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Experiences. The Transmedial Expansion of the Matrix Universe

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Abstract. Over time the Matrix universe has expanded, growing ever larger. Two aspects of this phenomenon will be highlighted here. Firstly, the transmedia narrative will be examined, which filmmakers Larry and Andy Wachowski have taken to the very limit possible. The narrative transcends different media platforms illustrating how narratives morph and re-morph into different forms, something which media analyst Henry Jenkins refers to as our contemporary convergence culture. What does it mean to have a complete movie experience in today's world? Secondly, the role of interactive spectator, the interaction that is developed in the production of games and accompanying media, will be examined. Close attention will be paid to how the media world of Matrix actualizes the shifts from spectator to participant, player, and media activist, which today take place in a variety of contexts. What do these shifts mean and where do the activities take place? Normally, phenomena such as transmedia storytelling and shifts from spectator to users, players and media activists are associated with the popular mainstream culture. It is, therefore, important to keep the discussion open to the inclusion of all forms of media. Both of these aspects will be discussed from the point of view of contemporary art illustrating that the same phenomena exist in all media contexts.

To say that expectations were high when *The Matrix* (Andy and Larry Wachowski) was released in cinemas in 1999 would be putting it mildly. A contributing factor to the buzz surrounding the release of the movie was the producer's unique marketing strategy, which asked the question: "What is the Matrix?" The question itself became a kind of pleasurable homework assignment, a puzzle to tackle, activities not often associated with a broad commercial film. If expectations were high before the release of the first Matrix movie, they were perhaps even higher for the sequel, *The Matrix Reloaded*. In May 2003 it was finally time to return to the world created in the first film, hopefully to get a few more answers to some of the questions it had raised. But it would not be as simple

as sitting in the theatre and passively watching the film. Certain parts of the story would be explained in the sequel; others, however, could only be found in the game *Enter the Matrix* (which also came out in May 2003) the plot of which was woven into the second Matrix film. In June 2003 *Animatrix* (Peter Chung, Andy Jones et al., script by the Wachowski brothers) was also released. *Animatrix* consisted of nine animated short films which were created when the Wachowski brothers were in Japan promoting the first Matrix film. The Animé films were marketed as "a unique opportunity to broaden your knowledge of the Matrix." For more specifics, "See *Final Flight of the Osiris*, which is the platform for the film *Matrix Reloaded* and the game *Enter The Matrix*". The final part of the trilogy, *The Matrix Revolutions*, was also released in November 2003. The philosophical questions raised by the first Matrix were clarified as the audience was finally able to assemble all three parts of the story. Taken together, these parts formed their own fictional world.

The Trilogy, *Animatrix*, and the Matrix comic books, which were also released in 2003, would be followed by even more games. In 2005, *The Matrix: Path of Neo* and *The Matrix Online*, a MMORPG-game played online via the Internet, were also released.[1] During the same period, a wealth of home produced films and videos put together by creative fans appeared on the Internet for general consumption. Proposals for how the fourth part might look were put forth, alternative endings to the Trilogy's parts, as well as variations on how the films could be integrated with other films were discussed and debated all over the Internet. Over time the Matrix universe has expanded, growing ever larger. [Figs. 1–2.] Two aspects of this phenomenon will be highlighted. Firstly, the transmedia narrative will be examined, which filmmakers Larry and Andy Wachowski have taken to the very limit possible. The narrative transcends different media platforms illustrating how narratives morph and re-morph into different forms, something which media analyst Henry Jenkins refers to as our contemporary convergence culture (2006). What does it mean to have a complete movie experience in today's world? Secondly, the role of active spectators, the interaction that is developed in the production of games and accompanying media, will be examined. Close attention will be paid to how the media world of Matrix actualizes the shifts from spectator to participant, player, and media activist, which today take place in a variety of contexts. What do these shifts mean and where do the activities take place? Normally, phenomena such as transmedia storytelling and shifts from spectator to users, players and media activists are

[1] MMORPG is an abbreviation for Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game.

associated with the popular mainstream culture. It is, therefore, important to keep the discussion open to the inclusion of all forms of media. Both of these aspects will be discussed from the point of view of contemporary art illustrating that the same phenomena exist in all media contexts.

