It is GEOFFREY ALAN RHODES’ penultimate tenure review presentation. He stands before the audience at the podium with his laptop. The screen shows a still of an iPhone, it’s dock shows two apps, "After" and "Cinema."

RHODES
I titled this presentation before I wrote it. ‘After Cinema’ is a name I’ve used in the past to refer to a set of media art that use cameras and screens but in ways separate from the tradition of cinema. I realized it also describes my own artistic career moving from independent film to video and new media installation to augmented reality and new forms of publication. I’m going to enact this parallel literally, beginning my presentation with video and ending it with live Augmented Reality.

So... to begin, ’What was cinema?’


RHODES
Sergei Eisenstein, the Russian filmmaker and theorist, described his vision for cinema in 1929 like this:

Cinema "will be that which resolves the conflict-juxtaposition of the physiological and intellectual... the realization of revolution in the general history of culture; building a synthesis of science, art, and class militancy."

Dziga Vertov in the opening of his film of the same year, Man With a Movie Camera, which we see here, put vis vision more simply, to
RHODES (cont’d)
creat "a truly international language of cinema based on its absolute separation from the language of theater and literature."

They are both talking mainly about the possibilities of montage—these juxtapositions hurling one shot against another on the movie screen to create and communicate new thoughts; in the case of this film, the thought of a day in the life in St. Petersburg in 1928.

These following film clips are cut together without captions, like John Bergers photo essays, to loosely trace a thread of this dream of a universal language over the last century.

For a long time the study of cinema more or less cut out its own territory, separate from Visual Communication Design, separate from Fine Art, but this started to come undone with the confluence of media begun with electronic video and inexpensive film and greatly accelerated by the personal computer, multi-media books and websites, smartphones, apps, tablet computers, and electronic books.

We are just beginning the new age of electronic images and just beginning to see the outlines of the new medium—things like Augmented Reality that fully realize the electronic image—not just movies broadcast over electric wires or recorded on to digital media or enhanced through computer-calculated effects, but a medium which takes live mediation as its essence and material.

This confluence of media and confounding of disciplines is not something we are looking back on, but something that we are swept up
RHODES (cont’d)

within. It’s always good to remind ourselves of the timeline... when Vertov made Man With a Movie Camera, cinema was about 34 years out from Lumiere’s first screenings. The Apple II was released 37 years ago this year. The internet opened to universities 28 years ago. Facebook is 10. The iPhone 7. The iPad 4.

I began thinking about this stuff about 20 years ago.

...

The video plays the beginning of Metonymy & Multichannel, in which the Bergson quote appears...

RHODES

This is the first self-reflexive video essay I ever made. It was for a conference on Giles Deleuze and his concept of the Time Image in cinema. I was fascinated by the idea of a cinema screen fractured into different frames. I had made a series of works in that form, and in this video cut those works together over an off-screen voice-over of my essay, the video doing what I was talking about.

VIDEO

"I want to ask a simple question..."

The video changes to a panning still of a page from Understanding Comics: types of closure.

RHODES

To put this in to context, I had read Scott McCloud’s ‘Understanding Comics’ soon after it was published in the early 90s and my immediate thought was ‘how about using this comic book language in cinema’. This was the decade of excitement around cheap digital video, and I had the thought which Mike Figgis realized in his film
RHODES (cont’d)
Timecode-- the idea that just four of these cheap cameras, if put together, could make up a 35mm frame in the cinema. The film was released the same year I went to graduate school, and I took the experience of seeing this film in the theater with me to Buffalo, New York.

The video plays part of my Timecodes. Then, when mentioned, plays selections of mentioned Buffalo artists: Sharits, Conrad, Frampton, (Gary Hill), Campus.

RHODES
This is the first multi-channel film I made there-- or at least the first good one, titled 'Timecodes'--one letter different from Mike Figgis' title. It was based on a photographic series I had made the year previous, trying to pull apart the moment of compulsion in a sequence of shots--kind of calling in to question the model of Before, During, and After when mapped on to actual lived experience.

