

Video Live-set, the Collective Performance

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Picture 1. Candida's Live-set. Images from Palestinian Intifada.
CSOA Ex Snia, December 2000.
Frame from my research footage

Abstract

Este ensayo se basa en un estudio etnográfico sobre la práctica de los Live-set en los Centros Sociales italianos (*Centri Sociali Occupati Autogestiti* - CSOA). Los Live-set se caracterizan por la proyección de imágenes al ritmo de música en las fiestas que llaman “free parties”. Experimentando con formas no lineares de comunicación, jugando con la yuxtaposición y los fragmentos, el Live-set responde a la ética hacker de los CSOA que apropia los signos para subvertir los significados. Esta performance colectiva es una representación cultural de un movimiento que apuesta en formas rizomáticas de organización política. Al mismo tiempo con el Live-set esta contra-cultura celebra y reconfigura su propio imaginario como parte de un movimiento global de resistencia y oposición social.

Abstract

This essay is based on the ethnographic study on the practice of Live-set in the Italian Social Centres (*Centri Sociali Occupati Autogestiti* - CSOA). Live-set are characterized by the projection of images at the rhythm of music in the “free parties”. Experimenting with non-linear forms of communication by playing with juxtaposition and fragments, the Live-set respond to CSOA's hacker ethic of appropriate signs to subvert their meanings. This collective performance is the cultural representation of a movement that believe in horizontal and rhizomatic forms of political organizations. At the same time, with the Live-set this counter-culture celebrates and reconfigures its imagery as part of a global movement of resistance and social opposition.

INTRODUCTION

From the ashes of this decade long social struggle (1967-1977), new oppositional practices started to emerge, which found in the newly contested urban space a new arena for struggle with the established powers. The contradictions and conflicts characterising city life of the 1970's and 1980's became the arena of struggle for the CSOA movement. Toward the end of the 1970s, a wave of illegal occupation of abandoned buildings – usually obsolete factories or ex public schools and hospitals - begun to disrupt the planned 'order' of the official city organization. These spaces, recovered from the ruins of industrial society, were re-appropriated and turned into *Centri Sociali Occupati e Autogestiti*, CSOA, (Occupied and Self-managed Social Centres) a type of self-managed 'community centre', used by local people as cultural, and 'political laboratories'. The CSOA became the headquarters of a new oppositional movement, which developed further the idea of everyday life as a site for resistance (De Certeau, 1984). Alternative forms of social life and co-operative work were explored. Communication became central to the forms of political organization of this new social movement.

In this article I examine the practice of the *Live-set* in the context of the CSOA video activism and the experimental approach to communication that characterise this subculture¹.

In 1984, in London, the phenomena of scratch video appeared.

... the politically committed activity of the Agit-Prop groups – the Douvet Brothers and the Gorilla Tapes – [...] promote processes of collective expression and work with a repertoire of images apparently familiar, but in fact charged with subversive messages. [...] Offering a counter-tendency to the packaged news that goes the rounds of the editorial offices of newspapers and television stations throughout the world – for a homogeneous and standard public, to suit a supposed international taste – the Scratch groups section the event into micro-sequences to arrive at the heart of the information and to disarticulate its mechanisms of counterfeit (Perrella and Cascella 2000:200).

In Italy, a similar practice, called *Live-set*, appears in the CSOA and in nightclubs in the late Nineties.

THE VISUAL LANDSCAPE OF THE CSOA

Poetry

*Immediate communication of reality
in the interstitial spaces
in the cracks
in the wounds
in the clefts of the white wall
the creative game is to play
at the mobile re-definition of meanings
(Text 'shot' over images in Candida's Live-set)*

Unlike North America where a community TV such as *Paper Tiger Television* existed for thirty years, it is in the Nineties that the taboo of TV was to be broken in Italy. After sporadic attempts at creating community (pirate) TVs by groups working within the CSOA on communication, in 1997, the video collective *Candida* launches the slogan, from '*Forte Prenestino*', "*Don't hate the Media, become the Media*". In their output the TV and advertising codes of mass commercial communication are violated, de-constructed, subverted and finally re-appropriated. The new video-activism plays with MTV, talk show and TV advertisement styles. Provocative and ironic TV spots promote mass-demonstrations. Eventually these works are shown on local and private TV stations; *Candida show* makes fun of TV genres while at the same time it re-launches its in depth reportage activities and even an ironic version of cine vérité. The MTV style of employing music and images provides a grammar through which young people interpret meanings. This grammar is subverted and turned into surrealist visual poetry in the *Live-set* performances that accompany raves and dance "free parties". Here young video-makers 'play' images to the rhythm of music.