A Complete Film Experience

Media plays an important role in our lives. By describing our relation to media, we also understand more about our life situation in general. The evolution of home movie systems is a good example of how our use of media and new technology has changed our lives. Since the 1950s films have been available to watch on television, yet surprisingly little has been written about our relationship to this activity (Klinger 1998, 4). For decades, the film industry has argued that the optimum film experience is inextricably linked to the cinema. Today, this notion has been seriously challenged by competition from home theatres as well as by other technology. Home movie systems are marketed with the claim that they do not only reproduce a complete film experience, but they provide a film experience even stronger than that offered by the cinema (Klinger 1998, 7). And, of course, 3D is one efficient strategy to again claim the advantages of the cinema theatre for the ultimate cinematic experience.

If we compare film and television research we see that the activity of watching television has been studied most frequently. To explain why Film Studies has focused more on "the object of viewing" rather than the "context of viewing," film and television professor Mark Jancovich has this to say: "The study of television, unlike that of film, seems to have a more easily identifiable social context – the domestic living room – the cultural politics of which are therefore more immediately open to analysis" (Jancovich, Faire, Stubbings 2003, 4).[2] In other words, Film Studies has paid less attention to the viewer's actual social position and more to a hypothetical audience construct. Accordingly, one begins largely from the point of view of an imaginary audience which one assumes has the same kind of response to the content of a film.

Today, the storylines of movies and television series are increasingly interwoven with story elements that appear in other medium, so that the narrative transcends different media platforms (i.e. transmedia storytelling). This will, of course, have consequences for the way in which these objects are studied, as well

[2] Jancovich refers to David Morley when he speaks about "the object of viewing" and "the context of viewing", taken from: David Morley1992, 157–158. London: Routledge.

as for how the public and its experience are studied. Quite clearly we are in the midst of a generational shift when it comes to understanding the meaning of film experience – a generational shift which must be understood both in relation to the audience's age and also to film and media arts itself. As the stories cross over different media platforms, a number of phenomena emerge that must be described and analyzed. How, for example, the media works – individually and in relation to its content, but also how audiences are positioned within different media contexts. The most influential research on how the movie experience has been shaped by the contexts and cultures surrounding it has been devoted to early film history (Charney and Schwartz 1995). Together with the enrichment of transmedia storytelling and the development of media strategies which take one story and infuse multiple media with the story, it becomes apparent that in today's world, it is impossible to study public experience on the basis of individual media and the rooms in which they are viewed. If we previously considered studying film experience from movie audiences and movie theatres, television experiences from television programs, television viewers and living rooms, art experiences only from artwork, art audience and galleries, it can be shown that to view transmedia will, at the very least, be problematic as the limits of both expression, audience and viewing room are transgressed.

Henry Jenkins, who has long studied popular culture, points to the Matrix phenomenon as an example of the wide appeal of a commercial film, whereas in a European art film the main point is to understand, or grasp, the film's content: "To get it or not" (Jenkins 2006, 93–94). But to grasp the content means that one must grasp the entirety of the context. Unlike the European art film, self reflectively pointing to its own significance, *The Matrix* stretches out like a labyrinth with numerous ways to enter. It shapes a universe not only for the viewer to absorb, to embrace, but one to which s/he can also contribute. *The Matrix* as a phenomenon shows the contextual and conceptual creation of meaning which is contained in today's (multiple media) film experience.

An important difference between a more production-oriented vision of film experience and the transmedia experience concerns expectations and media strategies. Before *The Matrix* was released, expectations had been raised via several different channels. To a major extent these expectations were created by marketing strategies where the trailer played a very important role. For example, the soundtrack for *The Matrix* trailer contained language that promised a film with existential undertones: "What is the Matrix? The Matrix is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth. What truth?" What

world view or which world views will the film invite us to consider? Interpretations have been many. Most likely it was the ambiguity factor which worked so well worldwide. The last two sentences in the trailer suggest that the audience does not only see the film but also actively assume Neo's (the protagonist's) task of understanding what the Matrix is: "Unfortunately no one can be told what the Matrix is. You have to see it for yourself." We hear the voice at the same time as the film's website is shown, the now legendary *Matrix* green DNA-like alphanumeric font code: www.whatisthematrix.com. Over time this official website for *The Matrix* has expanded from the first film to accommodate the entire Trilogy and beyond that, the comic books and media games. Today, the website contains an element of mystery (or perhaps lack of clarity) which is most likely an attempt to mirror the aesthetics and themes of the Matrix films. Ultimately, it is designed primarily as a marketing tool to induce us, the audience, to buy more Matrix products.