The use of hand-processed Super 8mm film was because of my entry into Western New York. I was strongly influenced by the structuralist tradition of film and video that had grown up there in the 70’s: Paul Sharits, Tony Conrad, Hollis Frampton, Gary Hill, Peter Campus...

The video changes to a selection of Distance of the Observer, Scopophilia, Tesseract, Mirror Series.

RHODES
Putting these two influences together was a bit of a voyage over a period of about five years in a string of films and installations made for the microcinema, festivals, and art galleries. I started with the idea of mapping time and story onto the screen as in comic books, and then
RHODES (cont’d)
became interested in juxtaposing perspective and subjectivity, voyearism and mediation, and then landed on a long-standing interest in the fractured screen, made up of effects and channels of video, being a stage for performance—a sort of material through which we can see the individual self-reflexively explore identity.

The video changes to a selection of MOIA.

RHODES
This, conceptually, became the subject of my first feature film and first large-scale collaboration: the documentary, Made Over in America which I made with body and media theorist, Bernadette Wegenstein. This was around 2006 and there was a spate of reality television surgical makeover shows. With several large production grants we went out and interviewed producers, surgeons, contestants, and audiences of these shows as well as media theorists and psychologists and tried to draw a line between what images were doing in the media and what people were doing with their real bodies. Our central character was Cindy, a woman who had been a contestant on the second season of Fox network’s The Swan. I think in this clip, in which she relives the experience of the show’s climax, you can see the conceptual connection to earlier work.

The video plays Cindy’s reliving of the mirror moment. When mentioned, it switches to Buried Land.

RHODES
At the time, facebook was just a few years old, the iPhone had not yet been released, ‘avatars’ and ‘Virtual Reality’ were still the subject of critical discussion, and questions about contemporary life—like having a mediated
virtual self that is larger than the real self--were just emerging. My second feature, a collaboration with London filmmaker Steven Eastwood, looked at this from the opposite side. We traveled to a small town in Bosnia that had been transformed by claims in international news media that the neighboring hills hid ancient buried pyramids. In to this community, a little like Kiarostami, we brought a vague script and two actors and worked with the people there to create a feature film neither all fiction nor all documentary that never solves the question of whether there actually are buried pyramids surrounding the town of Visoko.

To draw the thread, the inspiration for the project was a 2006 BBC news story in which they described how hotels had been renamed, murals had been painted, models were being sold in gift shops, all based on pyramids that had never been seen but only imagined. I thought of a very old town quickly transformed through imagined pictures and this imagination sustained in news and other media-- this is what fascinated me... a virtual world changing the real one.

The video shows a DART cube visualization.

RHODES
So this where we get to the ‘After’ part of the title ‘After Cinema’. This is what I saw in 2006 when Jay Bolter visited York University in Toronto where I was studying and he demonstrated the Directors Augmented Reality Toolkit that they had developed at Georgia Tech. The demo looked like this: a cube floating over a piece of specially printed paper. I was fascinated. Over the next two years I worked with a team to
RHODES (cont’d)
launch the Future Cinema and Augmented Reality Lab at York University and its first project, my own concept for a deck of cards that could be mapped with video: specifically the 52 shots that make up the shower scene of Alfred Hitchcock’s Psycho.

52 Card Psycho demo plays, and then other 52card cinema demos, followed by Manifest.AR documentation

RHODES
This, my first interactive media installation was installed in different iterations internationally and led to my first Augmented Reality publications working with a new AR art collective called Manifest.AR. Beginning in 2010, with the wave of smartphones really taking off, we published works using two new AR platforms called Layar and Junaio. We made playful riffs, working with that which the changing technology was capable... erasing the border between North and South Korea, parades of lo-res graphical animations that can only be seen through your smartphone, parodying currency through image recognition, visualizing tweet trends as cave-painting pictograms... It took a while to dawn on me that these things we were making, which I thought of as interactive videos, were actually publications. A new, unexpected genre of multi-media publications that can be sent out to the world through app marketplaces to communicate experiences and concepts.

