Video is dead.
The opening argument for the 'for' team
Presented by Ryan Stec, Artistic Director, Artengine

Video is dead because the generic has consumed everything. Video is dead in much the same way that the internet does not exist.[1] There is no singular and useful thing that we can call *the* internet. I raise this same question for video, is there any singular and useful thing called video? Has it collapsed under the weight of its own multiplicity? Has it consumed and been consumed? Have any media survived the incredible force of the digital revolution?

I began my preparations for today with the simple strategy of building a straw man that I could show had died bit by bit. Despite my efforts I was unable to be definitive about the meaning of the word video. Nothing seemed to be an adequate container. Video is certainly more than a series of overlapping technologies like the cathode ray tube, electronic image sensors and magnetic tape, but my question here is - how is it possible that 'the video that is more than the technology' has survived the continuous death of its material elements. The death of tape, of the CRT, of analogue signal, of standard definition, of standard frame rates. What is the video that has survived all of these deaths?

In the absence of a defining boundary of what is video I offer a very short hand history for consideration.

In his extended essay *Video Revolutions*[2], media theorist Michael Z. Newman describes three broad chapters in the popular and technological history of video. In the first phase, video is synonymous with television; his second is the emergence of video as distinct from television and in the third and current stage of convergence video is synonymous with the moving image itself. In the second phase, Newman proposes that video is first made truly distinct through its adoption and adaptation of a new technology; magnetic tape is key in bringing about a distinction between TV and video. Magnetic tape is taken up in broadcast television and begins to radically alter the relationship to time, live broadcasts can be delayed and key match moments in sports can be almost instantly replayed and slowed. Simultaneously, tape technology begins to enter the consumer market. A collection of personal recordings for purchase and created by the viewer are key moments in the creation of an individualized media ecosystem. These are the large scale commercial forces that shape this era, but artists and

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[1] 'The Internet does not exist' is the title of the excellent edited collection of essays published as E-Flux Jounral Issue 60, edited by Julietta Aranda and published by Sternberg Press.
[2] Newman, Michael Z. *Video Revutions: on the history of a medium*. 2014. Columbia Univeristy Press.

curious and enthusiastic people of all kinds subverted these forces at the margins. This is a story many of us here know very well. The story of video technology and the creation of art coupled with the drive to create more personal and intimate and politically challenging stories from documentary makers and activists. This is the powerful moment where something incredible emerges in between the two juggernauts of twentieth century culture – video becomes a space between cinema and television.

For Newman, and others, video moves out of this phase of life as an alternative and through digital technologies becomes the catch all for the moving image. This interpretation is one of the principal points I would like to emphasize. If we examine the question of video largely in relation to cinema and television we create a condition that converges the three into something we might comfortably call video. However, I think there is a significant distinction between the adaption of technologies in the analogue phase of video and the emergence of the new digital horizon. I would propose that death of analogue video can be understood not as a transformation into the general moving image, but rather an element of the almost total emancipation of all images into the digital image. I interpret this not as a collapse of cinema, television and video into the moving image, but rather a collapse of video, television, radio, cinema, photography, animation, illustration, graphic design, gaming and computer coding … to name the most easily identifiable. And beyond that perhaps one could argue that in this space text, voice, music and human gesture are also collapsing.

When I say collapse, however, I am not thinking of a black hole-like structure where everything is singular and dense, but rather collapse in the sense of their defining structures, not just the erasure of the edges between them, but the emergence of a profound network of complex hybridized structures. This decentered collapse is so much more incomprehensible than the convergence rhetoric of the last decades, and I am not interested in either a utopian proclamation about a new reality or a dystopian disdain for a flattened future. I am interested in the naming of things and the power therein. What new terms do we need to help define the new landscape of images around us? What language can we use to navigate and to shape the image of the image….

So if there is a general term that would help us I would suggest a version of Vilem Flussers term the 'technical image'[3]. If there is a common thread in the universe of contemporary images it is

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[3] Vilem Flusser*s*' develops the concept of the technical image first in *Toward a Philosophy of Photography* and then further *Into the Universe of Technical Images*. The technical image is offered as the concept marking the

our almost constant and significant collaborations with machines. The term technological image may help us navigate the space between our body, our imagination, and the images produced by the near ubiquitous computing technologies. The term acts as a touch stone to remind us that every electronic and digital image, including those on celluloid, is brought forth through the work of engineering and manufacturing of one kind or another. It reminds us that the tools of almost every medium now intersect with the history of the computer. The specific histories of video, of film, of television, of computer graphics, of sound recording are blending and blurring. They will not and cannot push forward into the future as singularities. To call an end to these singularities is not to abandon their histories. To call an end to these singularities is to look at this collapse more directly. To attempt to find a name. To find a language that may capture its beauty and its challenges.

Video is no longer an in between. It consumed and has been consumed. It is dead, but this does not mean it should be forgotten. The dead should never be forgotten. We should always find ways to remember. To carry the dead with us through the present and into the future.

There is a darkness beyond the death of video, it is a darkness that lies across the simultaneous and immanent deaths of many mediums. This darkness does not have to be an obscurity. We can begin to understand the technological image if we turn towards it. We can learn to carry the history of our dead mediums into the future of the technological image.

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departure from traditional images, they are no longer surfaces, but are of a different nature produced by apparatus'.