

## Cinema as *dispositif*: Between Cinema and Contemporary Art Un cinéma du dispositif : entre cinéma et art contemporain

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Résumé de l'article

De récents bouleversements au sein du paysage médiatique soulèvent deux questions essentielles. Premièrement, de quelle façon les nouveaux médias modifient-ils le dispositif cinématographique, à la fois dans sa dimension architecturale (projection), technologique (production, transmission, distribution) et discursive (montage) ? Deuxièmement, en quoi les expérimentations dans le domaine de l'art contemporain produisent-elles des glissements ou des déviations eu égard au mode de représentation institutionnel ? Contrairement au cinéma dominant, plusieurs films reçoivent le dispositif cinématographique en multipliant les écrans, en explorant d'autres durées et intensités, en modifiant l'architecture de la salle de projection ou en engageant de nouvelles relations avec le spectateur. Trois moments de l'histoire du cinéma qui témoignent de telles variations seront discutés ici, tout en cherchant à les distinguer à l'aide de la notion de dispositif : le cinéma des attractions, le « cinéma élargi » (*expanded cinema*) et le cinéma d'exposition. Bien qu'ils soient caractérisés par des transformations technologiques évidentes, ces moments font surtout état de diverses expérimentations avec le dispositif cinématographique qui ont été largement négligées par l'histoire du cinéma. Non seulement les déviations occasionnées d'avec un prétendu mode de représentation institutionnel produisent-elles des subjectivités inédites et hétérogènes, mais elles ont aussi un impact décisif sur la théorie du cinéma actuelle.

# Cinema as *dispositif*: Between Cinema and Contemporary Art

André Parente and Victa de Carvalho

## ABSTRACT

Recent upheavals in the media landscape raise two major issues. First, how is new media changing the cinematographic *dispositif*<sup>1</sup> in its primordial dimensions: architectural (the conditions for image projection), technological (production, transmission and distribution) and discursive (cutting, editing, etc.)? How does experimentation in the field create new shifts or deviations with respect to the institutional mode of representation? Unlike the dominant cinema, some films reshape cinema's *dispositif* by multiplying screens, exploring other durations and intensities, changing the architecture of the screening room or entering into other relations with spectators. In fact, cinema's *dispositif* underwent variations such as these during three particular moments of film history, as we will discuss here: the cinema of attractions, expanded cinema and cinema of exhibition,<sup>2</sup> whose differences will be analyzed through the notion of *dispositif*. While technological transformations are obvious in each of these moments, they also call attention to a series of experimentations with cinema's *dispositif* which have been largely overlooked by film history. Not only do these deviations from a so-called institutional mode of representation produce new and heterogeneous subjectivities, they also have a decisive impact on recent film theory.

*Voir le résumé français à la fin de l'article*

## Cinema Form<sup>3</sup>

We usually think of cinema as a spectacle involving at least three distinct elements: a movie theatre, a device to project a moving image and a film that tells a story in roughly two hours. Following recent communication technology theories, we might argue that cinema brings together three different elements in its *dispositif*: the architecture of the room, inherited from Italian theatre; the technology for capturing and projecting moving

images, whose standard format was invented at the end of the nineteenth century; and finally narrative form. This last element is characterized by an aesthetic of transparency which was adopted by films in the 1910s, particularly in American film production. The desire to “travel without having to move” inherent to this aesthetic can be traced back to the nineteenth century in phantasmagoria, immersive *dispositifs* such as panoramas and stereoscopic photography, and, principally, in novels such as those of Balzac and Dickens, which make use of new techniques to sketch out characters, actions, space and time.

Although it is often claimed that the Lumière brothers invented cinema, we tend to forget that their *dispositif* had only the first two elements: the viewing theatre and the technology for capturing and projecting moving images. Only recently have we started to distinguish the cinema of attractions (1896-1908) from classical narrative cinema, which began to develop around 1908. Reconsidering the history of early cinema enables us to distinguish two completely different moments: first, that of the invention of a new technology, when cinema was a spectacular *dispositif* for displaying phantasmagorical productions; and second, that of the emergence of a socio-cultural institution, when the cinematic *dispositif* imposed a particular mode of representation and various discursive practices.

