Visegrad Fellowship at OSA research report.

In the following report I will describe the work I have undertaken during the fellowship and review its outcomes against my intended objectives. Three appendixes will provide more detail on the archival items I have consulted (appendix 1), a reference description of the most relevant items I have worked on (appendix 2), and a list of the items I have helped numbering (appendix 3).

Going into the fellowship, my goals were to explore the more experimental part of Rodolf Hervé video works collection at OSA, drawing connections between their aesthetic experimentality and their potential status as political or dissensual art; I was planning to prepare for an academic journal publication and a conference paper proposal connected to Hervé's videos and I expected to produce, before the end of the stay, a set of critical notes on this particular section of the holdings which could be used by OSA and myself for further research.

In the first week of the say I have watched the entire corpus of videos that I had selected prior to the beginning of the fellowship, thanks to item description provided by OSA, which was confirmed to be very accurate. In the process, I took a number of screenshots from the videos, building a reference "summary" of the selected items for further reference, and as props for discussion. (After having considered the variations in the quality of the screenshots on different video players, I decided to take all screenshots from VLC video player, adjusting the ration to 3:4 and setting the deinterlacing option on to "blur").

After this, I proceeded to sketch the guidelines for the discussion of Hervé's videos in terms of Jacques Rancière's ideas on the politics of aesthetics. Preparing a following presentation, I had particular care to synthesize some fundamental points from Rancière's writings and to "streamline", as it were, my argument, so as to make it accessible enough for a non-specialist audience. At the same time, I reviewed a few books on the history of video art and technical articles on the kind of digital and camera effect Hervé used in order, first of all, to identify them more precisely. More work could be done in this direction, however, after finding out the exact models of image manipulation equipment he was using.

Through this initial, and still incomplete, bibliographic survey, I was able to begin drafting a critical review of the collection which, at this point, allowed me to identify those videos and those particular elements or tropes within them that were aesthetically more interesting, and more relevant for a discussion of their political status, broadly conceived.

By the time of the presentation I had, as planned, drawn connections between the aesthetic experimentality of this part of Hervé's video work and their potential status as dissensual art, in ways that both paralleled and repeated common formulas in the history of international video art – especially from the 1960s – and presented a more personal aestehtic: a politically egalitarian, decidedly anti-Greenbergian, almost punkish attitude in the way the work was conceived and presented, coupled with a consistent streak of pictorialist fancies.

During the remaining period of the fellowship I continued to work on the collection description, which is now at the stage of an elaborated draft and that is included in my report as the second appendix.

Although an academic paper on Rodolf Hervé would require much more substantial research in the history of the Hungarian art scene in the period from the late 1980s to 1996, I made some preliminary steps in this direction thanks to the kind collaboration of Gyula Muskovics, a young curator I was able to meet during my stay. More advanced, instead, is the work I was able to outline for a paper or article focussing on optical feedback, comprising an historical part on the history of the effect and of the artists that used it more significantly, and a more theoretical part on the politics of such an "easy", technically immediate and almost amateurish, technique.ù

Starting prior to the research period and extending beyond, I also managed to set up and help coordinate a small collaboration between the Budapest University of Technology and Economics and OSA for an internship program aimed at translating and subtitling part of OSA's large video collection, so as to make it more available to international researchers.

As a perfect conclusion for the fellowship period, a few days before the end, OSA staff found some prints of Rodolf Hervé's photographs and polaroids, which were exhibited some years before, but never catalogued. So, in a couple of days – not without a couple of mishaps on my part – I managed to number them and put down a list with matching thumbnails of the photographs for archiving, which is included as appendix number three.

Finally, I would like to take this chance to thank the Visegrad Fund for the generous and smartly targeted grant: OSA is a key institution and research resource, perfectly pleasant, very well organised, and an ideal place for an international intellectual community thriving with events that bring together academics and the wider public. I had a great time with all staff, colleagues and fellow grantees – I miss everyone already, and I wish I'll be able to come back soon!

Carlo Comanducci

Hervé collection breakdown.

Silent / no dialogue videos

_ #3 Antilles: Les Saintes (Guadeloupe) / Antillák: Les Saintes (Guadeloupe) (raw footage) Town feast with majorettes, and mass in church. French language, Date of Production: 1988, Duration: 00:47:49 Call no. 388-0-1:3/1

_ #3 Antilles: Les Saintes (Guadeloupe) / Antillák: Les Saintes (Guadeloupe) (raw footage) Town feast with dance group performances. French language, Date of Production: 1988, Duration: 00:24:05 Call no. 388-0-1:3/2

_ #4 Subway / Metró (raw footage) Escalator in the subway and inside a train. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1992, Duration: 00:00:55 Call no. 388-0-1:4/4

_ #4 Street Sweepers / Utcasepr®k (raw footage) Filmed from the window above, sweepers are cleaning Árpád fejedelem way. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1992, Duration: 00:02:25 Call no. 388-0-1:4/5

