



Erotic Artifacts: Matter, Drive, Pulsation. Film Encounters Between Flesh and Celluloid in Paolo Gioli and Peter Tscherkassky's Experimental Films

Andrea Ferraiuolo, Independent researcher



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This essay examines the intersection between sexuality and the cinematic avant-garde, focusing on the encounter between flesh and celluloid in selected erotic works by two major found footage filmmakers, Paolo Gioli and Peter Tscherkassky. It aims to place their practices in dialogue—highlighting both convergences and divergences—and to situate them within a broader scholarly framework in order to emphasize their significance and influence on experimental cinema, as well as on erotic and pornographic film.

Gioli's archaeological approach extends to early optical devices such as the pinhole camera; yet his erotic cinema, largely composed of appropriated pornographic footage, is characterized by an intense pulsational energy. In a similar vein, Tscherkassky's work reactivates surrealist motifs and visual strategies through an "archaeological" reworking of film material, transforming celluloid into an organic, tactile medium.

These films present themselves as flesh and, in their abstraction, merge with the organic as well. They make the viewer perceive the materiality of the filmic support as equally erotic as the flesh they depict. The two artists also share the central role of the technical apparatus in their practice, conceived as a matter charged with drive and pulsation.

Theoretical and artistic developments that stemmed from the encounter between filmic and human body are already widely known. This almost *organic* interactions are addressed by theorists and artists alike, starting from those who, in the 1920s, thought that if cinema, intended as a "technical organ", has the capability to "propose itself as a prosthetic extension of the eye" thanks to the camera, and to "interact with spatio-temporal coordinates of perception" because of editing (Pinotti and Somaini 2012, XXVIII),¹ then human body too may

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¹ Unless otherwise noted, all translations from non-English texts are my own.