When we state nowadays that new technologies and contemporary art are transforming cinema, we must ask ourselves: Which cinema are we talking about? Conventional cinema, which we shall henceforth call “Cinema Form,” is just one possible form that happened to become hegemonic. It is an aesthetic model determined historically, economically and socially. Cinema as a representational system is not created by its mere technological invention, for it took around ten years to be crystallized and fixed as a model.

Each of the aspects mentioned above is, by itself, a set of techniques trying to create the illusion of reality, to lure the spectator into believing that he or she is experiencing the actual facts and events represented on screen. It is important to remember, however, that there is not always a room, that the room is not always plunged into darkness, that the projector is

not always hidden and that the film is not always projected<sup>4</sup> or even telling a story. Indeed, we should remember that many films exert an attraction, are abstract, experimental, etc. Historians have largely neglected the forms which deviate from this hegemonic model, as if film history were solely made up of events that contributed to the development and improvement of Cinema Form.

The major advantage of the concept *dispositif* is that it dismisses dichotomies that are at the root of representation (subject and object, image and reality, language and perception, etc.). It enables us to rethink cinema and prevents us from cleavages and technological, historical and aesthetic determinisms. Rhizomatic by nature, the notion of *dispositif* somehow enables us to resolve certain oppositions which might not only paralyze our thoughts but also generate false contradictions.

Unlike dominant cinema, many works of cinema—such as those of Douglas Gordon, Stan Douglas, Sam Taylor-Wood, Eija-Liisa Ahtila, David Claerbout and others—reshape cinema's *dispositif* by multiplying screens, exploring other timeframes and intensities, transforming the architecture of the projection room or proposing other relations with spectators. Today more than ever, these transformations call for a reproblematicization of the *dispositif* and its conceptual, historical and technological aspects. We have already witnessed the impact of such “marginal” practices on film theory, which now sees images not as simple objects, but as events, power fields and relation systems which modify our understanding of their various enunciative and figurative properties. Indeed, these revisions and reformulations of cinema's *dispositif* raise important questions about how they affect our very relation to moving images.

Today, there are almost as many *dispositifs* as there are the number of discourses they have produced. The intermediality and versatility typical of the contemporary image prompt us to analyze the various strategies of the *dispositif*, an approach which has proven worthy in several recent studies on early cinema, on the relationship between film and video, and on cinema of exhibition. Our starting point is thus to problematize cinema's *dispositif* by looking at the inherent tension between the hegemonic

model and its various deviations, especially those which appear within the context of new technologies. Indeed, current relations between cinema and contemporary art give rise to new philosophical and theoretical approaches that call for closer examination.

### Cinema's *dispositif*

The concept of *dispositif* arose in the 1970s in the works of the French structuralists Jean-Louis Baudry and Christian Metz as a way of defining how spectators situate themselves in relation to filmic representation, a state that was described as being close to dreams and hallucination. In two seminal essays published in 1970 and 1975,<sup>5</sup> Baudry analyzed the ideological impact of cinema's *dispositif* and the specific "cinema-effects" it has on the spectator, laying at the same time the foundations for later discussions of the *dispositif*. These effects, Baudry argued, are not the result of discursive organization within the film (or of film language in a semiological sense), but rather of cinema's *dispositif*, here defined as a particular set of technologies (the camera, moviola, projector, etc.) and conditions of projection (the darkened room, hidden projector, immobile spectator, etc.).

Discussing Plato's cave allegory, Baudry (1978) drew an analogy between the cave *dispositif* and that of cinema, wherein the spectator is found in a similar situation (immobile in a dark room with projection from behind). Indeed, like the prisoners in Plato's cave, film spectators are the victims of an illusion, of an impression of reality, since they can't distinguish between representation and reality itself.

Cinema's *dispositif* thus covers several aspects. Like many components of the "basic apparatus,"<sup>6</sup> it has a material component, but also psychological, spectatorial and ideological aspects which reinforce the spectator's desire for illusion and prove to be responsible for producing an impression of reality. For Baudry this *dispositif* was an ideological device whose origin lies in the bourgeois desire to dominate, a desire that pervades film images. This urge to dominate causes an ideological blindness, a fetishist alienation. The impression of reality created by classical cinema

is thus the result, in Baudry's view, of an ideological articulation determined to hide the representation processes that film production implies, as if cinema could deliver truths about the world with no intermediary whatsoever.