It was during this time I joined SAIC and moved from a Film/Animation department to a Visual Communication Design department.

Documentation of EPub class plays. Then, when mentioned, NueMorte.
RHODES
There is a certain freedom which I experienced changing disciplines, which is to say, contexts. Reacting to design students’ engagement with book forms and interest in new electronic forms of publication online and in apps, I began to think of Augmented Reality in these terms. I coincided my teaching and my practice, starting a course in making new book forms for tablet computers, and taking on projects that sought to publish AR experiences as individual works.

These are student works from the Electronic Publications Studio course I began in 2012.

That same year I published my first app as an iPhone developer—a collaboration with Claudia Hart here at SAIC, titled NueMorte. As a publication, it is a riff on the limited edition in which a custom plate set is sold through galleries, but the actual experience of the plate set can only be had once you download the app and view the plate through it. Writing about the project recently in a book chapter, I described the trompe l’oeil effect as an inversion of 3D and 2D, real and virtual— the real plate becomes just a screen for the deeper world of a virtual 3D nude.

The video shows stills of TheAlicesApp, then Broadway Augmented, and Chicago 0,0 as they are mentioned.

RHODES
This has led to a second collaboration, an app that is to be published this month for part of a performance at Eyebeam in New York city in March. In this case, a set of costume-dresses have been created and performers choreographed for a stage show that will only be realized through the
mediation of an Augmented Reality app downloaded to the audience’s smartphones and also on provided tablet computers. The audience will surround the performers like paparazzi, but in this case instead of taking pictures they are seeing pictures through their devices: changing scrambled text from Alice in Wonderland augmented onto the dresses in strobing signs. These same augmented fabrics will then be exhibited at Bitforms gallery in Chelsea in the Spring.

Two other projects are currently in development and production. Broadway Augmented is a project with the Sacramento Arts Council in which a set of 11 commissioned artists will envision public sculptures for the Broadway Corridor in Sacramento and these works will be translated into 3D models and published through a custom app for an opening next Fall (these models shown are just rough stand-ins used for the app prototype, the artists’ works are not yet created). The expectation is that, through this process, in the future an actual (real) public art work will be commissioned based on users experiences.

Chicago 0,0 is a new collaboration with the Chicago History Museum in which their large unpublished archive of historical photography, drawings, dioramas and other content will be curated and placed in to the downtown core of Chicago to be viewed superimposed on the places from which they were originally taken. The AR experience app works as both a publication of the museum’s archives in to the community and as an entryway to a new database of geo-tagged items in their archives. The central experience is this augmentation of seeing a
RHODES (cont’d)

past superimposed onto a corresponding present.

The screen goes black. As it is introduced, the HUMAN changes applications on the computer to SnapDragon and enters a fullscreen live video feed from the webcam; then draws his cards.

RHODES
The other series of works which I began at SAIC is the AR on AR performance lectures. These are a series of lectures, pre-produced in video, and then delivered out to the audience at conferences and venues using the card-based AR medium developed at York University.

(turning on the fullscreen live video)

To describe this series of talks, I’ve produced a short one for today: an AR presentation about my presentations.

The HUMAN draws a card and reveals it to the camera. It is superimposed with an image of him, in the same clothes, against a white background. Inside the card he talks:

CARD1
Over the past two years with these cards I’ve talked about Augmented Reality in several contexts: performance and protest, early cinema and stage magic, cubism and multichannel, the virtual and real in mediation, and most recently, ekphrasis and the museum...

They usually begin with some delineating of the territory, and insisting that it is not simple, like this:

A card is drawn showing Spouting Off AR description.

