Back to the Wall: Home Video and Digital Decorating

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Abstract

This paper describes the experimental use of home video images as source materials for home decoration. It includes a brief description of the reasons for the experiment, as well as the equipment and software used. The remainder of the paper examines issues raised by the potentials offered by the availability of film titles in electronic form, and their use as sources in digital media.

Shortly after returning from an extended period away from my apartment, I decided that it was in dire need of reorganization. At first, this overhaul was confined to those rooms and furniture directly related to my work. However, what started as a matter of a new filing cabinet and moving my computer quickly developed into a re-decoration of the entire apartment. Having committed to this process, I decided there was no point in compromising. I allowed myself the luxury of purchasing new furniture, to mark my new status as an academic and to say good-bye to student life.

The theme of these new acquisitions was Napoleonic, allowing me to indulge a life-long fascination with Napoleon and Empire Style. This fascination has ebbed and flowed, but never disappeared. Like most interests that take an early hold, I have never been able to talk myself out of it, despite a growing realization of what the first empire meant to those who lived under it. It is, in short, an illogical hold, produced and continually reenforced by equally irrational associations. The most powerful of these other associations is an interest in classical music. This interest began at virtually the same time as my interest in Napoleon, and one of its first expressions was a devotion to Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture. Whether Napoleon served as my introduction to classical music, or Tchaikovsky's fanfares and marches made me interested in Napoleon is a secondary point. Whichever came first, they quickly reenforced one another.

Tchaikovsky's music was also important in the development of my interest in Empire Style and the painting tradition associated with it. Once I came across a recording of the 1812 Overture that had a reproduction of Meissonier's "The Battle of France" on the cover. In the painting, a disconsolate Napoleon at the end of his glory rides his famous white horse across a snowy landscape, as in a dream. He is followed by a group of officers wearing equally bewildered expressions. The painting was, of course, "wrong" for the cover, since the battle of France occurred two years later than the events commemorated by Tchaikovsky's music. However, the record cover demonstrated how the power of connotation (snow=Russia) can triumph over intention and accuracy. The fact that Napoleon conducted more than one winter campaign became less important than his association with a particular winter campaign, the retreat from Russia.

Such poetic truths have much greater emotional resonance than mere facts. They stick, like glue, transforming into the basis of a personal mythology. After some thirty years of nurturing this mythology, watching its branches creep into every cranny of my psyche, it has become impervious to criticism and rational comment. At this point, I know I identify with Napoleon, and that is enough. (I also know I will always associate Meissonier's painting with Russia, not France.) If that is the reason I choose to furnish my apartment with Empire memorabilia, so be it. At least its plentiful presence in Southern California suggests I am not the only one with delusions of stylistic grandeur.

However, if it was relatively easy to find furniture which suited this taste, finding the right props to accompany it proved more problematic. It was particularly difficult to find art works that matched the furniture. Military paintings are out of fashion, frequently very large and in any event beyond the budget of a research associate. Even reproductions of the more famous paintings of Napoleon's period proved elusive. I was ready to give up on the idea, or to settle for a less appropriate set of images, when I had an idea: why not use my computer to manipulate images from films set in the Napoleonic era, then print the results? This solution seemed particularly suitable, since in addition to giving my apartment the desired "look" it would help to bring together my different interests in military, political and art history, Napoleon, digital technologies and film. The resulting images would even have the extra "Post-
Modern” cachet of representing representations, covering the walls of the rooms in which the films unfold with pictures of themselves, mediated and transformed by my interpretation, interference, intervention.

Thus, the computer entered a world which it has no good reason to occupy, the subjective satisfactions of its owner. I have indulged in this personal reminiscence in order to contextualize this intrusion. My desire however, is not to focus on the negative, hegemonic aspects of this insinuation, but on what may be the greatest power digital technologies have provided consumers. Computers and their peripherals give us the ability to transform generally available, impersonal cultural products into personally meaningful expressions of interest. While William Mitchell has discussed the power digital imaging provides in transforming our faith in the photograph, he does not consider the potential emotional satisfactions such a sense of manipulative potential may provide. [1] Such potential will always be restricted by talent, access to equipment and personal desire. It nonetheless offers to the interested the capacity to change the environment to suit his/her view of it. I call this power “Digital Decorating” to convey the sense of its impact on the lived environment, the personal satisfactions it may provide and the slightly playful nature of the activity. While this ability has always been available to the artistically gifted, digital technologies enable those with only modest artistic abilities to produce works of high technical polish. In so doing, the line between producer and consumer becomes smudged. In that smudging lies the technologies’ potential.