Changes in musical tastes and fashion contributed substantially to CSOA video-makers way of thinking about the practice of editing. The music styles of Techno, House, Garage, Drum and Bass, Rap, and Hip Hop, have in common an accent on rhythm more than on melody. Here, with the exception of Hip Hop and Rap, the lyrics tends to disappear, leaving sound as the protagonist. Similarly, in the 1980s, electronic music seemed to speak for the excess of technology in industrial and post-industrial society. The proliferation of these musical trends which are classified on the basis of the amount of beats per minute characterising each style tells us how much value young music consumers attribute to the acceleration of stimuli. Again, the technological (electronic and digital) supports of the new music are crucial in shaping current sensibilities.

In the *Live-set* (and also, in more recent CSOA documentary productions, in particular those made by Fluid Video Crew, FVC), music is the dominant element and the main driver of audience emotions. Images amplify the impact of and are in dialogue with the sound track. With the technique of 'cut-up' CSOA video activists

juxtapose fragments of mainstream cinema, TV and music production but also material from their auto-documentation. This becomes the object of constant re-elaboration and de-contextualization. CSOA visual installations show fragments of demonstrations, of everyday life and activities in the CSOA. These are mixed with images of the city and clips from TV and cinema. This blending of footage seems to me to celebrate CSOA culture both by contrasting their views of the social reality with those expressed by TV broadcast and also by showing the CSOA movement as part of a world of social opposition.

Anthropologist Victor Turner (1987) stressed the intrinsic relationship between performance and its socio-cultural context. He argued that we need to study “*the history, social history, and cultural history of the “worlds” which encompass the dramatic traditions we are considering*” and to pay attention to “*the social and political processes to which the dramas [performances] bear direct or oblique witness*” (Turner, 1987:28-29). This is effectively what I aimed to do with this ethnography. The interviews with the video-collectives which follow and my participant observation in the *Live-set* parties allowed me to interpret these performances within their socio-cultural contexts.

THE LIVE-SET OF FLUID VIDEO CREW

“I like to see the Live-set not as a documentary that tells you a story from beginning to end, but as a series of contrasts that make you think. What you reflect, and how, it’s up to you. Each one of us does it differently”.

Edoardo (FVC)

“... to project the images of the local people’s faces... it was a good feeling... and for the people as well, they were not only watching themselves but also seeing their district [represented], which maybe was not even theirs, but rather our, and it won’t ever be the same as theirs”.

Lorenzo (FVC)

Before I first visited *FVC* studio, in 1999, I had already managed to watch some of their works, and I could ask crew member Davide specific questions. In particular, I asked him about the *Live-set*, a type of live performance someone had told me about, where images were mixed, mainly at parties, in ways similar to which Djs mix music. I had not been at a *Live-set*, but I had seen a tape with some clips from a few of them. Then I had the chance to view a recorded version of a *Live-set*. This consisted of a frenetic ‘cut-up’ made with fragments from videos produced by either *FVC* or other video collectives. It also included footage from the TV,

commercial cinema and computer animation. It seemed like a kind of installation which could not be simply read as a documentary or a fiction film since it did not follow conventional rules of narration. The images were edited with the ‘logic of repetition’, so that a certain topic would stand out from the apparent chaos of the fast cut-up.

I asked Davide about the difference between this technique of communication and that of MTV. Davide smiled and told me:

Well, I am not sure if we are achieving what we intended to, but... the idea is that in using a kind of communication with which the general public is already familiar, because of the TV, we can to use the same language to say something different; to fill it with our contents.