The influence of psychoanalysis and Marxism is evident here (especially that of Jacques Lacan and Louis Althusser), mostly in the "structuralist" aspect of Baudry's analysis. Through Marxism, Baudry tried to perceive the ideological effects generated by cinema's *dispositif*. From psychoanalysis, he drew the idea that cinema reproduces the dynamics of our psychic *dispositif* and its processes of duplication, reflection, dissimulation, identification, etc. Cinema's *dispositif* is related to the psychic *dispositif* to the extent that the subject is seen as an illusion produced by a certain time and place. As Baudry (1975, p. 45) remarks, the "spectator identifies less with what is represented, the spectacle itself, than with what stages the spectacle, makes it seen, obliging him to see what it sees." Cinema presupposes, like the mirror phase, a transcendental subject who is constituted as a "centre" from which unfolds what is seen on the screen. The subject thus arises as a possible condition of what already exists. This relation between subject and spectacle carries out the genetic process of various structural relations, where opposition and absence are determinant.

In his 1971 essay "Technique and Ideology: Camera, Perspective, Depth of Field," Jean-Louis Comolli transferred to the discursive organization what appeared, according to Baudry, to be a specific effect of the basic apparatus. Today, it has become clear that cinema's *dispositif* presents, besides architectonic and technological dimensions, a formal-discursive or formal-aesthetic dimension which plays a fundamental role in consolidating an institutional mode of representation, whose foundations lie in classical cinema (Hollywood in particular).

The theoretical model proposed by Baudry is partially able to explain the subjectivation process taking place in a cinema that favours an aesthetic of transparency. The "cinema-effect" is for cinema what the panopticon is for the disciplinary society: a way to construct a specific model of subjectivity. However, as Gilles Deleuze has demonstrated, cinema can convey numerous

types of images (movement-image, time-image and their numerous varieties: perception-image, action-image, affection-image, dream-image, crystal-image, etc.), each one tied to a certain type of subjectivity (Deleuze 1983 and 1985). Although Deleuze never specifically addresses the question of cinema's *dispositif*, the taxonomy he proposes in order to distinguish the different types of "images" exemplifies how much cinema's *dispositif* may vary. On this point, we agree with Ismail Xavier when he says that Deleuze clearly contests Baudry's theory of the *dispositif* because, for Deleuze, it is not possible to summarize the spectator's relationship to film images solely in terms of psychological structures (Xavier 2005, pp. 187-88). His main interest doesn't lie in the illusion produced by a *dispositif*, but in the desire to understand how cinema can be a form of thought.<sup>7</sup>

### *Dispositif* and the Production of Subjectivity

The concept of *dispositif* has a strong philosophical history in the work of post-structuralist philosophers, especially Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and Jean-François Lyotard. For them, the effect produced by the *dispositif* on the social body is already inscribed in words, images, bodies, thoughts and affections. A *dispositif* thus appears when the relation between heterogeneous elements (enunciative, architectonic, technological, institutional, etc.) produces a subjectivation effect in the social body, be it an effect of normalization or deviation, of territorialization or de-territorialization, of appeasement or intensification. This is how Foucault's *dispositifs* of power and knowledge, Deleuze's *dispositif* of production of subjectivity and Lyotard's impelling *dispositifs* are addressed.

According to Foucault, a *dispositif* possesses three different levels or layers. In the first, the *dispositif* is but a heterogeneous set of discourses, architectonic forms, propositions and strategies of knowledge and power, subjective dispositions and cultural inclinations. In the second, the nature of the connection that brings these heterogeneous elements together reveals itself. Finally, the third layer contains the discursive formation or "episteme" resulting from the connections between these elements (Foucault 1994, vol. 3, p. 114). From this perspective, we

may argue that the *dispositif* of institutional cinema—roughly, a dark room where a story is projected that makes us believe we are in the face of real facts—contains three dimensions: architectonic, technological and discursive.

Today cinema, or the “cinema-effect,” is basically everywhere, in or outside a room, in “spaces” such as television, the Internet, museums and art galleries, but also in other medias such as post-modern iconic painting of the 1970s and 80s, photography, cartoons, etc. Internalization of the dominant cinematic *dispositif* is, on the one hand, the result of a subjectivity produced by the *dispositif* itself, but it is also, on the other hand, what allows the emergence of practices that deviate from this same *dispositif* (in what we call cinema of exhibition for example). Foucault stresses the idea that the *dispositif*, although invisible, manifests itself in all discourses, institutions and societies, thus making it possible to define its characteristics.