Film marketing via the Internet plays an increasingly important role in creating expectations. The limits are diffuse when we consider whether this adds something to the experience. An example of a marketing strategy which uses certain activities designed to somehow contribute to the experience can be found on the website www.hatagbg.se. The Swedishfilm *Hata Göteborg* (Robert Lillhonga, 2007) is presented as "A comedic drama about masculinity at its worst." By clicking on the box that says "Who are you? Take the test!" and "Do you go your own way?" the viewer can take a variety of tests which help determine which of the film's characters comes closest to his own. It's possible that the website could contribute to creating identification with one or more of the film's characters (whether you see the movie before or after visiting the site) but the activity hardly adds anything to the film's narrative.

The film *Donnie Darko* (Richard Kelly, 2001), however, is an example of a movie where both the website and the Director's Cut version make a very direct contribution to the film experience. Film and television professor Geoff King, in his book with the same title as the movie, tries to sort out the mechanisms which influenced the classifying of the film as cult (King 2007). He emphasizes the nightly screenings at the Pioneer Theatre in New York's East Village, which were continuous until the Director's Cut was released, as well as how the story's explicit openness and high degree of ambivalence lent itself to fan participation (King 2007, 21). He writes extensively on how the extra textual contributions to the story on both the website, as well as other sites on the Internet, in addition to the Director's Cut version of the film with its cult status, presumes an active search

on the part of movie fans (King 2007, 22–23, but recurring through the entire book). On the website www.donniedarkofilm.com, it states: "Pay close attention. You could miss something," as an admonition or clue that there is something special to discover; here exist details beyond the film's narrative. Knowledge of details builds a sort of trust fund between the audience and film. Later, when the book *The Philosophy of Time Travel* appeared, the DVD material not only provided detail but also communicated the underlying philosophy, to the understanding of which King attaches great importance in order to intensify the insight over and above that of the film experience.

The function of trailers and websites is undergoing a change in at least two essential areas. Instead of merely describing the film's story, encouraging us to go and see the film, they contribute to it in different ways. Rather than presenting something ready-made for the passive theatre viewer, they ask the spectator to immerse himself in materials from different media platforms. To illustrate the generational shift as it applies to the "experience," Jenkins quotes Danny Bilson, an influential insider in the Hollywood gaming industry:

"If there is something I love, I want it to be bigger than just those two hours in the movie theatre or a one hour a week experience on TV. I want a deepening of the universe. ... I want to participate in it. I've just been introduced to the world in the film and I want to get there, explore it. You need that connection to the world to make participation exciting (Jenkins 2006, 106)."

The creators of *The Matrix* and *Donnie Darko* obviously share Bilson's point of view. Both films require spectator activity as part of the experience, necessary in order to grasp the whole of the content. Activity is obvious when it comes to television, video and computer games. It is also clear that in many cases the games act as links to the films. Whether or not the games add anything to the film's story or vice versa is not as obvious. Most examples after all show that one product does not necessarily function as an added incentive in the sales of another. The audience does not simply buy into all marketing tricks. The instances where the audience has responded to a story in the same way as it did with *The Matrix* are not as numerous as it may sometimes appear.[3] The public simply stays away if they don't find the content sophisticated or interesting enough. Accepting the challenge to go further with the experience via different media differs substantially from seeing a film or playing a game with similar content. You can also ask yourself how far the public is prepared to go to participate in a fictional universe or film experience. Jenkins again:

[3] In spite of that discussion, it can be worth noting that the Matrix games have been criticized as less interesting from a game perspective.

"Transmedia storytelling is the art of world making. To fully experience any fictional world, consumers must assume the role of hunters and gatherers, chasing down bits of the story across media channels, comparing notes with each other via online discussion groups, and collaborating to ensure that everyone who invests time and effort will come away with a richer entertainment experience. Some would argue that the Wachowski brothers, who wrote and directed the three Matrix films, have pushed transmedia storytelling farther than most audience members were prepared to go (Jenkins 2006, 21)."

By discussing the phenomenon of *The Matrix* and other films in relation to trailers and websites, I have tried to clarify how different movie experiences are structured today and how they increasingly require that the viewer actively engage within a broader context. We now turn to another media context to see if any parallels exist between popular culture and the way the art world structures film and art experiences today. To do so, we will examine how the Swedish artist and writer, Magnus Bärtås, chooses to show one of his works.