I thought about the structure of attention which is constantly modified and made more fragile by a combination of factors amongst which are TV advertisements, channel zapping, video-games and the *mediascape* of the metropolis: “The metropolis spreads itself like a panorama full of signs and dreams” (Canevacci, 1999:23). My mind goes back to the lines I had recently read in the magazine *Derive/Approdi*:

Fluxes, signs and neuroperceptive stimulations constantly modify the condition of the collective mind. Resonant, visual signs, word signs, synesthesia, alterations. The attention is the field of conquest of the fin de siècle economy. Therefore the attention is sieged, bombed, seduced, dissected, attacked. Constant attentive stress. Probable effect: progressive desensibilisation (Bifo, 1995)

FVC suggests that the *Live-set* consists in the appropriation and subversion of the dominant codes of visual language (especially that of the TV). Davide warned me that the *Live-set* could not be understood outside the situation in which is created. Outside the moment of its performance it loses its meaning. He says:

We keep the tapes as some sort of record, but you cannot understand what a Live-set is from watching it in a TV monitor by yourself: it is not the same. It is a performance in a specific space; each one of them with a specific installation, with live music, people etc; it is created by the people who are present. It is something you have to experience. It is not the same on a tape.

Victor Turner pointed out that the meaning of a performance cannot be isolated by the time and space in which it take place. Drawing on Singer (1972) about the notion of ‘cultural performance’, Turner wrote:

[performative] genres are instruments whose full reality is in their 'playing', in their performance, in their use in social settings – they should not be seen merely as scripts, scenarios, scores, stage directions, or other modes of blueprinting, diagramming, or guiding. Their full meaning emerges from the union of scripts with actors and audience at a given moment in a group's ongoing social process (Turner, 1987:24).

What was the message of these *fast-images*? Should I have looked for one in the first place? And if there was no message, what were they doing and why? Davide told me *"It may seem that our Live-set are not based on narrative, but actually they are the ones most based on narrative, when compared to those made by other groups"*.

He shows me a series of tapes nicely ordered on the shelf: they have different names written on them: *city, crowds, control...* and explains: *"We divide some material by topics, so that when we are in a Live-set we can mix more easily. The way it works is by creating meaningful contrasts"*.

I thought about Vertov, Eisenstein and generally the early Russian style of montage² where the audience was engaged to produce meanings. However, in the case of the *Live-set* the juxtaposition of images would only suggest 'meaningful contrasts' and create a situation where the Djs, the video artists and the public would be giving each other a feedback by the way they would respond to each other stimuli and participate in the performance.

AC

What distinguishes the Live-set from a bombardment of images?

Lorenzo

It differs in a substantial way. First of all it's an immediate experience. This is the concept of video-art, of installations in general, not just of the Live-set, where there is a physical role played by those who participate. It takes place in a specific place, with a Dj who mixes the music live while we mix the images, and there is an installation arranged in the urban space or the place where we do it. It is a direct experience: where people dance, get drugs or is totally lucid, anyone can make their own decision, the thing is open... this is the general premise, independently from how we do it... and, again, there is not fixed rule...

We realised that when we were filming, aside from what we were editing, we were left with a lot of material [and we started to experiment with it] ... therefore emerged the video fragment, the loop, the frame, taking determinate portions of images and assembling them into other completely different ones to create a flux, depending on the night, or the inspiration. Images that by themselves have

no relationship to one another, and have no meaning in themselves, but once mixed with a certain kind of music, with a graphic intervention, with the choices you make at that very moment in relation to the place where you are, acquire another value.

For example, we made three nights on the Balkans in Prato, Florence [Tuscany] and at Forte [Prenestino]. During the previous month we collected a lot of material on the Balkans; TV news on the war, Serbian and Albanian films, documentaries – we also had made few years before a documentary on Albania [Squiperia, 1997]. [After the political and economic crisis in the early Nineties thousands of Albanians were coming by sea to Italy, where, if they were lucky enough to survive the journey, they were often arrested by the Italian military forces and sent back to Albania]. We got all this material and worked on it in a certain way and made these nights which were similar to a theatre play. Every installation is different. For example I remember one we did in Florence that I really liked; where people were not even dancing, were sitting like in a cinema, with the Dj playing music live like in early cinema. The reference was to the silent cinema where the music was played live, with the orchestra and the piano, but now there was a Dj. It lasted two hours. At some point the Dj would lower the music and the sounds of an interview in albanian made in a detention center in Brindisi [south of Italy] would come on.