Deleuze’s conception of the *dispositif* is of a slightly different nature. Deleuze states that a *dispositif* does not present itself as a homogeneous system; rather, it is made of “lines” delineating processes that are inevitably unbalanced (2003, pp. 83-96). Every *dispositif* is crossed by visibility curves and enunciation curves, by “lines of subjectivation” in constant transformation. For this reason, knowledge, power and subjectivity cannot be clearly defined. Indeed, the subjectivation process which forms along those lines can escape from the spheres of knowledge and power and thus take a different shape. Instead of the universal subject, Deleuze defines new, multiple, nomadic and constructed subjectivities, in what is probably one of the more radical criticisms of conventional understanding of the subject.

While Foucault is concerned with how subjectivity is produced and shaped according to the forces acting in each historical formation, Deleuze focuses his analysis on the resistance occurring in the subjectivation process, on the inner forces able to target new modes of existence. A line of subjectivation is a process, a subjectivity in a *dispositif* (Deleuze 1986, p. 87). Thus, subjectivation lines might represent the “extreme contours” of a *dispositif*, or fracture lines, where the transition from one *dispositif* to another is sketched. Along those lines, the



*dispositif* conjugates heterogeneous elements in a rhizomatic, non-centred, non-hierarchical organization that can provoke grooves and fissures in any totalizing mode of power.

Deleuze dedicated himself to the study of cinema because, according to him, cinema is the sole *dispositif* able to give us a direct perception of time. When post-war filmmakers began to produce what Deleuze called the time-image, an indiscernible short-circuit was created between the real and the virtual. The virtual is not opposed to the real, but to the ideals of truth which are the purest fiction. In philosophy, as in science and art, time is the operator that throws truth, meaning and communication into crisis. Deleuze's work provides us with an important tool to view the relation between the cinematic *dispositif* and the production of subjectivity. Like all *dispositifs*, cinema also consists of "lines of flight" (*lignes de fuite*) responsible for the many displacements in its dominant form. His work calls our attention to the fact that cinema is a producer of multiple subjectivities free from dominant discursive formations.

It is important to stress that we believe a *dispositif* is, as Foucault points out, a heterogeneous set of elements, forces and discourses which produce dominant forms and subjectivities at specific moments in history. However, we agree with Deleuze that every *dispositif* has its own fracture lines and lines of flight that can cause the *dispositif* to turn into another form. Once cinema is seen as a *dispositif*, and therefore that it varies in time, it is crucial to take into account the instances that stray from its dominant form.

Similarly, Jean-François Lyotard (1994) also suggested the existence of lines of flight within the cinematic *dispositif*. Although his argument follows completely different paths than those described by Deleuze, the *dispositif* is always, according to Lyotard, what has to be subverted and differentiated to ensure the production of new standards of subjectivity. For him, the modalities of deviation are more important than the processes leading to the production of a subjectivity model. His theories emphasize the search for the energy and force capable of breaking the models of subjectivity targeted by *dispositifs*, which in his theory can either be "pulsional," "figural" or "libidinal."

Lyotard's work is marked by a strong opposition between, on the one hand, a libidinal economy of the cinema resting on the normalization of pulsions and the exclusion of aberrant movements and, on the other, on the possible de-programming and reversal of this model. In defence of a pyrotechnic cinema, capable of exalting forces and different movements, Lyotard proposes the concept of "acinema." While narrative-representational cinema is constituted under a dominant model that guarantees the impression of reality, acinema is based on various subversions of established laws. It admits the importance of aberrant movement such as the immobility of *tableaux vivants* or, inversely, the excess of mobility such as accelerations, duplications and alternations. By breaking narrative flow, each of these aberrant movements fails to acknowledge the reality-effect of conventional cinema.

