

TELEVISION DELIVERS PEOPLE

*You are the product of t.v.
It is a consumer who is consumed
Television delivers people to an Advertiser*¹

One of the crucial art videos criticizing television and mass media, *Television delivers people* by Richard Serra from 1973, suggests that television is the cultural dominant of its corresponding social and economic system and a tool for social control. The video was made in the times of shifts in cultural logic, democratization and the commodification of media, all leading to video art and television becoming the candidates for a new “cultural hegemony” realized through two confronting forms – the commercial television and the experimental form of video art, according to Frederic Jameson.² Television became a reference point reflecting the power and dominance in production and expressing a formative influence in designing a specific aesthetic. Similar to Richard Serra, numerous authors began to examine the cultural influence and the authority of television through their works. It was precisely the emancipation of video as a (new) technical, social and art media that enabled its role as “the technology of the society” through its historical transformations. At the same time that television was shaping a specific art aesthetics, the art was shaping television.

Today, we may observe *Television delivers people* as a historical art video from the perspective of various trends, transitions and innovations in media, technology, aesthetics and conceptual thinking, brought about by new television and media platforms, channels and programs – from the early ones such as MTV and CNN up to the influence of the Internet and You Tube as the “new spaces of currents”. The Internet has somewhat replaced the (historical) role of television in this new digital environment, stressing the social potential of the mass communication media in the 21st century.

When approaching the phenomena of audiovisual media (both old and new ones), artists tend to destabilize their conventions and the methods of cultural production and consumption, but also the wider cultural influence that both conditions and reflects the norms of behavior. The media in question are deep within the system of consumer society and mass communication and therefore become (as well as remain) a challenge to artists by opening the space for a critical examination of different aspects. Artists are then appropriating the aesthetics, poetics, ideology and structure of television and its media suc-

cessors, the channels for distributing audiovisual content online, while at the same time intervening with the codes of image and content production and distribution, as well as their influence and the position as critical reflections of contemporary society and cultural context. In a like manner, we assign a critical position to those artists of the present day who, triggered by the new media content and tools, reflect the experiences of a digital surrounding and the impact of the Internet on the context, production conditions, content creation and the distribution of work. Austrian artist of the younger generation, Susanna Flock, has aimed her research within the field of visual and social phenomena precisely at the complex relations between the body and its surrounding and encompassing media and technology. Her work is based on practical research and a conceptual approach. By combining experimental production strategies into different art forms (video, installation, object, text), she complicates the definition of a single media, responding each time over to the specific requirements of a single work. The thematic basis of Susanne Flock’s work is built upon the perception of art as a communication media and the research into the influence of digitalization on production conditions and the contexts of culture reception. Susanne Flock’s work reflects the question of the role of language within the recent context of digital communication.³ She looks into the phenomena of the post-Internet era and the interest in moving pictures, while examining the production and manifestation of linguistic sign systems, as well as the meaning and the influence of a digital surrounding. By appropriating different media content, what has been created transforms into a contemporary art video as an ironic, humorous, analytical and critical art commentator directed at the media. It is the product of a meta-media society, which recycles the existing media practices, in a space saturated with crossovers and hybrid genres, where a single piece of art may function as a research lab where the material is synthesized, analyzed and critically examined. At the same time it presents a self-reflexive journey through the space of contemporary audiovisual culture, both high- and lowbrow, both elitist and popular, all placed within a symbolical arena of remixed values.

1) From the transcript of a video by Richard Serra *Television Delivers People* (1973), in arbitrary order.

2) Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Duke UP, 2005 (11th edition).

3) Susanna Flock, artist statement