The way in which we used the audio was influenced by the experience of the metropolis, when you walk at Via del Corso [a popular shopping street in the centre of Rome, usually crowded, like Oxford Street in London]. You walk and hear a few seconds of someone's speech. Then you enter into the conversation of someone else. Then, suddenly you have to stop as a motorbike crosses your way and gives you that sense of .. [he makes an expression to indicate surprise] then you enter in a shop and there is music in the background... We try to work with this multiple levels of sounds to create a sensory experience, like a theatre-show, where you have a stage but instead of having actors you have screens and speakers. Then we write some texts and projected them. They are either literary or personal contributions, taken from historical account, or else... there are various levels of intervention...

Fluid Video Crew's reference to Futurism is clear here in its celebration of city life. In his study on the Brazilian city of São Paulo, Canevacci (1997) wrote,

those communicative models developed by futurism [...] have been fostered by the city-form itself: simultaneity, analogy, fragmentation, polyphony. (Canevacci, 1997:61)

Before Bakhtin (1963) had employed the notion of polyphony as a metaphor of the novel of Dostoevsky, this was theorised by the futurists at the beginning of the century as analogous to the urban context (Canevacci, 1997:63).

It is interesting to note how this FVC 'futurist' sensibility parallels contemporary anthropological discourses. Talking about ethnographic method as editing, Canevacci wrote, "It is an unstable and restless method that adjusts itself, as it were, to the landscape of urban communication" (Canevacci, 1997:61).

AC

Once Davide explained to me the preparation of the tapes for a Live-set. I saw a tape [of a recorded Live-set], which seemed to focus on the issue of control in the city. There were images of cameras on the street corners contrasted with others of different kind of crowds. He told me that your Live-set are more narrative than what they may appear. However, sometime in the Live-sets made by Candida I really felt bombarded, and when focusing on the texts, I could not help looking for a message and, instead, I ended up feeling intoxicated...

[later, I realised that the 'message' was embedded in the thick fabric of the CSOA subculture, which required a deeper engagement with that culture to become meaningful].

Lorenzo

Again, there has been an evolution. [...] In Tor Bella Monaca, after we made the video, we screened some of the images we previously shot in the neighbourhood with the people and then show these images to them again, on the occasion of a ball night – usually these are nights organized for people to get together and have fun – but to show the images, the faces of the people living there in the form of the kind of installation you could see at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni [Exhibition Palace in Rome]. [It felt great] to project the images of the local people's faces... it was a good feeling... and for the people [as well], they were not only watching themselves but also seeing their district [represented], which maybe was not even theirs, but rather ours, and won't ever be the same as theirs. We always try to relate a meaning to the images of the Live-set, not just colour or aesthetic.

Edoardo

The step between simply creating a choreography or telling a story is something we decide upon each time. In Tor Bella Monaca the Live-set had a meaningful title: *Ci Manca Tutto Non Ci Serve Niente*, [We Lack of All, We Need Nothing]. We told the stories of the occupiers of the CSOA in a peripheral district such as Tor Bella Monaca by contrasting it with the groups of kids on the sides of the streets of Morena [the outskirts where FVC made the

video *Com Franko*, 1998], or the dressed up girls of *Via del Corso* [main shopping street in the centre of Rome], or even with the fans of *Take That*, going crazy because the music group was disbanding. A series of contrasts... In Tor Bella Monaca we were dealing with the relationship or the gap between the people who occupy the side of the streets, the CSOA, the shopping malls, the stadiums, and, at the same time showing that they all live in a metropolis that seems like an enormous organic animal. The traffic, the cars, the roads, the buildings, the video cameras controlling you, the traffic lights... three minutes of these images in a documentary go probably unnoticed, but if you show this in a incessant way during the night along two whole hours you start to understand this: something will stay with you.

Therefore, our way of being thematic within the Live-set is a light form, diluted all the time; rather gentle; but we do say something that we thought about; even if it is simply an allusive contrast, that only came to my mind.

Therefore, there is always a kind of ambiguity between the ludic and the narrative aspects of the Live-set. We seek to create an atmosphere, a context, so that if you look at one monitor for few minutes something will stay with you. Then, for the rest of the night you may be dancing or having a beer, but if you go back to a monitor you may be faced with a simple concept, such as, that we live in a metropolis which seems like an enormous organic animal that is eating you; or the contrast between young people of the same age; some organizing a sit-in and clashing with the police over very important questions, and others organizing a sit-in in Piazza del Popolo to protest against the disband of the *Take That*, in an euphoric, almost militant, way.