There are two reasons why so many theoreticians of contemporary cinema—largely inspired by Deleuze, Foucault and Lyotard—have problematized the issue of *dispositif*. First, to show that cinema can produce an image that eludes traditional representation, the schematization of figure and discourse, language and its significant chains and signification as a process of reification. Second, by analyzing the alliances cinema establishes with other *dispositifs* and means of image production, each of these authors can, in his own way, sketch the displacement process cinema operates with respect to its dominant forms. Raymond Bellour's (1990a, p. 11) concept of "entre-images" or Philippe Dubois's (1999, p. 9) analysis of the "film effect" and "improbable movement" are, for example, ways to comment on the hybridization of cinema and visual arts, especially photography. Serge Daney (2007, p. 229) questions the mannerist effects provoked by the clash between cinema and the electronic image, in particular television. Jacques Aumont (1989, p. 37) proposes the idea of an "interminable eye" to express relations between cinema's gaze and that of painting. Studying objects ranging from Tavoletta to current *dispositifs* of virtual reality, these authors (and many others, such as Anne-Marie Duguet and Jean-Paul Fargier) share the common idea that video making is the art *par excellence* which promotes the de-territorialization of

Cinema Form and leads to new ways of thinking about the status of the image (Duguet 2002, p. 15).

The issue of the cinematic *dispositif* has been raised in various theories since the 1960s, mainly in works promoting a more active observer in the cinema experience. The principal criticisms of these theories revolve around the generalizations and abstractions of Baudry's theory of the *dispositif*, which do not take into account filmic textuality.<sup>8</sup> What those theories have in common is their fight against the idea of a subjected spectator, supposedly passive, who does not add anything to the narration. Laura Mulvey's survey of the relations between cinema and feminism and the cognitive thesis developed by David Bordwell, Noël Carroll (1996) and Greg M. Smith (2007) are examples of these efforts. The idea of a passive spectator echoes the whole question of cinema in media theory. Media theory is mostly monopolized by a moralizing view that dichotomizes communication systems on one side and society and its spectators on the other, the latter being seen as victims of transmitted messages. This results in a "terror situation," in which society is dominated by a media monster that imposes its messages with Pavlovian efficiency. On the other hand, media and languages are thoroughly dissected and their subjectivity emptied: everything that escapes the massacre of the media, all that is ethical, political, poetic or interactive, is immediately eliminated. This is the theory of absolute manipulation.

Today, a new horizon is appearing, and although it is difficult to name, its intention is to introduce into communication theories non-determinist, ontological and subjective dimensions. Research targeting the production of new subjectivities gained popularity as the emphasis of the virtual became increasingly evident in the field of new communication technologies.

### Variations in the *dispositif*: The Cinema of Attractions, Expanded Cinema and Cinema of Exhibition

The 1990s gave rise to new formulations of cinematic possibilities, which were already suggested in the work of artists trying to resituate cinema within the visual arts. In so doing, these artists also brought about a shift in the *dispositif*'s functions,

now crossed with electronic and digital images, while entering new spaces such as museums and galleries. Nowadays, a lot of discourses locate the origins of these new film properties in early cinema or in 1960s artistic production. It is not difficult to find throughout film history several experiences that move away from the hegemonic model established around the 1910s.

If Cinema Form is a representational model resulting from a kind of subjectivity consolidated in the nineteenth century, it is necessary to identify what is at stake in contemporary experiences, which seem to displace cinema from this representational-narrative model. We believe that the crisis of representation arises *along with* the institutionalization of a representational model. Indeed, at the moment this model takes shape, we also see the appearance of other forms that escape its gravitational field. This way, the notion of *dispositif* may contribute to the renewal of film theory, especially concerning the new modalities of an expanded cinema, that is, of a cinema that enlarges the frontiers of the established representational cinema.

After a century dominated by Cinema Form, it is possible to delineate, although with indistinct contours, at least three moments when cinema varies from its dominant form: the cinema of attractions, expanded cinema and cinema of exhibition, whose differences can be evaluated through the notion of *dispositif* we are proposing here. While technological transformations are obvious in each of these moments, they also call attention to a series of experiments with the cinematic *dispositif*, before and after cinema reached its dominant form. Disregarded by film history for a long time, these experiments finally resurfaced in two widely discussed fields: the cinema of attractions and expanded cinema.<sup>9</sup> Recently, a third research field started to look at other types of manifestations which emerged at the end of the 1980s and which were generally encompassed under the classification “cinema of exhibition” or “artists’ cinema.” Two main questions arose within this context: What is common between these manifestations and the cinema of exhibition? To what extent can we situate those manifestations within a larger set of phenomena with which they connect in a new discursive formation?