Procedures—Equipment

This project began with several sources, chiefly Paramount Home Video’s CLV videodisc editions of King Vidor’s War and Peace and Ridley Scott’s The Duellists, as well as personal still photographs. Stills were scanned on an Epson 1200C color scanner. Video was captured on a PowerMac 8100/100 AV, using Adobe Premiere 4.0 for recording purposes and Adobe Photoshop 3.0 for still image manipulation. The PowerMac was connected to a videodisc player which had the ability to produce digital freeze-fields. The final images were printed on an Epson Color Stylus printer.

Selection

With the stylistic models of Gros, Gericault, Vernet and Meissonnier in mind, both War and Peace and The Duellists were viewed with an eye towards finding those shots with the most “painterly” compositions. This process was based on several assumptions:

1) That a work in movement such as a film will only incidentally record frames with the compositional precision and impact of paintings. Realistic paintings, from the first conceived as static views, strive to depict what Gilles Deleuze has called the “privileged moment,” the view that contains the maximum amount of information and compositional perfection. [2] Films may include frames with similar compositional effect, but in only rare instances is this effect deliberately planned. Instead, the viewer seeking privileged moments must examine shots frame-by-frame in order to find those that can stand alone as still images.

2) Both films and paintings work from at least two different compositional approaches, first noted by art historian Heinrich Wölfflin. [3] The first of these approaches, closed organization, designs images as self-sustained objects, with important compositional components frequently centered or placed at the vanishing point in the composition. The closed organization largely ignores the out-of-field in order to create the illusion of a whole with only minimal relationship to the outside. The art historical tradition of the Napoleonic period largely conforms to this type of organization, although both Gros and Gericault often created compositions with more fluid organization. (Vernet and Meissonier, coming later tend towards looser compositional organizations. See Marrinan [4].)

In film, the closed organization is frequently associated with “classical” styles, particularly the Hollywood Classical Style which reached its apogee in the 1930s and 1940s. [5] Although War and Peace dates from the 1950s, its director, King Vidor, was trained in this tradition, and the film overall exhibits a strong tendency towards closed visual organization.

Wölfflin associates his second form of organization, the “open” frame with those paintings that create the illusion of just “happening” to come across the recorded view. This effect is achieved through several devices. Among the more important are de-centered, frequently asymmetrical compositions; the use of objects at the edge of the picture only partially included in the field of view; looser figure organization, that tends to deemphasize the central subject, while giving subsidiary figures “stories” of their own. Most importantly in relation to cinema, the “open” organization also frequently imparts a sense of movement to static scenes. Wölfflin associates the open organization chiefly with the baroque, but many of his observations also apply to Romantic art like that of Gros and Gericault.

In cinema, the “open” organization is usually associated with films from the post-World War II era, particularly with Italian NeoRealism. The Duellists exhibits many of the conventions of the open organization, as applied to film, even though it immediately impresses as a “painterly” film. This
"openness" is expressed in the asymmetrical, de-centered compositions, and particularly in the frequent camera re-frames and zooms. These camera movements further discourage viewing the image as an object by constantly changing its center, seemingly dissolving the frame through perpetual reorganization.

3) It was also assumed that although films will frequently attempt to mimic known works of art explicitly or to evoke "art" through their styles (The Duellists is an example of this latter tendency [6]), such references provide no guarantee that shots scanned from such sources will work as self-sustained images. This assumption was both borne out and contradicted by the experiment. Some shots that immediately impress the viewer as "painterly" in motion, did produce images that could stand alone as static compositions. Frequently, however, the most interesting still images derived from frames from shots that did not immediately announce themselves as "painterly." Such frames, usually buried and lost in forward movement can be said to be "discovered" by the "digital decorating" process.

4) Because this experiment began in order to produce new images, rather than to provide illustrative examples from particular films or paintings, selection was free from those constraints usually involved in the selection of movie frames for enlargement. The first consideration was formal, the success of a particular frame as an image. Only secondarily did the experiment address if the selected frames typified experience of the film as a whole.

