

**From *Solid Light* to Satellite:
the materiality of the moving image as broadcast signal and data**

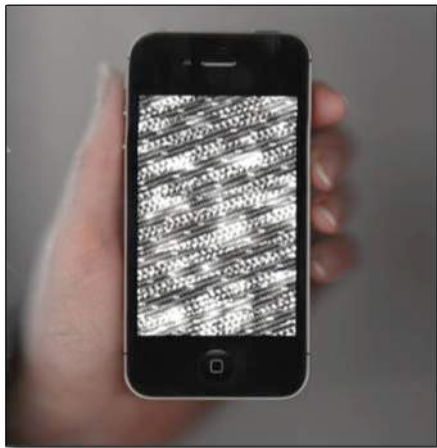


Image credit: Katy Connor
PURE FLOW [mobile edition] (2011)

PURE FLOW launched at Permanent Gallery last year, as part of the Brighton Digital Festival 2011.

It is a live moving image work that visualises the noise in networked GPS data; exploring audiovisual disturbance in its aesthetic value. The piece comes out of a reflection upon the ubiquitous use of satellite navigation, as mobile screens become increasingly ever-present.

Satellites hover on the periphery of our world, both physically and metaphorically, yet materially structure and provide for what we see; when, how, and where we see it. My intention was to subvert the use value of GPS as a surveying and navigational tool, whilst simultaneously providing a way of seeing these invisible streams of pervasive data.

Reflecting on the work one year later, at the second Brighton Digital Festival, I'd like to place **PUREFLOW** in a context of influences and interests, by drawing on the earlier work of the structural materialist Anthony McCall and Nam June Paik - artists whose work shares similar relationships with light, space, sound and noise.

It introduces some ideas that consider the materiality of the moving image, within a context of networked digital technologies, and the position (appearance and disappearance) of arts practice within this dynamic.



PURE FLOW is an abstract, generative piece, bordering on animation and pixelated data visualisation. Conceptually and visually, the work references analogue TV static - otherwise known as TV snow - the underlying material of TV and video broadcast, which is curiously absent in digital TV transmission.

In 1965 (3 years after the first satellite TV broadcast) Nam June Paik interrupted the pervasive TV broadcast signal by pulling a heavy industrial magnet over his television set; rendering the network visible as a system. "Magnet TV" brought the information of the Satellite TV broadcast into sharp relief; bringing us face to face with the physical medium of the Live TV Broadcast, its electromagnetic materiality.



Image credit: Nam June Paik

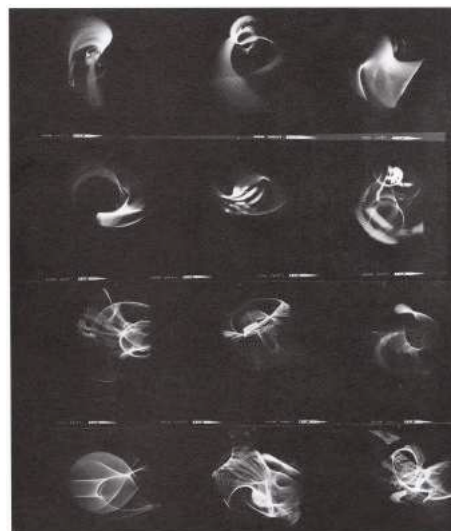


Image credit: Nam June Paik
Screen photographs of 'Magnet TV' (1965)

Anthony McCall's works for projectors continue this conceptual exploratory approach towards moving image technology, in terms of light, space and process. In "Line Describing a Cone" (1973), McCall handles the actual projection beam of light. No longer acting as a cinematic envelope, projected light becomes solid-light, with which people interact as they move around the space. Long pre-dating touch-screen technology, participants touch the solid form of the light itself.



Image credit: Anthony McCall
'Line Describing a Cone' (1973)

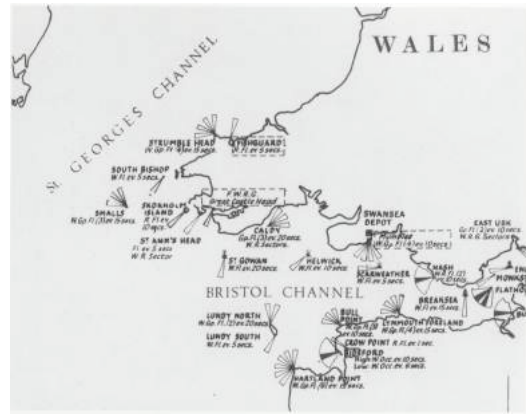


Image credit: Anthony McCall
'Found Solid Light Installation' (1973) detail

In his 'Found Solid Light Installation' a map locates each lighthouse around the coast of England and Wales. McCall considers this distributed network as a conceptual instance of solid-light, re-contextualising lighthouses as moving-image artworks. Here, the solid-light form is no longer bound by the cinematic black cube, nor the gallery space - but relocated into public space alluding to the luminous sites of broadcast. As Sean Cubitt states, when we deal with broadcast and video, projection has a number of new qualities. "Broadcasting gives a new sense of the radiation of light outward not to one but to a huge multitude of screens, each of them in turn a light source. The "projector" is still central, but the screens on which it beams its images are scattered across cities and nations. (Cubitt: *Projection: Vanishing and Becoming* p.412)

At Brighton's Digital Festival solid light can be found in the pocket and on the street - as illuminated smart phone screens respond to live invisible networks - mobile screens, linked to 3G telecommunications and wifi webcasts.

As a miniature, hand held application for a mobile (and global) audience **PUREFLOW** makes tangible the noise generated between smart phones and the multiple satellites, 3G networks and Wifi hotspots that determine its location. Fluctuations in the data produce a sliver of white noise that responds directly to the movement and immediate environment of the device. As a white noise generator, **PUREFLOW** reinstates negative space in the cultural icon of the iPhone.

Just as Paik's 'Magnet TV' intervenes in the visualisation of the broadcast signal (as an image) the **PUREFLOW** software intervenes in the locational data, and the Graphic User Interface of the GPS system.



Image credit: Katy Connor
PUREFLOW [mobile edition] Nighttime view
Permanent Gallery, Brighton Digital Festival 2011

As an installation at Permanent Gallery last year, **PUREFLOW** was projected onto a suspended screen in the centre of the window. The data projections sent shafts of light onto the buildings opposite, across the road and onto the windscreens of passing cars; the reflections mirroring and refracting the signals back and out into space - alluding to the action of the GPS signals between the receiver and the satellites.

PUREFLOW reflects on the position of our bodies, as we traverse and inhabit a series of networks. Placed in the gallery window, the illuminated screen and light projection undermined the stable boundaries between inside and outside the gallery space. It is this networked space that becomes the new background, the white noise from which our contemporary mediated experience emerges.

One year on and these mobile screens become mobile platforms for e-Permanent, a new gallery space where digital art can both appear and vanish into thin air, at any one moment. Like McCall's lighthouses, these mobile screens become luminous sites for broadcast in and around Brighton Digital Festival, and much further afield. One might say that this network will transform every boundary into a threshold... or a platform for the perception of digital art.

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