

## Lydia Nsiah The intermediate image in the photofilm 'Omega Point'

<sup>1</sup> Dietmar Kamper: Bildstörungen. Im Orbit des Imaginären, Stuttgart, Cantz, 1994, p.7.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Fig.: Markus Oberndorfer (Ed.): Foukauld, Fotohof edition, 2012, "Blokos Verts V", p.45.

<sup>3</sup> See Markus Oberndorfer (Ed.), Foukauld, 2012, p.72.

<sup>4</sup> Lydia Nsiah: Hybrid Fotofilm, Dem Sehen Zeit und Raum geben, Wien/Berlin: turia + kant, 2011, p. 79. <sup>5</sup> See i.a. Henri Bergson: Schöpferische Entwicklung, Jena: Eugen Diederichs. <sup>6</sup> Gilles Deleuze: Das Zeit-Bild, Kino 2, Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1997, p.109, (emphasis in original).

<sup>7</sup> Lydia Nsiah: Hybrid Fotofilm, Dem Sehen Zeit und Raum geben, Wien/Berlin: turia + kant, 2011, p.79.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.106, (emphasis in the original).

<sup>10</sup> Paul Virilio: Ästhetik des Verschwindens. Berlin: Merve Verlag, 1986. <sup>11</sup> M. Oberndorfer: Das Verschwinden – der Atlantikwall um Cap Ferret (short introduction), 2008.

*"Nowadays, humans do not live in the real world. [...] They rather live in their own images, the images they have made of the world, themselves and others, and from images that have been constructed for them of the world, themselves and others."*<sup>1</sup>

The clouds appear to move intermittently in the sky above Cap Ferret. Several bunkers, which have almost entirely sunken in the sea and sand, are scanned by the photo-camera. Waves break on them. The viewfinder moves in the panorama, and focuses one of the objects:

"NOS!"/"WE!"<sup>2</sup> is written on it.

Markus Oberndorfers digital photofilm *Omega Point* (2008/2012) consists of around 1300 single photographs, which are turned from "still" into "moving" pictures by the filmic montage. The song, and with it the title for the film, have been contributed by the American sound artist DDay<sup>3</sup> One. The photographs move along with the rhythm of the sound. Image and sound interlink and merge. The photofilms subjects are the former fortifications of World War II in Cap Ferret, animated by stop-motion technique. Image by image, and sound by sound, the void of the Cap opens up, and with it does the temporal intermediate of the bunkers, which are swallowed by the ravages of time.

*"Past = Present = Past"*<sup>4</sup>: Both tenses coexist in the image. After Henri Bergson<sup>5</sup> past and present can be interpreted as being equal to the virtuality and actuality of time. Virtuality refers to the past, the no (longer) elusive. Actuality, on the contrary, points at the present, respectively what is happening right now. For Gilles Deleuze, (according to Bergson) one calls for the other and both are chronologically tied together: Each moment is both present and past at the same time. *"The present is the actual image and 'its' simultaneous past is the virtual image."*<sup>6</sup> This visual process of simultaneous past and present, suggests that this time-formula can also be applied to the medial translation of motion. Time and motion are coexistent, outside as well as inside the photographic recording.

Markus Oberndorfer contrasts photography with film, past with present, absence with presence, as well as memory with perception. He generates something new – an *intermediate image*, *"that has its function in the simultaneous absence and presence in time respectively in its simultaneous actual and virtual movement"*.<sup>7</sup> Photofilm leaves space and time for this slightly different process of perception: Photography copies single moments out of moving reality. Film does the same. The single photograph is the virtual image of a former actual motion. In photofilm several of those still, virtual motional-images are strung together (but without resorting to the motional-illusion of conventional film technique). Photofilm leaves blanks, and therefore asks for another model of perception: motion and time between the images have to be completed by the observer. With the fusion of photography and film in *"Hybrid Fotofilm"*<sup>8</sup> the attributions of two differently perceived media are enhanced with a new, invisible and fictive production of images. The blanks between the filmic animated photographs and their saccadic movement are filled with *intermediate images*.

*"Time hovers [in photofilm] between present and past, between the captured and projected. [It] becomes 'present', although it cannot be artificially [like in film] reconstructed. [...] Time and motion, again, become part of imagination."*<sup>9</sup>

Neither the virtual, already existing motion (photography), nor the motion actualized in front of our eyes, are entirely shaped in photofilm. Both exist in this hybrid at the same time and demand each other. With *Omega Point*, Markus Oberndorfer not only reflects this media-philosophical context – with the photographed bunkers in Cap Ferret, he also draws upon an *"Aesthetics of Disappearance"*<sup>10</sup>, which is generated by the *intermediate image* of standstill and motion. This photofilm is *"a snapshot of what happens with these remnants, 60 years after the war, and what a place like Cap Ferret represents today."*<sup>11</sup> The void, vast space of the Cap is (still) marked by those fortifications, which were built to hold off the Allied enemy during the

German occupation in World War II. Memory and perception merge in photofilm: *Omega Point* not only has the virtual (commemorative) image of former war-bunkers inscribed in itself — as an "art-object", those remnants, that show young graffiti-art, also represent an actual image of the (non)perception of historical knowledge.

From sky to water to earth: as so-called terminus of a seemingly "endless" linear historicity, the term *Omega Point* represents the conjunction of all past knowledge and consciousness. Translated to Oberndorfers nearly 3 ½ minutes long photofilm, this conjunction means nothing definite: with his animated snapshot — supported by the *intermediate image* of standstill and motion — Oberndorfer delivers no execution of the term *Omega Point* itself. In fact we (still) are on a pictorial tour, to Cap Ferret, to the walls of the bunkers that exhibit graffiti-art and to the blurring perception of our times.

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