CARD - SPOUTING OFF
I’m interested in one newish medium in which the context and circulation of artwork is transformed. Self-evident in the mode of presentation, this is
what’s called either Augmented Reality or Mixed Reality. It is where ‘virtual’ content is overlaid on or mixed with ‘actual’ content. Already, just using those two words, I have confounded any critical description of what we are talking about. ‘Actual’ and ‘virtual’ are ontologically and epistemologically loaded—especially when the actual, as it is now, is presented as live mediation through video, and the virtual, is just pre-recorded video of that same subject earlier.

Then I go on to say that any conceptual definition is insufficient, it is always wrapped up with a set of changing technical gear. ...This part usually involves costumes and staging.

There is something about the novelty of technology that is part of the particular experience we’re referring to. It evokes, not just for me, pre-cinematic stage illusion performances, where the whole idea of smoke and mirrors—Pepper’s Ghost and automatons—was not knowing exactly where and what the technology was.

I usually draw the historical line of work from Jeffrey Shaw’s 1994 work, The Golden Calf through to Google Glass.

These cards are shown simultaneously.

And inbetween these, survey the state of the art.
And then discuss the problems. Like here when I discuss AR art projects that center on protest and interventions:

**CARD - SPOUTING OFF**
There is something shallow and ephemeral about virtual objects; it is, really, a tautology. Does it matter to invade controlled spaces if they are not legally invaded and if the content is only viewable if someone with a smartphone chooses to view it? There is, certainly, a connection with performance art, where the larger life of a project is in its press and the knowledge of its occurrence (or in the case of AR, its existence).

Or here, discussing the special mediation through AR:

**CARD - SCMS**
Here, things are made stranger by the spatial montage of these images-- it takes on a sort of Cubist collage, daring us to not resolve these boxes into a single form.

Or on simulation:

**CARD - SCMS**
Effects have gone from this... to this. ... It is no longer a representation of fantasy but a simulation of it. Not so much a trick within an illusionistic medium, but a seamless illusion in which you don’t know the boundaries between mediated-actual, and synthetic-virtual.

Or discussing AR in the museum and the desire for an immersive but invisible media commentary:
CARD - MUSEUMS
Media cannot be invisible. Parallel content--especially visual--occludes real content. It stands in the way. After all, one of the goals for AR is to make transparent the invasive world of digital media... to solve for us the problem of smartphones, which the comedian Louis CK recently described as ‘taking away the ability to just sit there.’ ‘To just be yourself and not be doing something.’

CARD1
And then conclude with an affirmation with the question ‘Who cares about all this?’

CARD - SPOUTING OFF

CARD - MUSEUMS
There is a real desire, maybe a techno-utopian desire, that these projects are trying to address. We want to be flaneurs of digital culture, observant engaged wanderers of the technosphere. And, at least for some, there is a dream of doing this without spending eight hours a day staring at a phone or laptop screen, scanning Tumblr and Facebook and the things rhizomatically linked out from them.

CARD1
The process of composing these talks-- screenplays drafted, video production and editing, then cutting them up and sequencing them for performance is, appropriately for me, a confluence of media,
CARD1 (cont’d)
combining performance, video, interactivity, and published out to the world as videos. My current project is taking these presentations and re-constructing them into a multi-media book for iPad, taking me full circle to my early interest in Scott McLeod’s Understanding Comics, a book which uses presentation as the basis for the self-reflexive media essay.

A card is drawn which shows the iPad book prototype. For the conclusion, the cards showing Rhodes floating through the AIC are shown silently.

CARD1
I want to conclude with one thought. I think part of the fascination of these AR talks is the uncontrolled nature of the juxtapositions— the performer manages the cards, but the exact juxtapositions and montages created are by machine. There is a certain titillation in this, and in the larger montage, between a real human and his smaller virtual self held in his hand a certain ‘lilliputian humor’. I connect this with my earlier fascination with ‘spatial montage’ in a fractured screen, and these things could be called a new wave of ‘mechanical juxtaposition’ that also includes the picture essays we discover on Tumblr, web-aggregators, and the like. All of this you could say is part of Art in the Age of Mechanical Juxtaposition of which we are a part, and a new age of truly multi-media Visual Communication.