The Context of Exhibition and its Significance

Magnus Bärtås has long worked on a project which he calls *Who is?*. It is a series of films about both well known and unknown people he depicts through a kind of essay reportage which during the project has evolved and been exhibited in several different ways. To simplify, you could say that it depicts the lives of individuals while exploring the biographical form. *Who is?* has its origins in a number of texts composed of simple notes on twenty lines which Bärtås had written over a period of time. At a certain point, he realized he needed a form, a method for telling the stories of the people he had been meeting. The texts were to be presented in the form of an installation on a reading apparatus, as well as on signs, banners and on furniture intended for the purpose of reading (benches, tables, and chairs) in different contexts, including libraries. He was later to look up several of the people depicted in the texts and consequently changed the medium from written text to film. From the notes which he had already taken, he allowed those individuals to play themselves filtered through his experience of them. One of the films was named *Who is Zdenko Buzek?* and is thus the result of the artist and his objects/subject working together to recreate the artist's impression and memory of Zdenko Buzek through Buzek playing himself.

The staging of Bärtås's notes was produced in 2003 by the Filmform Foundation within the framework for the project *Sex vågade livet / The Magnificent Six* – in

collaboration with Swedish Television, the Swedish Film Institute and the Future of Culture. The film has since been shown in many different galleries, art institutions and museums.[4] By looking at the list of screenings on Bärtås's website, you can see the number of art institutions, in the traditional meaning, where the film has been shown. It has also been shown in contexts where art is not traditionally shown. Television is still, on the whole, an unlikely place to view art films. On the 5th of July in 2003 Bartås's film was shown on Swedish Television. It has also been shown at cinemas, which is not the usual venue for video art, although there have been exceptions. For example, *Sex vågade livet / The Magnificent Six* was shown at the Zita Cinema in Stockholm, Haga Cinema in Gothenburg and the Curzon Cinema in London. The film comprises a total of six films and can also be purchased on DVD as *Sex vågade livet* for approximately 100 Swedish crowns. For five Swedish crowns, the film can be viewed on the Internet at *www.glimz.net*, a film-on-demand-service for Scandinavian short films and quality documentaries.[5] Yet another way to see the work is via a multi-media agency called Agence Topo in Montreal.[6] The agency redrafts works of art adapting them to the computer as a medium. They translated some of the film's linearity to segments which are clickable. In 2007 the film was presented in yet another way in Tokyo. In the manner of the Benshi tradition with a narrator for silent movies Bärtås had a narrator read the text while the film was shown as performance.

Who is Zdenko Buzek? is an example of an art event occurring through many contexts, in a variety of media and exhibition practices.[7] *Who is Zdenko Buzek?* is, therefore, a work of art that can be seen on the television sofa, a chair in the cinema, at the gallery, in the museum's darkened rooms and on the computer. We may assume that the audience experiences the work in very different ways depending on the form the exhibition takes. Likewise the audience will differ greatly depending on how the work is exhibited. And very likely the meaning of the work will vary according to these different contexts. This raises a number of questions: Which audience sees the work on television, in a museum, at the cinema or on the Internet? How does the audience react to the same work shown at different locations? Today, questions about where an audience sees the work, in which medium, and how their experiences differ, the linking together and

[4] Home page for Magnus Bärtås, www.magnus-bartas.se/index.htm (Checked 13 May, 2008).

[5] Payment for these films can be made via telephone, by invoice or with credit card.

[6] Home page for *Who Is?* Re-enacted Biographies, www.agencetopo.qc.ca/whois (Checked 13 May 2008).

[7] Bärtås also works with an art research project at the art college Valand in Gothenburg concerning this and other films included in the *Who is?*-series. See: www.valand.qu.se/forskning/doktorander.html#magnus (Available May 13, 2008)

colouring of it, are important to study. They are central to our understanding of contemporary image culture and its relation to experience. We may in point of fact ask ourselves where the experience of Zdenko Buzek begins and ends, just as we can ask ourselves where the experience of *The Matrix* begins and ends.

We cannot compare *Who is Zdenko Buzek?* to *The Matrix* where the story crosses over different media platforms and further where the audience collects more and more pieces of the story, adding them to its fund of information. *Who is Zdenko Buzek?* is always the same story but viewed through different media in different contexts. It is an event or a film which is viewed in an ever wider context. It can be stated that the perception of a work of art associated with a single original, existing in one place, is becoming rare. According to that tradition, a visit to the Louvre is required to experience Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* (*La Gioconda*, 1503–06). Arrows point the way throughout the museum guiding visitors in their search to find and experience the only "true" painting. The amount of references and copies of the *Mona Lisa* certainly creates a "mobile context", but they primarily contribute to the myth of the original (Benjamin 1936). Although the consumer culture of the *Mona Lisa* is enormous, the original still exists behind armoured glass.