Several cinematic manifestations have turned the *dispositif* into a privileged field of experimentation. Rereading cinema as a *dispositif* that can be reinvented seems to be a way of uniting expanded cinema (which concentrates on happenings and performances while allying projection with other types of artistic expression), the cinema of attractions (a filmic practice that constantly interrupts narrative flow) and cinema of exhibition (characterized by a particular spatialization of image and the diversification of temporal flows, on film and in the space of reception).

The term “cinema of attractions” was proposed by the film theorists André Gaudreault and Tom Gunning, who used this term to distinguish early cinema from later institutionalized practices, mainly because it favours monstration to the detriment of narrative flow (Gaudreault and Gunning 2006; Gunning 2006). We believe that all cinema can be read according to the interruption of narrative flow. In this regard, authors such as Roland Barthes and Jean-François Lyotard (and later Serge Daney, Laura Mulvey and Jacques Aumont, among others) called our attention to the question of the freezing of the image. This entails new theoretical approaches—whether of an affective (“punctum”), perceptive (figural), political (feminism) or conceptual (rereading) nature—which seek to analyze what displaces the image from the narrative flow in which it is inserted. While the cinema of attractions can be understood as a cinema striving to capture observers’ attention, to surprise them with variety acts, it can also be seen as the result of a series of experimentations with the cinematic *dispositif*, at a time when such things as narrative flow or the transparency of representation were not a concern. This is a form of cinema that counts on the observer’s capacity to delve into detail and thus to break the flow of the narrative. It is about questioning filmic representation as part of a system of preconceived signs.

For a long time representation was seen, at least in cinema, as a model of transparency that makes it possible to apprehend reality in a functional, specular and encompassing manner. Francesco Casetti (2003, pp. 229-44) stresses the importance of such qualities as opacity, resistance and dispersion, since they

can enable us to think beyond the notion of pure representation. Such an approach is no different from the so-called “obtuse sense” described by Barthes (1984, pp. 43-56) as a non-narrative sign empty of information and possessing its own duration or Lyotard’s (1994, pp. 55-69) “acinema,” characterized by disorder, excess and intransitivity, although these authors found different ways to approach the impossibility of representation. While for Barthes the un-representable lies at the very core of representation, Lyotard finds it outside representation, in various subversions of established laws (such as Cinema Form).

By reshaping traditional screening conditions and narrative, expanded cinema seeks multi-sensorial experiences and presents itself as an autonomous show with its own particular duration. In general, it presupposes the production of a multimedia show, somewhere between cinema, theatre and performance, and the inclusion of an observer in a specific context and duration. Marked by the desire to overcome the limits established by conventional cinema, expanded cinema uses properties from different means of expression and is best described as a cinema of body and presence. These works ask spectators to participate in an experience that has its own pre-established duration, although chance and surprise can also be part of the experience. Expanded cinema is an attempt to dissolve frontiers between the arts and aspires to the unification of artistic practices or the utopia of so-called “total art.” In *The Exploding Plastic Inevitable* (1966), for example, Andy Warhol combined the music of the Velvet Underground, a group of dancers and the simultaneous use of two projectors. Stan VanDerBeek’s *Movie-drome* (1963), which he labelled “Movie-Murals” or “Newsreels of Dreams,” was projected on a hemispheric screen and used a variety of techniques to create image and sound effects. *Feedback no. 1*, *Variations no. 5*, *Poem field no. 2* and *Move-movie* are some of his other best-known experiments using similar techniques.

In a period of media transitions, when the status of images is harder than ever to define, Raymond Bellour (1999, p. 10) has looked into the production of new forms of temporality created by the “passages between images,”<sup>10</sup> since they alter the nature and perception of representation. Indeed, the diversity of

*dispositifs* and experiments has shaped a new aesthetic paradigm, thus creating an intermediate place of instabilities, multiplicities and hybridities. Passages from the mobile to the immobile, variations in image speed and migration among media have been studied by both Bellour, through the concept of “between-images,” and Philippe Dubois (1999, p. 9), through the concept of “improbable movements.” Their respective research stresses the importance of cinema’s intermediality, made obvious by the influence of video and other new technologies, and makes the issue of *dispositif* a fundamental one. The introduction of cinema into galleries and museums raises new questions. The fixed duration imposed on the spectator by regular movie theatres, for example, no longer applies in cinema of exhibition. Its conditions of reception imply an elasticity of time, allowing viewers to follow their own trajectory, to participate in an experience unique to them only. Instead of a definite sequence, it offers different modalities of perception, editing and temporality. Although it shares similarities with expanded cinema—in terms of duration for example, such as Warhol’s *Sleep* or *Empire*—cinema of exhibition is today more of a practice that invites the spectator to go through the images, to delve into them, promoting interaction between images and the audience.

