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Replay: ANNA

INVISIBLE PRODUCERS/APPÉTIT D'OISEAU

A film essay about archives, film characters, cinemas, projectors, projections, clouds, and about a bird.

Replay: ANNA is an installation that configures the concept for the planned production INVISIBLE PRODUCERS as a spatial narrative in an exhibition space. INVISIBLE PRODUCERS is an essay film developed in the context of the Living Archive project. It is based on the film ANNA (Italy 1972-75) by Alberto Grifi and Massimo Sarchielli.

The installation is organised around a central photograph that shows a view of the Piazza Navona in Rome (one of the main shooting locations of ANNA) as the repetition of a film shot. The omission in the image corresponds to the place where the protagonist Anna can be seen; this omission is symptomatic for the approach of INVISIBLE PRODUCERS, which is about Anna, but does not show her. At the same time, the visual elements that are omitted become the background of a display that collects the various materials into INVISIBLE PRODUCERS.

If you're in the desert, you get a longing for cake, for cinema, for people...
(Massimo in ANNA)

The Italian film ANNA by Alberto Grifi and Massimo Sarchielli, which was made in Rome between 1972 and 1975, was premiered on July 6, 1975 in the Forum of Young Film section of the Berlinale. Over the course of my research in the Arsenal archive I came across this film, which had been all but forgotten for many years. Originally a central work of the (post-) 68 movement in Italy,¹ it was only screened again for the first time in 2002 at the Locarno Film Festival. After being restored by the CSC Cineteca Nazionale and the Cineteca di Bologna, ANNA experienced something of a

¹ The film was presented in 1975 at the Berlinale and at the Venice Biennale; it was screened in Cannes in 1976 and was immediately considered an underground classic.

renaissance. The film ran in the section Orizzonti 1961–1978, the retrospective of the 68th Venice Film Festival, which was dedicated to Italian experimental cinema from the sixties and seventies; subsequently it was shown at the Rotterdam Film Festival in 2012 and at London's Tate Gallery, and in 2012 in the context of a showing of Alberto Grifi's works at the Viennale. INVISIBLE PRODUCERS seeks in part to make a sophisticated contribution to the history of the film's reception by critically highlighting questions of representation and of those (power) relations between the camera's gaze and the actress, which are deeply inscribed in the film. In the Forum catalogue, we read the following introductory words:

"ANNA is a videotape that was recorded in 1972-73 with an AKAI apparatus in 1/4 inch format, which Albert Grifi then transferred to 16mm film with an apparatus of his own invention, the Vidigrafo. ANNA exists in three versions: a long one (11 hours) on 1/4 inch videotape and a shorter one (4 1/2 hours) on 1/2 inch videotape. The third version is the 16mm film version (3 1/2 hours). The film is a collaboration between Alberto Grifi and Massimo Sarchielli, an actor, who plays an important role in mediating between the camera and the 'heroine.' It shows the real situation of Anna, a 16-year-old girl with a drug problem, who is pregnant, who meets Massimo Sarchielli at Piazza Navona, and is taken home by him. At the same time, the directors filmed what was happening in the marginal groups in Rome." Adriano Aprà, L'Art Vivant, Paris, February 1975

PROJECTIONS

The film ANNA forms the gravitational center for INVISIBLE PRODUCERS, which is first and foremost a film about another film. At the same time, INVISIBLE PRODUCERS makes the term "projection" its central topic: on the one hand, projection as a constitutive element of the cinematographic set up (projector, projection surface, the transition from analog to digital projection...); on the other side, projection in the psychoanalytic sense: projecting on something, on someone, which/who always stands in some connection to forms of desire and thus also structures the relationship of the audience to the events on the screen.

Between these two meanings of the term projection, a media-historical arc is drawn along

a psychoanalytic narrative, which—starting from ANNA—leads through film history(ies) and theories, but also through the histories of the film characters and cinematographic screening venues. The film is about different cinematic sites (Le Panthéon in the rue Victor Cousin in Paris; a cinema founded in 1911 in the Japanese village of Niigata; and the Arsenal in Berlin); about three histories of projections (of a movie projectionist who refuses to project out of love, of Anna Karina as Nana, who goes to the cinema and sees Dreyer's film *LA PASSION DE Jeanne d'Arc*, and of the role of the projection in the early years of Japanese cinema) as well as about three characters, all called Anna—Anna Karina, the (otherwise nameless) Anna from Alberto Grifi's film, and a third Anna, who doesn't want to be called that.