The similarity between *Who is Zdenko Buzek?* and its many installation incarnations, and transmedia storytelling illustrates, as does the film, *The Matrix,* that narrative takes on different meanings in different contexts, that the many ways to view it together creates the context of the work. A spectator who sees only the first Matrix film and nothing more can be on a similar viewing level as a spectator who sees *Who is Zdenko Buzek?* once in a single context. A serious Matrix fan who actively looks for the story's numerous riddles and answers can be compared to someone who follows, sees, and compares Bärtås's work in a variety of venues and thus can create a story that reaches further than the film's original narrative. The audience will, in both cases, depending on the variety of input, have a variety of experiences and activities. That said, we move on to another contemporary art work which illustrates the positioning of the viewer in a different way.

The Use of Media in Art

The All Seeing Eye. The Easy Teenage Version (2005) is the title of a work of art by director Michel Gondry and the artist Pierre Bismuth. [Figs. 3–8.] It has been available to view in galleries, as well as online. In collaboration with the scriptwriter Charlie Kaufmann, Gondry and Bismuth wrote the manuscript for the film *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (Michel Gondry, 2004). In many ways

the scriptwriters' different backgrounds reflect the current artistic climate, and the text itself illustrates simultaneously how different forms of art and media transgress boundaries: in terms of the creative process, expression, and also for the viewer.

The All Seeing Eye starts with the image of what looks like an everyday living room. As the camera slowly pans, a room that connects onto other rooms comes into view. As the camera moves on, designer furniture and exclusive furnishings come into view, as well as a window looking out. On closer inspection the view from the window reveals a great variation of geographical places: Moscow, Brussels, and so on. At the same time as the camera continues panning around the room you get the impression that this isn't just any living room. In the middle of the room there is a television showing *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind.* The sound that you can hear is taken from the scene in the film that is showing. The use of this sound might remind you of a home cinema system. Provided that you know the film, and use it as a reference, it becomes apparent that the views and the room have more to do with the memory of a room than an actual room.

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind is about Joel Barish and Clementine Kruczynski who are going through the process of erasing each other from their memories. To ensure this is a success, Joel Barish is encouraged to map out his memories of Clementine and make sure that no apparently insignificant object could accidentally remind him of her. But how far does a memory linger or reach? How much has to be erased for you to forget someone? Pierre Bismuth, who claims to be one of the three scriptwriters who came up with the story, said that he became fascinated by something a friend shared with him after a brief love affair. The friend wished that it had never taken place and wished that there was a way to erase every trace and memory of the man she had met (Newman interviews Pierre Bismuth 2005, 188). It was in this way that lingering memories became the theme of the film. It is a very particular theme – to erase someone from your memory, to pinpoint every related thought that might remind you of them – and this also underpins the art work *The All Seeing Eye.*

All the memories of Clementine which are to be collected, mapped out, and destroyed in the film are staged and depicted visually in the form of a home which gradually disappears in *The All Seeing Eye*. Every trace of memory and life are literally erased from the work of art. Each step of this occurs as a camera pans 360 degrees in a circular moment around the room nine times. After each circle something disappears: a newspaper, a pot plant, a chair, a bookcase, another newspaper, a lamp, an arm chair, a mirror, another newspaper. After a while the room itself also begins to change; the window and the views outside

disappear, the adjacent rooms disappear, the walls become white and the floor also finally turns white.

In *The All Seeing Eye* the room becomes finally empty. When everything has been erased nothing remains except a white room shut away from the outside world. The white room has no external influence and it is as empty as an object. The object is such that it is reminiscent of a gallery room. Consequently, all that remains is the impression of a gallery resembling a white cube where every murmur or memory, every trace, has been erased. Similarly to the reference to the white cube (the modernistic gallery), the viewer or onlooker needs a number of other references to comprehend this work of art. Amongst them, of course, is the most central one, the film *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*; but also the designer objects, different buildings, places, and the object that remains in the room when everything else has become completely white – a Brillo Box. The sound from the film is audible and a Brillo Box à la Andy Warhol becomes visible in the middle of the room. The box has always been in the room but has been slightly hidden behind the TV where the film was playing. In art history the Brillo Box plays an unmistakable role as an art work that symbolizes both Pop Art and the dissolution of the complex relation between the original and the copy. These boxes have also become, theoretically at least, loaded symbols in terms of the discussions about a gallery's identifiable function – that the room as such defines what is art. In the book *After the End of Art. Contemporary Art and the Pale of History,* art theoretician Arthur Danto, who is associated with the identified role of a gallery, wonders whether the art work of artist David Reed will be historically possible, and how this type of art can be critically possible (Danto 1997, xi-xiv).[8]

Reed has, in a well-known project, framed his paintings with a couple of scenes taken from Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958). He recreates in two works the bedroom scenes as installations and places his own paintings above Judy's and Scottie's beds (*Judy's Bedroom, Scottie's Bedroom*, 1994). He adds to this televisions in both rooms and on these he shows the scenes from the film that take place in the bedroom. Even here in the film he places his paintings above their beds, but this time digitally.