### Cinema as *dispositif*

The current proximity of cinema and media art produces what we might call an art of *dispositifs* which establishes itself according to different kinds of logic—as mechanisms of resistance, of new subjectivities and of novel experiences. Installations become a privileged way to accommodate such a cinema, a “cinema as *dispositif*,” which shares strong similarities with visual arts. The works act as “experimentation fields” in which the spectator reacts strongly to the experience proposed by the artist, where representation may be tested in all its states and limits and where the *dispositif* reveals itself as the essential principle underlying such works.

The works of artists such as Douglas Gordon, Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Stan Douglas, Pierre Huyghe, Doug Aitken, Isaac Julien, Sam Taylor-Wood, Anthony McCall and David Claerbout,

among others, reiterate and recreate the cinema experience. The experiences to which they invite us call our attention to the reconfiguration of cinema's architectural space, using multiple screens (*Today/Tanaan* [Eija-Liisa Ahtila, 1996] and *Third Party* [Sam Taylor-Wood, 1999]), continual repetition of certain film classics (*24 Hour Psycho* [Douglas Gordon, 1996] and *Taxi Driver Too* [Vibeke Tandberg, 2000]) or by experimenting with fundamental properties of the cinematic *dispositif* such as field/counter-field (*Hors-champ* [Stan Douglas, 1993] and *Sections of a Happy Moment* [David Claerbout, 2007]).

We might say that the current relationship between art and cinema is strongly shaped by the idea that the “cinema as *dispositif*,” while undergoing constant changes, does not relinquish its primary condition as cinema. The possibility of a cinema which is simultaneously the same *and* different does not necessarily mean its dominant form is in crisis. In expanded cinema, a movement unfolds between an “I” and the “Other,” it causes a displacement, a tension between dominant cinema and its possible deviations. It results in the production of new subjectivities that surpass dualisms such as activity and passivity, subjectivity and objectivity, narrativity and a-narrativity, truth and falseness, since they now manifest themselves simultaneously within expanded cinema. Works of cinema exhibited in museums and art galleries nowadays can reinvent cinema in several ways—by multiplying screens, undermining traditional narratives and experimenting with duration—because cinema subjectivity has been deeply interiorized. It is this interiorization that allows the dialogue between cinema and other technological and aesthetic regimes.

More than a cinema of rupture, cinema of exhibition, along with new technologies, is characterized by the displacement it produces in relation to current hegemonic models, seeking new modes of seeing and being. Cinema of exhibition differs from other cinemas in the way it evidences the *dispositif*, its active forces and strategies. It does not actually produce a new model of subjectivity, but rather new models of subjectivation, formed in the fissures of the *dispositifs*. The work itself occurs in this disjunction between acknowledgement and displacement, in the creative game of relations in which spectators are engaged with the *dispositifs*.



The *dispositif* brings into play variations, transformations and spectatorial postures that define the horizon of cinematic practice. The array of relations it creates is influenced by a multitude of factors, among which we can distinguish: the techniques employed, developed and displaced; the epistemic context wherein this practice is constructed as well as the world visions it carries; the orders of the discourses that produce inflections and hierarchies in the reception process of the works; conditions of aesthetic experiences, among them institutionalized spaces and pre-established cultural conditions; and, finally, forms of subjectivation, since *dispositifs* are, above all else, the collective equipment of subjectivation.

After its appearance in film studies, the concept of *dispositif* slowly infiltrated other theoretical fields interested in media art, where it became commonly used in works on photography, video, installations, interactive interfaces, videogames, telepresence, etc. This might be explained by the fact that works of art and images, as they “dematerialize” and “scatter” in conceptual or interactive environments, do not necessarily manifest themselves as objects. Images have started to stretch beyond the spaces where they were usually exhibited, such as movie theatres and living rooms, and have begun to occupy galleries, museums and even urban spaces.

