

PROCEDURAL MONTAGE: ALGORITHMIC CINEMAS, AFFECTIVE SCROLLING

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Could social platforms that use primarily audiovisual content be considered a kind of cinema? While swipes and scrolling take over from the montage table, the distracted viewer of early cinema still lingers in the precarious user-viewer-producer of social media networks. As the debates on cinematic spectatorship recently started to include transdisciplinary understandings of negotiated agency between the viewer and the image, similarly the increasing algorithmic automation of visual culture presents new angles for considering the circulation of affect and negotiation of agency in the moving image ecologies formed by human users and platforms. Furthermore, as algorithmic processing enters higher levels of complexity, various operations of automation become more and more opaque, hidden behind the proprietary claims of the platform stakeholders. Machinic epistemologies of pattern-finding and predictive analytics are inserted in the cultural production, delegating the decision-making to algorithmic processing.³ The experiential and affective space of audiovisual consumption becomes looped into the algorithms of attention economy. This can be clearly seen in the social media networks based exclusively on visual communication, such as TikTok or Snapchat, that thrive by exploiting the audiovisual automatism, scrolling and autoplay functions, built into contemporary interfaces. These 'biopolitical screens' become the primary affective spaces in which we negotiate our agential position in relation to technology.⁴ This paper aims to understand the role of procedural algorithmic montage of moving images in social media networks, looking at TikTok as a primary example. I propose to approach this montage as 'affective scrolling', and outline how it can be understood as a moving image paradigm of the age of neoliberal techno-cultures.

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