Danto's choice of artist is interesting given that Reed always emphasizes that he is a painter and that it is his paintings that he wants to be known for. He believes that the installations just function as frames for the paintings. Reed's art exemplifies for Danto the end of modernism and the end of art. And consequently

[8] Arthur C. Danto, together with George Dickie, came to be regarded as one of the fathers of art institutional theory. The theory is about how the room defined art.

the end of the institution that sets the framework for art. He is interested in understanding how this art which consists of so many different forms of media – sculpture, video, film, installation – is possible, and how the boundaries of different art forms have blurred. As a painter, Reed chooses film and installations as a frame for his paintings. He frames them by creating a room around the painting. What is most important in this context is that he uses our contemporary experiences as viewers – our relationship to films, other art forms and media – as a point of reference. Danto represents a modernistic approach where a work of art is defined externally from the room in which it is displayed. Within this room there is, thus, just place for that which is defined as art and by extension those who come to look at art. He discusses the end of art in relation to mixed media and art forms, and following what he says about the end of art according to Reed, it ought to mean the end of paintings without context, or the end of visitors to galleries without film and TV references. In this way it would mean that the onlooker understands Reed's paintings in relation to TV and film – or in relationship to technological activities such as zapping between channels, using video and image editing. If we were to maintain Danto's viewpoint there would still be a sharp division between TV-viewers, cinema-goers and gallery visitors. This dividing line would be able to make life easier but the experience of film and art works less interestingly and is less relevant. In our contemporary culture of images it is not just the borders between the art forms that have been eroded; the understanding of different types of viewers or onlookers have been blurred. This is of interest both to commercial filmmakers and many artists today.

The use of the *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* in *The All Seeing Eye* shows in other words how we no longer seem to view film and art as separate forms, frames within their own boundaries; instead, we seem to put considerable emphasis on understanding references, the narrator's relationship to other narrators and the context in which the work is shown. Ultimately, this means that experiences are shaped and formed by contexts and surrounding cultures, and that these are mixed together; moreover, it seems that the cultural worlds which are often defined within the context of the work in which they are shown are now muddied. Kaufmann, Gondry, and Bismuth's background might appear to be different in terms of collaboration, but simultaneously, it has now become quite normal for this kind of transgression of boundaries. We have been theorizing for a long time art works which transgress boundaries. However, much remains in terms of the increasingly blurred picture of the onlooker; simultaneously, audio visual expression seems to be attempting to handle this. *Eternal Sunshine of the*

Spotless Mind is shown at cinemas, on our televisions, on computer screens or mobile phones. The art work *The All Seeing Eye* depicts all this on TV. The TV is in the living room. The living room is transformed into a gallery. The work of art is exhibited in a gallery. The work of art plays on the computer screen, perhaps in the living room. Art which enters our living rooms via TV, the Internet, and via different software and other technology is aimed at *users* rather than *viewers*. Many exhibition practitioners are influencing art and its attitude and its representation of our contemporary viewing situation. The above mentioned works are comprised of a number of different media practitioners – and once more even more blurred boundaries, which raises questions about which onlookers are involved. First and foremost the film can be seen by Internet users.[9] The work was shown for an audience of art lovers and TV viewers at an exhibition about television at the Witte de With museum in Rotterdam. It has also been shown at Lisson Gallery in London and to visitors at the Cosmic Gallery in Paris. The film *Eternal Sunshine of a Spotless Mind* was created for the cinema-going public. It is shown in an artwork that is shown in a living room for TV and film viewers. In other words, it can be seen as an attempt to problematize the notion of what a viewer is, questioning who sees what.

From Viewer to User

We have been searching for a long time for methods to understand and discuss art that transgresses boundaries. We have spoken of the need for an interdisciplinary method of analysis and way in which to examine everything that comes under umbrella terms; for example, visual culture. The benefits of creating tools for film theory to study contemporary visual culture outside of the traditional context of film are numerous; it is just as valuable to use examples from media contexts (film, art, TV) in order to study public groups and experiences. Which conceptions form the basis for the public that sees *Judy's* and *Scottie's Bedroom*, *The All Seeing Eye*, *Who is Zdenko Buzek?* and *The Matrix*? What type of viewer gets all the references and every context? Is it the channel surfer? Is it the navigator? Is it the downloader? Is it the recycler? Is it the consumer? Or the gamer? Quite probably, a viewer comprehended in terms of technological activity (in a lesser or greater metaphoric meaning) – as a channel surfer, navigator, downloader, recycler, consumer and gamer – a conceptually technologically active user.