I like to see the Live-set not as a documentary that tells a story from beginning to end, but as a series of contrasts that make you think. What you reflect, and how, it's up to you. Each one of us does it differently, but it is about putting together things that clash and make you think.

THE LIVE-SET OF CANDIDA

"The Live-set doesn't seek a speed, it seeks a rhythm synchronised with the present moment. The difference is exactly this: the Live-set doesn't address an external public, public and producers are all in the same place at the same time in a very amalgamated situation, therefore, generally, the resulting rhythms are as much as possible collective rhythms..."

"When these things happen, shared meaning becomes the result of a collective labour, a collective text; rather than depending on the ability of a single editor or author to create a product".

Valentina (Candida)

AC

You still haven't talked to me about the Live-set. Is it noise or it is not?

Valentina

Is it noise? Yes and no. [She interrogates Lele with her eyes]

Lele

It is what we call the 'electric body', which many people who connect with Candida through the free parties can have access to and experiment with: it is what we also call 'domestic' direction [the DJ and 'VJ' 'controls' are no longer in a separate box, they are in some part of the dance floor, and everybody can have their go at it].

Valentina

The interesting thing about the Live-set is that it is an instantaneous palimpsest. In fact, although it is based on preparatory work, where we select some material, the ways in which we show this material depend on the emotional wave and the people's moods alternating during the night that can be a party or something else. Therefore the broadcast is very emotional, and not narrative... it is mainly of visual impact, even if we also send some texts over the images.

Lele

We also insert the 'live' [images filmed during the party]

AC

Is it a show using as many technological tools as possible to add to the noise of sounds the noise of images; or is also about the desire to communicate something, apart from entertainment?

Valentina

It is about both things.

*Because the point is that of experimenting with a language that is not imperative in relation to meaning, that is, the *sparaconcetti* [literally: 'concept-shooter', a computer program which allows words to be superimposed onto the images at various speeds] doesn't produce a text that you would read like a book, linearly... you only get few words that pass by very fast on a video. During the night you would only get a few words or concepts, and images... it is a kind of research about the de-structuring of the syntax of visual language.*

AC

But the speed at which images and words are 'shot' does prevent people from feeling, reflecting or relating to these images; since, as you connect to one, another one will come? Isn't hard to retain an image or a concept?

Valentina

It doesn't have to be retained. An image of a Live-set does not have a meaning in itself. It is up to the people who participate to put a stimulus in relation to all the rest; because a party is a situation where people get together, not to see what we screen, but because that is only one thing together with music, with the people that come, and all the general circulation of information.

Lele

Also, music is more overwhelming than video; and anyway the images do not seek to impose a meaning. If you find a narrative thread, it is what you find yourself and is definitely different from the one I am working on from the console, or the people who are filming live, or working on the texts. And this is what we like about it: the diversity of the emotions... that anyhow get transmitted but instantaneously. Probably the Live-set does not want to tell a story, but to create emotion and give stimuli.

Analysing the aesthetic of drama in different ages, V. Turner (1987) argues that this can only be partially understood without considering the social context in which it took place. He wrote:

"What we are looking for here is not so much the traditional preoccupation with text alone but text in context, not in a static structuralist context but in the living context of dialectic between aesthetic dramatic processes and sociocultural processes in a given place and time" (Turner, 1987:28).

Valentina

The interesting thing is also that at some point, by chance, within all this chaotic and a-systematic production, that goes against any linear and logical structure, there are some moments in which all this gets to some 'peaks' of shared meaning, so that, after a working-up period, all the various people working, at the music, at the texts, etc. by chance, all start to put things on that mesh together, without having agreed anything in advance. On many occasions people told us after a party that there were some moments when the images and music were very effective in matching the emotion of the event. When these things happen, shared meaning becomes the result of a collective labour; a collective text; rather than depending on the ability of a single editor or author to create a product.

Lele

*There are other times when we decide to make a Live-set on a very specific theme [as FVC did with *Balkan-OFF*]. It may be an actual theme or something that we particularly care about such as the prison system, biotechnology, social control, drugs etc. So we may prepare some material and decide with whom to make the music and what to do. On these occasions it is very interesting to see how different individual languages would blend together: video, theatre-performances, and the music would try to amalgamate together*

Each media involves a range of senses. Their "nuanced instruments [are] capable of carrying and communicating many messages at once, even of subverting on one level what it appears to be "saying" on another" (Turner, 1987:24,

on Singer 1972). So music and written texts are often in contrast with each other, and sometimes they ‘say’ the same thing. At other times, the written text plays with the participant, by abruptly interrupting a sentence and saying something else.