Contemporary visual production presents a vast number of *dispositifs* which raise new and unforeseen questions; these are difficult to answer and classify, for they confront us with an experience without any guarantees or specificities. What Deleuze called “lines of flight” seem to be, more than simple lines of segmentation, what really shape and constitute “cinema as *dispositif*” today:

At the same time, again, there is a third kind of line, which is even more strange: as if something carried us away, across our segments, but also across our thresholds, towards a destination which is unknown, not foreseeable, not pre-existent (Deleuze and Parnet 1987, p. 125).

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## NOTES

1. The term *dispositif* is commonly translated into English as “apparatus” or “device.” These translations, however, tend to obscure the original meaning of the word (from the Latin *dispositio*) by focusing on its technical dimension. For reasons of clarity, in this text we will use the French term *dispositif*.
2. “Cinema of exhibition” refers to what French-language authors have recently called “cinéma d’exposition,” “cinéma exposé,” “cinéma d’artiste” and “cinéma de musée” (Paini 2002, p. 1).
3. Conventional cinema, which we will henceforth call “Cinema Form,” might be seen as a particular form of theatre which has become hegemonic. It is, essentially, a model of representation, be it a “narrative-representative-industrial form” (N.R.I., a term coined by Claudine Eizykman) or an “institutional mode of representation” (IMR, a term used by Noël Burch). See Eizykman 1976 and Burch 1990.
4. This is demonstrated by the success of digital technologies. Nowadays, more than 80% of a film’s spectators have seen it through electronic images, on broadcast or cable television or on home video.
5. Baudry 1970 and 1975a. See Baudry 1975 and 1986 for English translations.
6. It is important to point out that Baudry uses the term *dispositif* specifically for the screening conditions that situate the subject. What he calls the “basic apparatus” covers the film stock, the camera, the editing/assembly process and the screening conditions.
7. In “As aventuras do dispositivo (1978-2004),” Ismail Xavier (2005, pp. 175-207) presents an impressive discussion of *dispositif* theory in the twentieth century.
8. In the 1970s, Marie-Claire Ropars (1970) claimed, among other things, that analysis of the film text could not in any way come down to a simple restitution of what already exists in the text as a datum, since it is the result of a complex dynamic of forces between the critic and the text itself.
9. Recall that the term “expanded cinema” had already been used by the experimental filmmakers Jonas Mekas, Kenneth Anger, Paul Sharits, Ken Jacobs, Andy Warhol, Stan Vanderbeek and many others before being popularized by Gene Youngblood (1969).
10. Raymond Bellour curated the exhibition “Passages de l’image” at the Centre Georges Pompidou in 1987, where artists presented works that joined cinema and art in different ways.

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## RÉSUMÉ

### **Un cinéma du dispositif: entre cinéma et art contemporain**

**André Parente et Victa de Carvalho**

De récents bouleversements au sein du paysage médiatique soulèvent deux questions essentielles. Premièrement, de quelle façon les nouveaux médias modifient-ils le dispositif cinématographique, à la fois dans sa dimension architecturale (projection), technologique (production, transmission, distribution) et discursive (montage)? Deuxièmement, en quoi les expérimentations dans le domaine de l'art contemporain produisent-elles des glissements ou des déviations eu égard au mode de représentation institutionnel? Contrairement au cinéma dominant, plusieurs films reçoivent le dispositif cinématographique en multipliant les écrans, en explorant d'autres durées et intensités, en modifiant l'architecture de la salle de projection ou en engageant de nouvelles relations avec le spectateur. Trois moments de l'histoire du cinéma qui témoignent de telles variations seront discutés ici, tout en cherchant à les distinguer à l'aide de la notion de dispositif: le cinéma des attractions, le « cinéma élargi » (*expanded cinema*) et le cinéma d'exposition. Bien qu'ils soient caractérisés par des transformations technologiques évidentes, ces moments font surtout état de diverses expérimentations avec le dispositif cinématographique qui ont été largement négligées par l'histoire du cinéma. Non seulement les déviations occasionnées d'avec un prétendu mode de représentation institutionnel produisent-elles des subjectivités inédites et hétérogènes, mais elles ont aussi un impact décisif sur la théorie du cinéma actuelle.