[9] The website that showed the piece in connection with the exhibition at Witte de With is no longer available but the piece itself can be seen on YouTube under: "The All Seeing Eye" Gondry/Bismuth Installation," (Available May 15, 2008).

The film being shown on the TV in *The All Seeing Eye* is visual material that anyone has access to through purchasing, renting, downloading or watching at the cinema. There is nothing special about the film being shown on TV. From this perspective it is interesting to link it back to where this action takes place: at home, in the living room, in the private sphere. It is that place or room which has previously been associated with watching TV and thus passivity. In this and other art works it appears as if the living room is being associated with the exact opposite, with a technologically active user. In keeping with earlier theories of viewers, the cinema has been the place for the most active viewer. Now, from a technological perspective, this seems to be the least active setting, and it seems as if the most industrious activity takes place in the living room – at home. At the cinema there is, by comparison, the least room for activity – a social (and perhaps the most ritual) and mental activity, but not the technological activity that takes place at home.

Within contemporary art there are several artists who have commented on the living room as a room for media. Pierre Bismuth made *Link* (1998) before *The All Seeing Eye;* Pipilotti Rist has thematized the viewing situation by drawing attention to the room itself and over-dimensioned sofas in front of a variety of screens and projectors. Ina Blom, an art historian, in her latest book *On the Style Site: Art, Sociality and Media Culture* shows how art thematizes the use of different media at home (Blom 2007).

She describes numerous pictures of exhibitions that look like contemporary settings, where furnishings with light have a leading role. Lamps of all kinds seem to be characteristic for this type of art represented by artists like Tobias Rehberger and Jorge Pardo. Blom is of the opinion that this ends up bringing about two conclusions regarding this type of art: the first, that, rather patronizingly, it is about cool settings, whilst the other is more positive and is about art and design getting closer to each other, so that the boundaries between them are blurring. Blom finds that a major interest in this type of environment is in some way or another about televisuality – or more specifically televisual experiences. She says: "Given that these elements open up for an agreement between the memory of media signal and our cognitive creations of room, forming the initial collusive of TV room and media production room." (Blom 2006/07).[10]

Those environments that Blom speaks about are aimed at the media situation in these particular rooms or living rooms:

[10] The article describes much of the book's contents. In the quotation emphasis is laid on the spatial aspects but in the piece itself it is primarily the temporal nature of things that Blom links to these environments. She calls these exhibitions/exhibition rooms "time machines" (time-believes machines). Time machines that function as a kind of public memory – or places or environments/atmospheres of public memory.

"Because if the lights are perceived first and foremost as effective creators of the atmosphere (a fundamental characteristic of any residence), it becomes easier to see the associations in one work after another, between the lamps and various other light sources that adapt or create the rooms that we live in. The lights that shine through differing media such as television, computer screens, clock radios, mobile phones, and the constant flashing of neon lights and billboards, seem to make night appear as a direct interface." (Blom 2006/07).

Accordingly, the living room, also associated with TV viewing, has now come to resemble a kind of media centre which offers space for the more technologically active user like channel surfers, navigators, recyclers, consumers, gamers, influence producers and chats. This living room has been moved into the art work described above, into the setting of the gallery – this room, which in Danto's spirit, has taken precedence in defining what art is today turns the living room into a TV and media production room. At the same time as it does this, it comments on the use of media that Jenkins paints when he describes the transmedial means of narration and our contemporary convergence culture. From this we can conclude that the technology that we are creating and using today is shaped and cultivated by active consumers. This, in turn, shapes the way we think.

