

Ecstatic Cuts : Stroboscopic techniques, receptive viewing and liberated subjectivities

Stroboscopic techniques have been used for over two centuries to generate altered states of consciousness (ASC). My practice-based PhD elaborates the communal aspect of these subjective states through videos and audiovisual installations that investigate stroboscopic editing techniques, drawing on phenomenological and autoethnographic framings of intersubjectivity and film theoretical writings on the human-screen relationship to articulate the social component of individual ecstatic experience. My research uses stroboscopic techniques and narration to both evoke and contextualise the emancipatory potential of these effects. This will involve considering historical and contemporary instances of stroboscopic techniques, and using queer theoretical notions of liberation-in-passivity to update historical film theoretical framings of the passive film spectator as constrained. Drawing on the emergent field of decolonial psychedelic studies, I will propose a new model for understanding this type of ASC as communal and intersubjective.

At the current stage of my research, in addition to my more formalized research questions, my studio practice and reading are driven by the more general question: what does it mean to be a hallucinating audience. Flicker films, which are one of the canonical examples of stroboscopic techniques, can induce visual hallucinations and shifts in temporal experience in their audiences. In what way can the "audience" of "a" work be said to exist, when each viewer is absorbed in their own idiosyncratic altered state of consciousness. What mode of exchange is facilitated, or not, by this unshared experience in response to shared sensory stimuli? What forms of language arise in response to these non-identical experiences? And to what degree is the experience of the hallucinating audience a useful tool for thinking about contemporary modes of (inter)relation and fundamental misapprehensions?

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