

*From CAMERA AUSTRIA Nr. 75, Graz, Austria, 2001, pp. 50-56:*

Axel Roch

**»Heavy Metal.**

**zgodlocator as a techno-visionary phenomenology of matter«**

»If, then, dynamics  
are outside the concept  
– and thus a schema –,  
they are within  
the idea and are thus drama  
or dream«  
Gilles Deleuze

1. use(r)

When a DJ presents to his cult community a remix of sounds pressed on vinyl by the industry, or when an MC preaches with his voice a higher message, at least as his title – Master of Ceremony – would suggest, the synthesis that evolves for the listener is an »Audio-Vision« in the true sense of the word. Those who view and hear Herwig Weiser's zgodlocator installation experience a similar divinatory message. A few controllers, buttons, in the first version a matrix of on/off switches and a keyboard interface constitute the interface for an audio-visual enactment of two interfering heterogeneous surfaces: a desert-like landscape of electronic sand and an oleaginous liquid. But zgodlocator does not present stored sound or spoken voice but rather the matter of electronic storage media itself as techno-granules capable of being modulated.

The architectural starting point of the zgodlocator installation is a storage unit for electronic media: the »hard disk«. Unlike a record, as mass-produced by the industry, a hard disk consists of magnetic input/output media and a magnetic liquid: a ferrofluid. A hard disk works in the micro range at such high speeds that only ferrofluids can make the mechanical components of the electromagnetic storage unit resistant to ageing. The electromagnetic properties of this fluid give the oily surface an appearance of dynamic depth by means of an electromagnetic field generated from outside. zgodlocator

presents the material of electronic storage media as a dynamic, deep surface, as a short-term memory. The computer with its storage media such as the hard disk is not »hard« at all, but rather dynamic and fluid. In this way, zgodlocator gives media theory food for thought. We are in the process of saying goodbye to the computer as a storage medium, instead highlighting its nature as a dynamic process. Electronic media need not be described as the dead spaces of an archive, but are equally enactments of electronics themselves, being as they are an event of temporal, intensive experience.

## 2. granular hardware

The desertscape consists of granulated computer hardware – i.e. electronic components broken up into small and minute pieces – recovered from an industrial recycling process. Electronic componentry such as printed circuit boards, plug connectors, integrated circuits or semi-conductors contain valuable raw materials for the industry, which not only conduct electricity as an information vehicle, but which are also restored to the flow of capital. One of the recycling firms, for example, writes in a copy: »Washing machine controls, car radios and computers still contain precious metals at the end of their product life cycle. In order to put these values back into the economic cycle, we offer suitable processes and systems for comminution, separation and enrichment. [And:] The precious metals gold, silver and palladium [also platinum, rhodium and iridium] are, among other things, used in the production of relays, switching elements, sensors, plug connections and printed circuit boards.« Electronic scrap, then, has alchemical qualities, for hardware consists of fractions that contain precious metals. zgodlocator presents granulated hardware as a desert and thus the metallurgical circulation of electronic information media in the industrial reproduction apparatus. Thought, as Deleuze/Guattari wrote a long time ago, thought is metallic. Matter and information, real and symbolic are not separable in this case, but rather, as a matter-force relation, constitute a deep, haptic surface. The zgodlocator installation shows the interacting user the metallic nature of visionary thought with and by means of electronic media.

### 3. sound/vision-surfaces

The dynamic modulation of hardware is based on a technique stemming from sound synthesis: granular composition. In granular sound synthesis, a sampled soundtrack is split into time segments and then the chopped up sound material is resynthesized into a new soundtrack. This is exactly what zgodlocator does with electronic hardware.

Computer media are »sampled« in that they are granulated into very small pieces, and these granular hardware elements are resynthesized by means of electromagnetic induction in a surface landscape. With the aid of controllers, the viewer and listener sends midi signals for an active/passive sound environment, the control signals are translated into electromagnetic patterns and generate deep surfaces in the techno-granules. Live hardware modelling. In zgodlocator, software and hardware are conceived inversely. It is not the hardware that produces specific effects in the sound, but rather the sound, as code translated into electromagnetic fields, induces and configures the hardware. It is the musical synthesis that creates technical-electronic diversity. Hardware itself can be modulated on the time axis as a signal.

The electromagnetic interaction with the electronics reveals that particularly those techno-granules display depth that specifically stem from the computer as an image medium. Cathode ray tube deflection coils are particularly sensitive to electromagnetic induction and generate a haptic and deep surface landscape. zgodlocator thus implies a message of image theory. Namely, electronic images are *ab ovo* effects of a surface. In computer graphics, being a paradigm of electronic image synthesis, a physical model of light reflection displays a three-dimensionally modelled object. Two techniques of electronic image synthesis prevail: raytracing and radiosity. The image of the radiosity method is a closed, thermodynamic space balanced and calmed in terms of energy. The image of a raytracing method, in contrast, is a window on an open, hyperreal space. In both methods of image synthesis the electronic image is a surface, an interaction of surfaces. zgodlocator is not only aware of the surface nature of electronic images, in terms of image theory it goes even further in that the image is controlled by signals as a haptic and deep surface. The electronic image assumes depth, significance. The signs of electronic media, that are formed on the basis of circuits, can be modulated here in electromagnetic codes as a surface. Not the images themselves but rather their technical

conditions as granulated circuit diagrams are synthesized by sounds. The synopsis of electronics in zgodlocator, then, is no longer audio-visual, but rather techno-visionary.

#### 4. algorithms of transcendence

zgodlocator starts off the discourse on electronic media with an extended concept of writing. Writing is not only switchable, being a series of zeroes and ones, ons and offs, but rather electronic writing is also a dramatic difference of real flows. In his »Course in General Linguistics«, which became the foundation for structural analyses, Ferdinand de Saussure had not only seen the sign in terms of utility value and exchange value, but also – as he states in his introduction to linguistic value – as incisions into the real. In simplified terms: a coin not only has a face and reverse but is also minted, cast or cut. In exactly the same way, electronic writing has a quality of cuts, a cult value. For the same reasons of writing theory, incidentally, one of the basic assumptions of the philosophy of difference as understood by Gilles Deleuze reads: »the logical causal relation cannot be severed from a physical process of signalling«. In other words, the logic of the computer as electronics only creates meaning by cutting into the real of flows. The computer is a semiotic machine based upon a physical signal.

Deleuze himself once wrote that »thought itself is always denoted by a signal, by a first intensity«. zgodlocator makes this so-called inner difference perceptible as a distortion of the senses in modulated surfaces made up of computer scrap. By means of this dramaturgy of electronic difference, zgodlocator points out an important aspect of techno-electronic imagination. As a user and recipient of electronic messages, it is hardly possible any more to see the production algorithm in the product or to hear the sound processing tool. The complexity of techno-electronic processing cancels the borders of sensory perception. We no longer see circuit diagrams in the electronic image, nor do we hear any filters in the electronic soundtrack. As a result, electronic images and sounds have taken on a transcendental aspect. Techno-visions cannot be decoded in reception. zgodlocator is one such extrasensory interface to hardware. The user stands mystically in deep electronics (z-god). In the temporal synthesis of electronics itself as algorithms, zgodlocator conveys to the viewer a techno-visionary message: the extrasensory experience of intensive transcendence.