**Video Capture**

After selection, source shots were recorded as Quicktime movies, using Adobe Premiere, at a window size of 640 by 480 pixels at 72 dots per inch. Although the source laserdisc player could provide a digital field output, shots were recorded in motion in order to preserve the full resolution of the NTSC signal. After being digitized, each Quicktime movie was examined frame-by-frame until finding one that exhibited optimum compositional organization. These frames were then "exported" as PICT files for re-opening in Photoshop.

This capture method proved problematic. Because they were recorded at the full 640 x 480 screen size, and thereby contained large amounts of information, the Quicktime movies frequently did not preserve full-motion. Although a compression scheme (such as Apple's Cinepak compressor) would have smoothed motion, it would have done so at the expense of picture quality. Since the final goal was to produce the best frame possible, this sacrifice seemed worth the loss of intermediate frames. However, as a result, the choice of frames was limited to those actually captured in the digitization process. Therefore, although the final images maintain picture quality, more optimally organized shots might have been available, but dropped in the digitization process.

Also, NTSC video produces an interlaced signal, i.e. the full resolution of the video frame is produced by alternate scans of odd and even pixels. Because of this process, and because it runs at a rate of 30 frames per second (as opposed to film's rate of 24 frames per second) there is no necessary correlation between a frame of video and a film frame. Thus, a single video frame can include information from two consecutive film frames. Digitized versions of such video frames display a noticeable "smear" of lines across portions of the image in movement.

While Adobe Photoshop provides a de-interlacing filter that removes this pixellation, it does so by eliminating either all the odd or all the even pixels. The resulting image, while no longer pixellated from movement, provides only half the resolution of the original. The program compensates for the missing pixels by interpolating the information (examining the pixels to either side and making a best "guess" how to fill in the missing pixel) or by duplicating an adjoining pixel. The results resemble the digital frozen field generated by the laserdisc player. In other words, the advantages of recording in motion are lost.

**Image Manipulation**

After exporting the images as PICT files, they were re-opened from Adobe Photoshop for re-touching and further manipulation. To maintain resolution, all manipulation was done at the original, 640 x 480 frame size, and reduced only for printing purposes. Since the value of these images as source materials lay in their Realistic properties, i.e., in their convincing portrayal of spatial reality, the goals
of the manipulation were restricted largely to the creation of new, equally realistic images which could nonetheless "pass" as paintings. Thus, the full collage capabilities offered by Photoshop were not appropriate to the task. Nonetheless, the program's capabilities for producing nearly seamless mergers between images became crucial in the production of two of the images.

The first of the images was produced through the combination of a captured video frame (Figure 1) and a photograph of a cloudy Los Angeles sky (Figure 2).

The frame in Figure 1 was taken from the middle of a camera movement. Thus the shot exhibited some amount of digital "smearing" produced by video interlacing. The first task was to remove these smear lines, either through Photoshop's "de-interlace" filter, or by re-painting those portions of the image effected by the movement. Since in this case the effected portions of the image were relatively small, and therefore required only a minimal time commitment, the latter option was chosen.

Second, in order to produce a more effective composition, the image was cropped from its 1.33 aspect ratio to proceed a more horizontally oriented image.

Third, in order to compensate for the low-contrast nature of the video image, and also to increase the "painterly" qualities of the shot, both the contrast and saturation were increased. The combination had the desired effect of an overall enrichment of tone, particularly in the fabrics worn by Napoleon and his officers.

Fourth, in order to heighten the drama of the scene, the background sky, largely washed out in the video original, was replaced with the clouds from the Los Angeles photograph. In order to make a more effective join, some "feathering" (smoothing out of differences) of the seam was necessary in order to make it appear that the clouds were actually present. The resulting image is shown in Figure 3. (The results of the combination necessarily are more difficult to notice in these black-and-white, low-resolution prints.)

This first example was relatively simple to produce because of the low-contrast, high key lighting of the original frame. Since light was diffused overall in the image, it was easy to produce the illusion of the cloud-covered sky, since such a sky could well produce the type of lighting contained in the rest of the image. Since there was no strong source light in either image, their combination was relatively successful.

In the second example, however, different lighting schemes and compositional organizations problematize image combination. Figure 4 shows one frame as captured from video. Note that despite the low-contrast nature of the video image, the film image records a relatively bright, summer sky, with strong sunlight. Figure 5 was taken from a scene filmed under a cloudy, late autumn sky. The goal was to produce an image in which the hussar in Figure 5 seemed to cross the frame from Figure 4 in order to produce a third image of general "charging cavalry" which could stand on its own.

