



VHS +

[I hope I die before I get old talkin 'bout my generation]

Lined up on the highest shelves, lying in cardboard boxes, naked and covered by dust, to hundreds of thousands, twenty years of recording on VHS tapes quietly await a new polarity, a static charge, the relentless friction of time that will grant them the oblivion, demagnetization.

Twenty years or so lasted the reign of the VHS and twenty years or so separate us from that period. In those tapes, in addition to afternoon movies, the Italia 90 games, magazine freebies, there's also some original content, the electronic dream of a season on the road between analog and digital, editing projects that tell of a productive method, an aesthetic outcome, a collective utopia.

They are our fossils, they tell of those who populated the earth before the flood, before digital, working with obsolete hardware and with the beginnings of software, beginning a peer discourse and a difficult dialogue with television.

As opposed to the term "Digital Native" according to Mark Prensky's essay, there were "Digital Immigrants".

Digital is told to us as a physical place, a geography, a promised land to which someone sailed for others to be born there.

The "Digital Immigrants" who arrived on these coasts with their VHS came from a cumbersome world of hardware, multiple formats, experiments made by dissolving and coagulating the electronic signal; a world where noise still existed.

While the audiovisual industry branded itself as magnetic, electronic and multimedia, evoking eidomatics, accelerating polygons and logarithmic quantities, a generation began to accumulate all the low-cost technology available, to deprogram it and reprogram it trying to infuse life into every single pixel, by hand, by any means necessary.

Low formats, low fidelity, toy technologies.

In 1980 Alvin Toffler predicted a mediasphere where the role of producer and consumer would begin to merge and forge a new figure: the "prosumer".

For the video it happened in those years, the five years before the end of the millennium, of the century, of the VHS, the years from 1995 to 2000 saw an Italian simultaneity of productions with mixed technique, a recurrent confluence of the performative, of videographic, mixed media, animation techniques, juxtaposition of heterogeneous spaces.

The end of the twentieth century in an electronic glow.

An inherently collective production that in the same years becomes a group of squads, becomes a trademark.

Narratively, is an escape from novel, from dialogue, from cinema; the parody of commercial communication is pursued, the graphic design is mature, is the difference between the machines and their grain that sing. Everything is promotional, everything is a tv break. Candies.

In those VHS there are also the projected walls that hosted the electronic music of those years, the video that served to appease the horror vacui of a society without screens besides the home one.

## TEAMS

[this revolution has not been televised]

Opificio Ciclope, Fluid Video Crew, Ogino Knauss, Sun WuKung, OtoLab.

The collective brand, the team (crew, lab) seemed to be a necessary and inevitable strategy.

All these groups materially built projection screens in their respective residences (Link Project, Forte Prenestino, CPA ExLonginotti, Garigliano, Pergola).

It was a world that did not watch videos other than television.

A world without message boards, without chat. A world without YouTube. A world without tutorials.

The machines could be connected but could not transfer files, unconscious machines that had to be used with dexterity, far beyond the instruction booklet.

Computers could not talk to video recorders. With the sole exception of Commodore Amiga which allowed image sampling there were few inputs and even fewer outputs besides floppy disks to transfer txt files.

Yet be able to connect signals despite the blueprints is a statement that needed to be made.

Machines that could still be connected: old Saticon cameras, AV5 video mixers, VHS recorders, Hi8 video cameras, frequency modulators, super 8 cameras, surveillance cameras, title generators, Amiga genlock, a dozen connectors, many meters of cables.

This mix of video, animation, vjing of live sources was a constant training; they produced both a setup and a performance result. They were a design project for space and infographics. It is on this practice of brand design opposed to the self-sufficiency of video art, that a first dialogue was begun with the market.

The second is based on the production of music video, an obvious result for these groups that have always lived together with the music scene, in a market that expressed two television channels (Videomusic, MTV).

The concepts of sample, mix and frequency are the alphabet of those years and allow a visual maturity towards error, tape release, noise and imperfection. It is the same aesthetic that is emulated digitally today, decades later, by smartphones apps to produce glitches.

The screen and the signal are the origin and the end, "to project" and "to transmit" are the evocative verbs that will soon leave space for the most mundane upload and download.

## TELEVISION

[what's the frequency, Kenneth?]

This was the last generation to have grown up with television, admiring an expansion that seemed unstoppable, the last generation that had time to fall in love with it.

Airwaves seemed a good place to grow old after having spent our childhood there. Obviously that world

was changing to spread in the streams of the digital bouquet.

The most lyrical and opaque corners of Italian television in those years (mostly Rai 3 by Enrico Ghezzi) provided the illusion of a landing place.

For years the concept of "broadcast television system" stood before the transmission law, as a gate. A standard made up of formats, lines, columns, quantity of pixels, which allowed only two kinds of tapes (BVU, BetacamSP) shot as usual by three videocameras, the same ones used for football, talk shows, newscasts. In those days, exceptions to the standard were apologized; "low quality" and "amateurish video" formulas were given.

The production of the groups of those years was inspired by the interferences of that cameras; mixing techniques and formats was certainly a reaction.

Fuck the professionals.

Programs, series, experiments occupied uncharted areas of the night tv, an intermission between one success and another.

Darkened by the splendor of the Berlusconi era, not yet cleaned from dust of the contemporary .

Invisible titles and stories, slip under the radar of the academy and public opinion.

The perishability of the media, the endless corporate restructuring have done the rest. Today they return in a retrospective that shows a collective production.

After the videographic and music clips, for some of these brands, the television of this transitional phase becomes a screen in which to transmit. In addition to MTV and Videomusic, a tv slot of Canale 5, Tele +, the emerging Studio Universal and other satellite channels screen, for a season, there was illusion that TV was, after all, an elegant art gallery, capable of containing new narratives: mockumentaries, short chapters of counterculture, abstractions.

Digital gives, digital takes away.