Conclusions

"Come. See. Experience." With these words the cinema-going public in London were enticed to the cinema, computer users to YouTube and art lovers to visit the Tate's website by a trailer to see a film with British actor Jude Law in the main role. Simultaneously, the trailer encouraged the public to visit Borough Market in London on November 30, 2007. Here a performance took place with the very same Jude Law right in the middle of the events. At Borough Market the trailer was also filmed (in 35 mm film). The film was, however, never made. It never existed except in our expectations. The work of art, for it was a work of art, was comprised of just a trailer and performance. That was all that was to be seen, all that was to be experienced. The person behind these media platforms attracting the public to Borough Market was the Polish artist Pawel Altamer. [11]

When contemporary art comprises art events like Althamer's *Realtime Movie* or when the viewer is encouraged to use their own mobile phone to integrate with the art work, when a video installation is translated to a DVD so the viewer can

[11] See the trailer: http://movings.blogspot.com/2007/11/realtime-movie-in-borough-market.html (available May 22, 2008). To find out more about the project: http://feeds.tate.org.uk/tateshots (available May 22, 2008). See also (Staple 2008, 15).

choose from a menu with the help of his or her remote control or when the viewer integrates by distance in realtime with help of their computer to later see the results on the Internet, it becomes clear that we ought to let experiences from several media contexts enrich the discussion that is taking place about how experiences are being enriched and structured differently today.[12]

Pop cultural phenomena have, in this text, been compared with similar phenomena in contemporary art. *The Matrix* was used as an introduction given that it is a major experiment with transmedia storytelling. *The Matrix* demonstrates how integrated user-perspective is in the entirety of the film's narrative. It is comprised of interactive elements, inviting the viewer to participate and create. The viewer is both an onlooker and user. The example *Who is Zdenko Buzek?* illustrated how the context within which a work is shown (the significance of context) creates parallels to popular culture and media use there. The work was shown in many different contexts and in all likelihood for a public in different kinds of settings. Even *The All Seeing Eye* took up the whole issue of context but also how the authors integrated their own view of the onlooker as a participant and user as part of the work itself. The films that they have made are used in different contexts, which drew attention to different levels of media use. Today's technological development challenges us to develop narrative structures and this in itself contributes to a change in the actions of the onlooker. Jenkins asked how far the public is prepared to go in terms of their own activity. Film as experience describes our relation to representation and activity in different media contexts. Our situation in life is depicted in the way we use technology; or, as media philosopher Friedrich Kittler put it: "Media determine our situation which – in spite or because of it – deserves a description" (Kittler 1999, xxxix).

[12] The use of mobile phones and computers: Between September 12, 2001 and February 23, 2003 The Chaos Computer Club transformed a building at Alexanderplatz in Berlin into a gigantic computer screen upon which interactive installations took place with the help of Berliners' computers and mobile phones. A similar event coordinated by the artist Erik Krikortz took place in Stockholm. *Colour by Numbers* was an interactive light installation that was shown on Ericsson's telephone tower at Telefonplan between October 23, 2006 and April 1, 2007. The same artist was also behind *Emotional Cities* which was a light game that was shown on multi-storey buildings at Hörtorget in Stockholm from November 1, 2007 until January 6, 2008. The interactive light show was thought to reflect how people in Stockholm felt going through seven variations of colour. The use of remote controls: This refers specifically to a work by the Danish artist Eva Koch and her works *Villar och Villar - Manuela's Children* (2001). The first is a video installation and the second is a DVD version for private use. Both show two completely different attitudes towards technology, narrative, and viewer. An interview with Eva Koch about both these works is to be found in (Torp 2003, 125–134). For an interesting interpretation of *Villar* see: (Rossholm Lagerlöf 2007, 212–222). Realtime interaction from a distance: The artist Stelarc tries, in his art, to illustrate or depict his view of the body as obsolete. By connecting his body to advanced technological equipment it is controlled in realtime from a distance by figures in different places around the world. For clearer pictures and descriptions see: www.stelarc.va.com.au/arcx.html (Available May 22, 2008).

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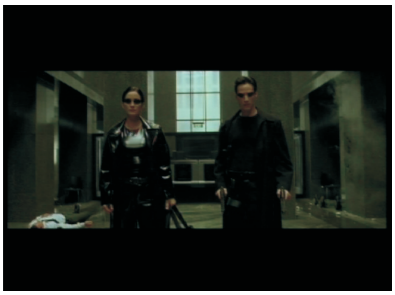
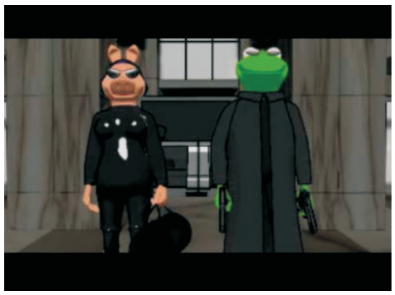
Figures 1–2. The expansion of the Matrix universe. Screenshot from the original film and the Muppet version available on YouTube.

Figures 3–8. *The All Seeing Eye. The Easy Teenage Version* (2005), video installation by Michel Gondry and Pierre Bismuth.