Several operations were necessary to achieve this effect. Space does not allow detailed discussion of

Figure 2: Photograph of Los Angeles sky.

Figure 3: The combined image.

Figure 4: The background image before horizontal flipping.
them all. Among the more important was a horizontal "flipping" of the image in Figure 4, now made into a background for the charging hussar. The hussar, in turn, had to be "cut-out" from Figure 5. Because of the different lighting schemes in the two original images, Photoshop's lighting filter, which allows the user to assign different types of light, direction, intensity, throw and other visual properties, was applied to the background image to produce the illusion of a more low-contrast lighting scheme. As further compensation, the colors in the hussar were made more saturated, and the overall contrast increased. The combined effect of boosting the contrast of one portion of the image while decreasing it in another had the desired effect of lessening the visual differences between them. The results are shown in Figure 6.

Back to the Wall

I have argued elsewhere that one of the effects of laserdiscs particularly and home video generally, is to shift the emphasis of our view of the film texts they contain from that of a process unfolding in a theater, to that of an object we can hold in our hands. [7] This effect can be understood in terms of a the decline of aura described by Walter Benjamin. [8] In Benjamin’s description, previously sacred, semi-religious artistic experiences are rendered more accessible, understandable, and disposable by the availability made possible by mechanical reproduction and mass distribution. Benjamin deals explicitly with cinema only as an example of an art form based on mechanical principles, and therefore counter to the usual process of artistic fetishization. However, he also speaks of the "phony" aura of the movie star as one source of the inappropriate use of the cinematic image. It is from this observation that we can argue that home video works to desacralize the film image through a similar process of "familiarity breeding contempt."

There are, however, problems in applying Benjamin's ideas too literally to cinematic exhibition. First, to argue that home video helps to "deconstruct" cinema implies that there is a film qua film which remains unchanged. A Benjaminian approach to home video assumes that the film text remains constant, even as it becomes more available through changed modes of reception. Furthermore, to view any text as a static set of denotations privileges it over the spectator in the production of meaning. This position is increasingly difficult to argue in the light of post-structuralist theory, which has drawn attention to the multivalence of all texts. In particular, it is no longer possible to deny the reader or spectator's role in making sense of a work of art. If post-structuralist theory is correct, then, a change in the mode of reception should have an effect on meaning, since such a change necessarily imposes changes in perception on the viewer. If meaning is changed, one can no longer speak confidently speak of a “decline of aura” since aura is integrally part of the initial mode of reception.

To take a relatively crude example, suppose we view a 35mm print of a film in a dark, first-run theater, with a full audience, state of the art sound and a conscientious projectionist. That experience would be very different from, say, exactly the same print projected in bright sunlight, against a white sheet on a street full of honking cars. To the extent the text exists under such circumstances, it cannot be perceived in the same way as in the first-run theater. The mode of reception has changed so fundamentally that the “text” has shifted from the events unfolding on the screen to the drama of the traffic jam created by its projection. Certainly no "aura" would attach to the text under these circumstances; arguably, neither would meaning.

In short, while the status of the text as an object to be venerated and fetishized cannot be discounted, least of all in an art as technologically based as film, neither can the text's existence be said to reside intrinsically in the object. The reels of film of which it consists sit inert, and we are largely indifferent to
them. If we are to speak of the “aura” of a cinematic text, it cannot be dissociated from the context in which it is received. This context includes the theater, sound system, particular audiences and, finally, individual viewers.

At the same time, however, the process we call “home video” is not so different from theatrical film that we can deny the disinterest in the film that may result from its repetition on video. There seems to be an insurmountable paradox here. Under Benjamin’s scenario, “aura” exists because of the uniqueness of a work of art, its physical state in space, its status as an object. Film, on the other hand, seems to defy this definition, since the “object” of the film has little value apart from its viewing circumstance, its unfolding in time.

If we are to apply the Benjaminian model to film and home video, we must revise the definition of the text and its relationship to aura. The “aura” of a film is produced by the text (that is, the aggregate of meaning that a film reveals as it unfolds in time), commentary around it, and its circumstances of exhibition. Removing a film from that theatrical context removes aura because it removes the film from where aura resides, the theater, not because it has become more accessible through mass distribution. The theatrical film provides a temporal process which seeks to insinuate itself into the viewer’s imagination. Whether viewed favorably or not, this process is uncontrollable once it begins. It can be resisted, but it remains fixed to the extent that we can do nothing but leave to register our disapproval. As this process unfolds, a second, imaginary object is created from the projection of the concrete object, the reels of film that we do not normally see. For the sake of clarity, we will call this second object the “image object,” and recognize that its spatial existence results entirely from its temporal unfolding.