The way in which *Candida* blends different media together, bears parallels with Antonin Artaud’s idea of performance. In *The Theatre and Its Double* (1938) we read:

It is not, moreover, a question of bringing metaphysical ideas directly on to the stage, but creating what you might call temptations, in draughts of air around these ideas. And humour with its anarchy, form poetry with its symbolism and its images, furnish a basic notion of ways to channel the temptation of these ideas... by positive means (means of spellbinding music, dance, pantomime, mimicry, turning words into incantations, etc.) the sensitivity is put in a state of deepened and keener perception, and this is the very object of the magic and the rites of which the theater is only a reflection (1958 [1938]: 91; in V.Turner, 1987:30).

I ask them to compare their work to *Blob*, an Italian TV programme that, almost ten years ago, created a type of satire taking clips of TV programmes, especially News, political speeches and talk shows, and editing them in such a way as to stress the nonsense and or reactionary content of the messages. This subversive practice of montage, would disrupt the ‘naturalness’ of the discourses performed by the TV; the mass media *par excellence*.

AC

When Blob employs this technique of the cut-up, taking an element out of its context, it takes away one meaning only to create another one. Therefore, after you see one hour of Blob, certainly you haven’t followed a linear path; however, through this technique you have received some precise messages. Some TV programmes are now increasingly using fast editing, where the fragments take you from one thing to another without any overt message in it.

Since you tend to re-invent and re-elaborate on TV languages, how much the Live-set is an effect of these recent TV fragmenting and speeding styles, and how much is the result of a choice, of your independent research?

Valentina

We are interested neither in the speed nor the fragmentation of information. We conduct research on the shattering of exactly those languages that focus on the ‘news’; so that, for example, the events of Genoa are no longer ‘news’ because they are past; when actually, we know that the consequences of those events are still suffered by people. For example,

there is still an increase in police control in the cities. For us, it is fundamental to work on the contents, on proposals in relation to themes we care about. Therefore we explore, of course, within our limits, the forms, which express these contents. Yet we are aware of the fact that often the language that you chose, the form in which you organise yourself is not separated from the statements you make and the contents you express. We are also aware that to transmit an idea effectively, sometimes you have to communicate through emotions more than logic; so that provoking people’s emotions can also be a way to communicate information.

The Live-set doesn’t seek a speed, it seeks a rhythm synchronised with the present moment. The difference is exactly this: the Live-set doesn’t address an external public, public and producers are all in the same place at the same time in a very blended amalgamated situation, therefore, generally, the resulting rhythms are as much as possible collective rhythms...

Again, *Derive/Approdi* comes to my mind as this text seems to speak about the ways in which technology is appropriated to channel collective energies into counter-cultural practices.

... To create harmonies between single breath and cosmic prana is the sense of the existential and artistic research; the sense of music and poetry. The late-modern sociality is hanging about in the neurotelematic ‘desertocean’. (Bifo in *D/A* n.8, p5, 1995)

The Raver’s Distracted Gaze

The video performances of the *Live-set* and video installations explore new forms of representation alternative to the linear narrative structure typical of both the codes of representation of realism and fiction. The visual research of the *Live-set* explores tactile, corporeal forms of communication making the perception of the flux of images closer to the perception of music.

Differently from the continuity editing effect, in the *Live-set* the editing becomes very explicit whereas the narrative becomes nearly invisible (Table 1). In a similar way to which in Techno music the rhythm became prevalent in relation to the melody, the visual narrative becomes non-linear employing the editing as the main strategy to engage the viewer’s perception of the viewer paralleling the music beats (Table 2).

