutions where this principle prevails. The question he posed to conclude with, ‘To whom does the media belong in the era of communication?’ (Weinrichter 2009b: 191), is also the question that the works outlined in this article generate – a question that tackles the problematics of creation and ownership of images in these times of worldwide information and hyper-visibility. Correspondingly, the Argentine videos discussed here interrogate the aura of the artistic work by exposing reproducibility as an art form in itself; problematize notions of authorship and primary material through their exploration, interrogation and reuse of someone else’s work; enquire into the integrity of the archives and highlight how images have become an inherent part of life – a fact that means that they arguably bring closer one of the ultimate aims of art: to become life itself.

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Contributor details

Clara Garavelli is Lecturer in Latin American Studies at the University of Leicester (United Kingdom); member of the editorial board of *Secuencias. Revista de Historia del Cine* (UAM-Abada); author of the book *Video Experimental Argentino Contemporáneo* (EDUNTREF, 2014); co-editor of *Poéticas del movimiento: Aproximaciones al cine y video experimental argentino* (Libreria, 2015) and co-editor of the special dossier on experimental film and video of the journal *Imagofagia* (2014). She is also co-author of collective works such as *The Cinema of the Swimming Pool* (2014) and *Directory of*

World Cinema: Argentina (2014), among others. She worked as Jury member of the International Festival of Video Art (FIVA, Argentina) and curated several video and film exhibitions.

Contact:

Dr Clara Garavelli

School of Modern Languages

University of Leicester

University Road

Leicester, LE1 7RH

Email: cg226@le.ac.uk

Notes

¹ In other words, the loss of the idea that a work of art is unique and authentic in an age of ‘mechanical reproduction’ (Benjamin 1968).

² Paul Arthur has also called upon Leyda’s story to explain the practice of ‘rearranging extant materials in fresh combination’ in non-fiction film-making (2000: 58, 68).

³ First issue published in October 2015: <http://foundfootagemagazine.com/>.

⁴ A term coined in 1998 by Nicolas Bourriaud (2002), which refers to the artistic practices that involve social and contextual relations.

⁵ Since the origin of video art, its existence has been constantly challenged and its demise foretold in multiple circumstances: see, for instance, Kaprow (1974) or the famous issue of *Cahiers du Cinéma* entitled *Où va la vidéo?*, which in the early 1980s gathered key personalities of the video art world to discuss its future.

⁶ Curated by Stefano Basilico (2005).

⁷ Golder has become one of the key figures in Argentina who promotes artworks that explore the limits of the moving image. Together with Andres Denegri – also artist, teacher and curator – they created the project ‘Continente’ and direct the ‘Moving Image Biennial’ (BIM), which gathers together prestigious local and international personalities from the world of artists’ film and video.

⁸ Díaz Morales personal communication.

⁹ This video was shown in the exhibition ‘Cut: Film as Found Object in Contemporary Video’ and it has become an iconic example of the videos that turn to cinema to create a new videographic code.