Films on video retain their triple status of process, concrete object and “image-object,” but shift in relative emphasis. Home video changes the physical form of the concrete object, subjects the “image-object” to the new technical requirements of the television screen and preserves the process only at the cost of the viewing context. The uncontrollable temporal process, paramount to theatrical exhibition, becomes subject to the direct control of the viewer, who can start or stop the video at any time. The reels of film we never see are now not only present in the form of the cassette or disc; they must be handled by the consumer in the same way a projectionist must handle the reels in a theater. The cinematic experience takes on a literally graspable form. Even the “image-object” of the projected film becomes transformed by its realization on the small, low-resolution television screen. Furthermore, the site of the “image-object’s” appearance has changed from a wall (which remains largely invisible in the darkened circumstances of projection) to another object, the television set, which never fully disappears in the act of home video “projection.”

To the extent we are aware of the objective status of a film in a theater, it is in relation to the “image-object,” itself a product of the temporal process of its own unfolding. Home video, on the other hand, foregrounds the text’s existence in space first by existing aggressively as an object (tape or disc) and second by making us aware of its place in our homes (on a television set that must be positioned for optimal sound and image quality).

This new status of the film/video text as a primarily spatial rather than temporal artwork suggests why the “phony” aura of a Hollywood film does not exist on home video—it has been removed from its context. The aura producing mechanisms of the theater, left behind, are concentrated on the “image-object’s” which is integrally tied to its realization of the particular space of the theater. The concrete object of the reels of film is suppressed from our awareness.

On the other hand, home video’s assertive existence as object-before-process also suggests why Benjamin is relevant to a discussion of the video’s packaging and advertising. In an attempt to reestablish aura through physical presentation, highly-priced “special editions” lavish as much care on the packaging of the object itself as to the “film” their boxes contain. Just as the decor of the theatrical spaces dresses the “image-object” in its super-polished technical aura, or its palatial grandeur, so too the special edition package wraps the video object in multiple layers of connotative class. The equivalent to theatrical “aura” in home video does not lie in the expensive equipment mistakenly purchased to duplicate the cinematic. It lies in the hard boxes, lush photographs, lobby cards and production art that enterprising publishers include to create the object’s “special” status.

If these suppositions are correct, the home video/film text operates under a different utilitarian principle than a theatrical film. A process, in addition to being uncontrollable, is dynamic, difficult to fix in place, resistant to analysis and therefore something special. An object invites manipulation to the extent that its component parts can be removed, reconfigured and reassembled. A process gives the sense of never being quite understood. At that moment we believe we have comprehended it, it eludes us, slipping into a perversely fascinating spectacle of the aleatory and ineffable. An object may prove equally elusive, but because it sits still, we can begin to pick it apart, jam our fingers in its nooks and crannies.

This distinction, of course, depends on having
Home video begins this process by providing an easy means to stop, start, pause, freeze, rewind and so on. This is also, however, where home video’s contribution ends. Its capacities to manipulate the image are considerable. The final product, though, is the images as recorded, impersonal, alienated, fixed in place. Even subjected to the whims of our projection, home video’s images remain someone else’s. What’s more, they are still on the TV set, dependent on machinery for access. They are, in the logic they set into action, not convenient enough.

It is logical given home video’s purpose to supply film texts to a domestic setting, that most of the critical work using the medium does not deal with home video at all in order to talk about the film it contains. It is equally logical that the first flush of detailed film textual analysis based on home video should use models derived from critics, such as Christian Metz, Roland Barthes, Stephen Heath or David Bordwell interested in defining film’s constituent parts of meaning. This phase, however, should probably be seen as transitional. This transitional nature derives not just from the interim nature of the technology employed (frequently a laserdisc player controlled by a computer) but even more fundamentally from the inadequate view of the medium’s potential. This lack of vision stems directly from the inability to transcend the film text, to recognize the re-definition it has undergone and the further transformation of which it is capable with the use of digital technologies.