linear narrative	‘invisible’ editing
‘invisible’ narrative	explicit’ editing

Table 1

linear narrative	Melody
non-linear narrative	rhythm

Table 2

As the narration becomes discontinuous, the attention asked from the public is not the same as that demanded by linear narratives typical of realism or fiction. These, according to a classic schema, unfold a precise logical thread, supported by continuous editing, and reach a conclusion after an introduction and a main climax. In the *Live-set*, the continual attention of the spectator is not needed. The narration is constructed via repetition, contrasts and associations so that the participant can immerse herself in the visual net of meanings and leave at any time. If the nature of linear narrative is coherence and continuity, to the discontinuous narrative of the *Live-set* corresponds the juxtaposition and the interruption of the visual 'telling' (Table 3). In place of linear narration we have flux. This flux is not continuous but fragmented. The method of the cut-up shapes the content of the representation (Table 4). If on the one hand video technology has been appropriated to celebrate the CSOA oppositional culture, on the other hand the use of a new technology has shaped the expressive forms of the CSOA users

linear narrative	Coherence, Continuity
discontinuous narrative	Juxtaposition, Interruption

Table 3

Linear Narrative

Flux, cut-up

Table 4

Tiddi (1997) speaks of the utopic value of the *fragments* which interweaving past and present within the actual context express the desire for liberation (p. 80). Through the practice of alteration and *détournement*, he writes, it is possible

to move politics towards the recognition of a plurality of alterities. (...) Unitary identity is lost in the collage of identities. The alchemy

of the movement is opposed to the codification of the state; the nomad alterity to the settled identic; the multiple in the flux to the centered subject. (p.81)

The visual perception of images becomes distracted, and immediate. To this kind of narration corresponds a different type of attention and modality of consumption. If documentary and fiction film address the public 'directionally', in a specific position in relation to the viewer, and demand constant attention. In the *Live-set*, the raver's gaze resembles that of the Benjamin's *flaneur* and the modality of exposition becomes

increasing of the body (

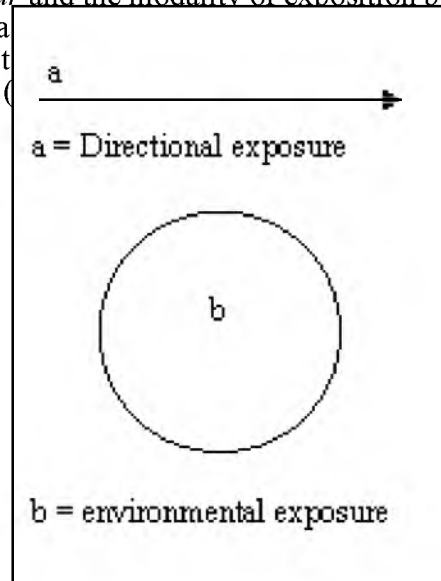


Table 5

To these changes in the forms of representation, which occurred in the video production of the CSOA in the second half of the Nineties, corresponds also a change of the usual place of projection, which becomes nomadic. The images are projected directly onto the walls of the buildings running along the streets, to accompany a demonstration or a street parade. Visual installations can be adapted to the particular features of a warehouse, temporarily occupied for a rave or the CSOA itself turned into a sort of audio-visual 'factory' and 'museum', as it was for *Forte Prenestino* during OFF festival. In these dancing parties, the visual messages of the *Live-set* play with the distracted gaze of the public indulging in many parallel activities while they are together.

The surrealist visual poetry of the *Live-set* celebrates the re-appropriation of visual communication as a game always open to new forms of re-elaboration of the collective imagery. At the same time this imagery is not controllable *a priori*, but the result of a collective practice among

different subjects. 'Live-set turn better in the CSOA', said Davide (FVC) once, maybe because they celebrate the relationship between the CSOA sub-culture - through the cut-up of images of its participants' everyday life, cultural and political practices - and the CSOA as the re-appropriated fragment of the metropolis. Just as the bodies of the CSOA people speak through clothes, tattoos and piercing, the CSOA speaks through graffiti, music, and images of the sub-culture that inhabits it; a nomad



Picture 2. CSOA Forte Prenestino, entrance hall. September 2000.

In occasion of the 99 Posse and Assalti Frontali concert, part of a campaign demanding amnesty for political prisoners. Frame from my research footage

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Notas

- 1 This article is part of my PhD thesis: "Video Activism in the Italian *Centri Sociali*. A Visual Ethnography". Napier University, Edinburgh. 2003.
- 2 In particular the 'effect Kuleschov' which relied on the association of images in the mind of the spectator. The meaning had been created by progressively juxtaposing images that were not connected in the original footage (Grau, 2002:60; 94).
- 3 The ravers' practice of squatting in a place just for a night was inspired by the T.A.Z., *Temporarily Autonomous Zones* and 'Utopie Pirate' by Hakim Bey.