This film essay will be accompanied and commented on by clips from further films that come from the Arsenal archive, and through which the term projection will be extended in connection with various forms of cinematic recording and representation; the film will also be structured by a series of texts. The film theorist Laura Mulvey contributes a text on the topic of projectors, which is understood as the repressed within cinema. In the contribution by the US-French filmmaker and theorist Noël Burch, he attends to the role of the projection apparatus in early Japanese cinema. The question of the relationship between projector and projection, of the single photographic image and movement on the screen, of the still and the sequence, and of the associated role of the audience is examined in the text *Le défilement*² by Thierry Kuntzel, who represents another important reference point for *INVISIBLE PRODUCERS*. The subtitle *Appétit d'oiseau* refers to this text, which seeks to define more precisely the relationship between the film strip in the projector, the projection on the screen, and the space that emerges between them, by analyzing an animated film by Peter Foldes with the title *Appétit d'oiseau*. And also significantly, *INVISIBLE PRODUCERS* treats the relationship between directing and acting as a specific case of the projections between love and work, between exploitation and self-empowerment.

Eventually, all these coordinates are put into relation with one another, following the elements and ways that an analog film projector functions as a model ("projected" onto the

² Cf. Thierry Kuntzel, "*Le défilement: A View in Close Up*," *Apparatus*, ed. Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, New York: Tanam Press, 1982.

projector in a metaphorical sense), so that the apparatus to a certain degree becomes the blueprint for the individual chapters of the film. Each chapter thus corresponds in a metonymic way to a part of the machinery of projection. In how it is constructed, the film symbolically reflects the structure of a projector itself, and, in a kind of mirroring process, it is projected back “onto” the projector in its parts.

At the same time, the question is raised as to how the functions of the analog projection apparatus can be transferred to contemporary forms of digital practice: that is, how an “old” machine appears again as a ghost within new media. What will become of the individual parts of the analog projector in the digital age? What of its spools, channels, lamps, and lenses, the mechanical parts? And how, if at all, can analog light be distinguished from digital?

The reference to questions of archival practice in artistic productions arises through the choice of films, which belong to an archive that itself can be seen, in analogy to the psychoanalytic discourses mentioned and psychic constellations of the characters, as the “psyche” of an institution, which is here symbolically used for the “cinema” per se. INVISIBLE PRODUCERS sees itself as an approach to a fleeting image, which—to paraphrase Kuntzel—“is always about to erase itself.”

“Between the space of the film-strip and the time of the projection, the film rubs out: movement erases its signifying process, and eventually, conceals some of the images which pass by too rapidly to be ‘seen,’ without, nevertheless, failing to produce a subliminal effect.”

Thierry Kuntzel, *Le défilement*

PROJECTION, LOVE, REPETITION

The title INVISIBLE PRODUCERS refers back to a lecture given in May 2012 by the British film theorist Laura Mulvey in the context of a Paris conference³ on the work of Morgan Fisher. In this lecture, Mulvey uses the work *Projection Instructions* (1976) to examine the role of the projector in Fisher’s films. *Projection Instructions* is a work that puts the—otherwise neglected, concealed—role of the projectionist within the cinematic set-up into

³ *Autour de Morgan Fisher: Un cinéma hors-champ?*, organized by Christa Blümlinger and Jean-Philippe Antoine, was held at Université Paris 8.

the centerpoint. The film itself give instructions for its own projection, which the projectionist is to follow. Every projection of the film is thus a one-time event under live conditions, which resembles a performance. In this context, Mulvey spoke of film projectors as “invisible producers” that remain out of sight of the moviegoers, while at the same time they produce the image that this sight is focused on. Since the movie audience, according to Mulvey, just wants to see what it desires, the mechanical, loud, and bulky projector has to be repressed, invisibly shut away in the projection booth. Desire thus not only plays an essential role in the production of projection, but also in the production of repression:

“The cinema’s most repressed mechanism is also the site of the manipulation of human perception that makes its marvelous effects come into being. It is there [in the projection process, C.R.] that the film receives a further layer of inscription in the form of scratches and dirt, bearing witness to the repetitive and ultimately damaging process of projection so that the ‘magic’ and the ‘illusion’ are overlaid by the film’s own aging.... In a normal cinema screening, the projection scratches give a historical dimension to the process of watching a film: the indexical, celluloid recorded images are degraded by other equally indexical marks, but ones without representational significance except as traces of film strip’s physical movement through the projector.”⁴

At the same time, projection represents the site of endless repetition: not least through the repetition of single images 24 times a second. To describe the model of cinematographic projection, Mulvey drew on E.T.A. Hoffmann’s famous dictum, who, in his novella *The Sandman*, spoke of “a seduction apparition that is brought to life by a mechanical interior.” This special kind of mechanics, according to Mulvey, can symbolically stand in for “all machines”—and also for film narration, and equally so, or at least that is what I am claiming here, for the psyche and the unconscious, which, following Deleuze, can also be understood as a machine, as a factory, as a site for producing repression. At the same time, this space of projection, in which the cinematic repressed is constituted, becomes the starting point for the mysterious magic of the cinema:

“When questioned about his 1976 film *Projection Instructions* by Scott MacDonald, Fisher

