

“From Source to Poem“ by Rosa Barba

Slides and Notes

*From Source to Poem* is an invitation to think about the spaces in which history and cultural production are preserved in order to be passed on to future generations.

On the one hand, it pursues my research initiated with *The Hidden Conference* (2010-2015), a three-part film work exploring museum storages and whose title refers to imaginary conversations taking place between artworks inside these invisible spaces and of authors that have often not been contemporaries but their artworks can continue to speak through different time zones – on the other hand, it is a reflection about the obsession of preserving any output of western culture in any possible medium.

*From Source to Poem* shifts the focus from artworks into archival storage: Shot at the National Audio-Visual Conservation Center of the Library of Congress in Culpeper, Virginia, and at an enormous solar power plant in California, it juxtaposes images from the largest media archive worldwide with a study of rhythm and images of cultural production with those of industrial production.

Like the temporal property of two things happening at the same time "the interval determining the coincidence gate is adjustable".

The film exposes the preservation of cultural outputs, but also their digitization for the future. A vast number of the archives' holdings are sound material (audio recordings, wax discs, vinyl and LPs); a sonic memory that I rescue and mix in the soundtrack as a mean to set in motion otherwise unlikely dialogues.

„Nowhere in this Universe is there any forgetting, but it's all forgettable as any clam.

Light is transmitting into the future and storing memory in a territory without radio.

Narrative time can also be delaying, cyclic, or motionless. In any case, story as an operation carried out on the length of time involved, and enchantment that acts on the passing of time, either contracting or dilating it.“

The film is a continuation of the thought, which brings together the sources: these can be kinds of inscriptions in landscapes, which we leave behind, and yet whose meaning can't really be translated or projected into the future. These can also be documents, and even rumors; narratives that people haven't written down but that just exist somehow as source material in some form. I was thinking about the Library of Congress, the media archive at the National Audio-Visual Conservation Center as being some sort of white noise as all this information and all these sources, become so compressed that it could be compared with light. I filmed a series of light production systems in the desert, such as solar plants where actual electricity and light energy is collected, then put these against each other with texts about the history of the Culpeper Center, and of the building itself, which was actually built as a bunker against nuclear attacks. A simultaneous existence and composition of simultaneous order.

It starts with all these facts, and then navigates to think about what this archive could mean, so in a way it perhaps turns into a sort of poetry. But primarily, the poetry part is the soundtrack, because it consists of a lot of free source material from the Library of Congress: interviews with field workers, with slaves, with native American poets, and more; and it has become a very dense soundtrack with all these voices that constitute the United States.

In this actual world, where we are right now, we have to let poetry and subtlety play a role again. Everything seems to be about compressing one sentence into a slogan and making things shorter, just like this habit of branding everything. I think things need to become real again, and poetry, being multifaceted, helps language to become more playful, so that we cannot immediately grasp it.

The archive for the memorization of voices shapes time, ideas and memory of other powers and faculties formulating a "magical memory", as Francis A. Yates named it.

Filmed and screened on 35mm film, the work itself is preserved in one of the most durable archival forms.