To put it another way: most uses of digital technology in film studies have been thwarted by the will to understand the process and “image-object.” It is fixated on meaning, and therefore cannot move beyond the “image-object” to understand the concrete object, the video tape or disc, as a source for new production. At 30 frames per second, the average feature film offers over 200,000 frames for manipulation. The number of sequences is limited only by the potential re-editing of shots in as many combinations as the user likes. Add to this the possibilities offered by computer software, and any film becomes a lodestone of nearly limitless potential. By attempting to break films into representational parts, critics guarantee only at best that they will duplicate that meaning, never move beyond it because they insist on perceiving the video as a film text.

While not all viewers may move beyond passive consumption to viewing video as a database of images and sequences, such use is built into home video’s shift in emphasis in the film text from process to prop. To break the film into constituent stills merely extends the logic that first motivates putting VCRs into pause (or, indeed, to break the process into constituent pieces of meaning). This realization of potential may first occur accidentally, when a frame randomly chosen for pause reveals a compositional life of its own. Or, it may result from a deliberate choice. In both cases, the frozen frame restores cinema to its material reality, its existence as a sequence of still images. This fact is frequently overlooked in the drive to privilege meaning and narrative, but the narrative has meaning only because each image can convince it occurs in reality.

To take those stills and digitize them, and to print the results and hang them on the wall merely closes the circle and returns cinema to where it began: on the wall, as a “painting.” Each time we hang a picture on a wall, we remember painting’s origins in murals. Linear perspective, the key to cinema’s capacity to produce the illusion of reality started there too, in the first efforts to produce the illusion of architectural space retreating beyond the picture plane. Painting eventually began to shrink, from the mural to the wall-size canvas, from the large-painting, to the easel painting, to the cameo portrait. [9] Cinema, until the age of home video, maintained its position on the wall, still impressing with its depth and richness, its assertive presence as a public art, murals in motion.

Home video began to change that, not just by bringing movies into the home (broadcast television did that as well) but by doing so in a personally controllable form. By offering the possibility of control, and by shifting the emphasis from time to space, from experience to object, it opened the door to the further manipulations of digital technology. The special, public, “sacred” character of watching a film has been transformed from an all-encompassing, engulfing process, to an occasionally interesting one subjected to the stop and go realities of daily life, to being pinned back on the wall, frozen in place. “Film” has disintegrated into a set of images and sequences.

To return to Benjamin, for a moment, it remains critical to recognize that the wall to which film images have returned is not encased by the Gothic arches of the religious setting for fetishized works of art. Nor do these “new” images sit on walls framing the marble-lined corridors of city hall. Least of all do the images sit as the focal point of the gilded public theater. They lie flat against our walls, dirty with the grime of everyday use. Digital manipulation thus restores the possibility of the consumer and viewer as a creator, someone who not only receives and constructs the text in his or her head, but who breaks it down and re-builds it to personal needs and desires.

If, like home video, digital technologies stopped at the point of transmission, did nothing but provide a set of files, they would offer little more than a new mode of consumption. It is because they offer each viewer the possibility of becoming a producer that
digital technologies can be spoken of as creative tools. At a stroke, the debates about the relative importance of the text versus the reader/viewer disappear as the person on the receiving end takes up the tools to become a creator.

This is one context in which to understand the personal computer, a machine that, despite its name, succeeded largely because of its ease of adaptation to corporate and bureaucratic needs. The first stage of its adaptation to “personal” use was in fact, more the reverse, the twisting of the consumer’s free time and desires to the bureaucratic fixations of word processing, spreadsheets and accounting. Had it remained nothing more than this, it would have had no more artistic validity than a calculator, no more potential for personal enrichment than a microwave oven.

Of course, the calculator and the microwave are computers. The difference lies in their interfaces, or more precisely, in the current generation of personal computer graphic user interfaces which invite not only the traditional spectator position of voyeuristic detachment but also encourage the urge to shape, change, create. In the process, the computer provides the user with the emotional satisfactions of personal creation. It gives the consumer the possibility of being not just a spectator (the traditional cinematic position) or a reactor (the position of limited interactivity) or even a Barthesian writer (the position of hypertextual interaction) but a producer, someone who by the act of selection promises new images, stories, videos and more. If it does nothing else, the personal computer performs a service by demonstrating that “interactivity” carried to its conclusion, can only mean a personalized “production” that transforms exploitation into expression in the service of private needs and desires.

References