⁴ From an unpublished lecture that Mulvey gave on March 11, 2012 at the conference *Autour de Morgan Fisher: Un cinéma hors-champ?*, organized by Christa Blümlinger and Jean-Philippe Antoine, at Université Paris 8.

replied: 'But the projector has remained enshrined as an objective, almost scientific, instrument. Normal projection is a hidden assumption even in the few examples of avant-garde work that have taken projection as a subject, where, for example, the projector serves as a device that extrudes light or inflects the space through which the beam passes before it strikes the screen. Even then, the projector's autonomy as a mechanism that functions of itself remains inviolable. There's obviously nothing wrong with conventional projection, but I still find it strange that work of every kind, including advanced work, relies on correct projection. I wanted to see what could be done by bringing that standard into question: there is no correct way to show Projection Instructions. It is, so to speak, an objective film that gives the projectionist a chance to be an interpretive artist.'" ⁵

In his book *Filmtheorie zur Einführung* (with Malte Hagener, 2010),⁶ Thomas Elsaesser writes about the relationship between cinematographic projection and psychoanalytic projection:

"The idea of the cinema as a mirror became a central paradigm of film theory from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s. Two possible articulations sometimes overlap and are not always easily separated: on the one hand, the use of Sigmund Freud's theories of the unconscious (of the imaginary signifier) in

Jean-Louis Baudry and Christian Metz, and on the other hand, the appropriation of Jacques Lacan's idea of the mirror stage (that phase in early childhood that is so decisive for the formation of subjectivity), above all by feminist film theory. All of these psychoanalytically influenced approaches are based on the idea that the body in the cinema regresses to an earlier state. In the dark surroundings of the movie theater, the connection to reality gets lost, and the projection, which for Freud takes place in the imagination, is externalized in a quite literal sense."

In this paragraph, the line connecting the cinematographic projection and the psychoanalytic term projection is clearly drawn: "In the dark surroundings of the movie theater, the connection to reality gets lost, and the projection, which for Freud takes place

⁵ Laura Mulvey, *ibid.*

⁶ Thomas Elsaesser/Malte Hagener, *Filmtheorie zur Einführung*. Hamburg, Junius Verlag, 2008. The English version of this book is entitled *Film Theory: An Introduction Through the Sciences*. The citation here is, however, a translation of the German version, since it differs in several points from the published English version of this passage.

in the imagination, is externalized in a quite literal sense.” It is along this movement from inner to outer that INVISIBLE PRODUCERS unfolds its visual and discursive constellations.

CLOUDS, SHEEP, MUSES: THE DREAM OF ONE AWAKE...

“That is to say (we always come back to this), the dream of a man awake, a man who knows that he is dreaming, and who consequently knows he is not dreaming, who knows that he is at the cinema, who knows that he is not sleeping; since if a man who is sleeping is a man who does not know that he is sleeping, a man who knows that he is not sleeping is a man who is not sleeping.” Christian Metz, *Film and Dream*

What is the relationship between the transparent celluloid of the 35mm film strip to, for instance, a cloud in contemporary digital networks? If earlier, to push the analogy further, the clouds were reserved for the gods, they now belong to human beings, who live in social networks and whose clouds consist of various constellations of data. The film reel itself becomes a cloud: visual information that once could be organized in sequential single images today becomes part of a formless, changing cloud in the heavens of social networks. The looping of the projector itself, as machinery, is indeed seen as disappearing, but possibly entering into procedures of film narration in order to reappear again in certain films (for instance those of David Lynch): in films that are often based on looping, circular narrations, remaining without beginning or end, and instead—like some computer games—shifting levels and narrative in opening, circular veils of layers and the unresolved circumstances of the unconscious.

It is here that Hollis Frampton comes into play: clouds and sheep. It was Frampton who once claimed that cinema had now finally produced (or rather: “attracted”) its own muse. Her name is: insomnia, sleeplessness. Frampton’s very first film from 1962 is named for this, *Clouds Like White Sheep*, and has been lost. Cloud formations that evoke the outline of sheep, reminiscent of the technique of counting sheep when you can’t sleep. But insomnia, the new muse of the cinema, keeps the sleepless awake. That’s why it remains reserved to filmmakers to banish the ephemeral sheep in an act of magic or conjuration: as if they were sacrificed to insomnia so that the watcher can finally sink into sleep.

Frampton's lost film seems to be the invocation of a muse, and the sleeping need neither sheep nor projectors: they are dreaming.

In compliance with the title of the film, INVISIBLE PRODUCERS, the projector remains invisible as an object, even as it provides the structural plan of the film, just like Grifi's Anna, who is tracked so mercilessly by the director with his camera, is not shown so that another image of her can arise.

"We'd often go to the movies. We'd shiver as the screen lit up. More often we'd be disappointed. The images flickered. Marilyn Monroe looked terribly old. It saddened us. It wasn't the film we had dreamed, the film we all carried in our hearts, the film we wanted to make and, secretly, wanted to live."

Georges Perec, *The Things* (1965)