_ #4 The Dome of of the Pantheon from Below, Rome. / Róma, a Pantheon kupolája alulról. (raw footage) (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1992, Duration: 00:00:32 Call no. 388-0-1:4/6

_ #5 Construction Works at the Studio on the MÁV Premises / A MÁV telepi stúdió javítási munkálatai (raw footage) Construction work (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1994, Duration: 00:07:25 Call no. 388-0-1:5/2

_ #7 Orsi / Orsi (raw footage) Orsi in Tilos az Á (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1990-9-1, Duration: 00:02:50 Call no. 388-0-1:7/7

_ #7 7th District Street, Budapest / Utca a VII. kerületben Budapesten (raw footage) (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1996, Duration: 00:06:08 Call no. 388-0-1:7/8

_ #13 Duck Shit Plant. Duck Shit Factory / Kacsaszarüzem (raw footage) A duckling at someone's feet. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1992, Duration: 00:00:19 Call no. 388-0-1:13/2

_ #18 Lipótmez® / Lipótmez® (raw footage) Bus ride to the mental hospital, then images of the hospital and the park. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1990-1, Duration: 00:03:02 Call no. 388-0-1:18/1

_ #18 Pig Slaughter / Disznóölés (raw footage) Singeing the killed pig. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1990-3-15, Duration: 00:00:47 Call no. 388-0-1:18/2

_ #34 Horse / Ló (raw footage) A horse and a carriage. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1990, Duration: 00:04:15 Call no. 388-0-1:34/3

_ #49 Geoview Systems Ltd. / Geoview Systems Kft. (raw footage) The exhibit of the space informatics company at the IFABO international fair. (silent) language, Date of Production: 1993, Duration: 00:14:12 Call no. 388-0-1:49/2

Concerts series

_ # 28 Csigafröccs Band Concert / Csigafröccs koncert (raw footage) Concert in Tilos az Á. Added visual e_ects. Opening act before Csigafröccs. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1995-1, Duration: 01:16:34 Call no. 388-0-1:28/1

1

_ #28 Lacht el-Bahhtar and Ági and the Boys Concert / Lacht el Bahhtar, illetve Ági és a _úk koncert (raw footage) Concert, then from the 22nd minute a di_erent place with folded paper boats and candles on the stairs. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1992, Duration: 00:36:42 Call no. 388-0-1:28/2

_ #41 Grund Band Concert / Grund együttes koncertje (raw footage) In the _rst about ten minutes footage of the Great Boulevard in Budapest with added visual e_ects. Up to minute 20, a musical performance, then a naked woman, visual e_ects added, in the body painting performace at Agora Festival in Óbuda. From 01:02:45

_ #46 Flash Concert / Flash koncert (raw footage) Conert in Zanzibár with the participation

of Ágnes Bárdos Deák. Then Dixi, Miklós Barcs, Ágnes Bárdos Deák, R. Hervé and owner of Zanzibár are talking at a table. Occasionally visual e_ects are added. Hungarian language, Date of Production: 1992-1-31, Duration: 01:02:28 Call no. 388-0-1:46/1

_ #46 Vasmalom Ensemble Concert / Vasmalom együttes koncertje (raw footage) Folk music concert in Tilos az Á. Edited footage. Hungarian language, Date of Production: 1991-12-7, Duration: 01:02:40 Call no. 388-0-1:46/2

_ #47 Concert of Bands Tükrös, Tatros and Új Nem / A Tükrös, a Tatros és az Új nem együttes koncertje (raw footage) Folk and pop music concert in Vác. Edited footage with visual e_ects. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1992-6, Duration: 00:52:47 Call no. 388-0-1:47/1

Tram number 6 animations series

_ #14 Tram Number 6 / 6-os villamos (raw footage) Animation from the footage shot on a tram No 6. Footage manipulated with video technology. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1992, Duration: 00:04:15 Call no. 388-0-1:14/1

_ #14 Tram Number 6 / 6-os villamos (raw footage) Passangers on the tram. Footage manipulated witth video technology. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1992, Duration: 01:02:25 Call no. 388-0-1:14/2

_ #14 Tram Number 6 / 6-os villamos (raw footage) Passangers on the tram and street scenes. Footage manipulated witth video technology. Hungarian language, Date of Production: 1992, Duration: 00:47:59 Call no. 388-0-1:14/3

_ #15 Tram Number 6 / 6-os villamos (raw footage) The _rst 5 minutes is an action _lm . Passangers
on the tram at night, manipulated with video technology. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1992, Duration: 00:47:54 Call no. 388-0-1:15/1

_ #15 Tram Number 6 / 6-os villamos (raw footage) Passangers on tram No 6. Manipulated with video technology. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1992, Duration: 00:24:11 Call no. 388-0-1:15/2

_ #15 Tram Number 6 / 6-os villamos (raw footage) Passangers on the tram at night. Footage manipulated with video technology, footage by Orsi Sandly. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1992, Duration: 00:24:39 Call no. 388-0-1:15/3

_ #17 Tram Number 6 / 6-os villamos (raw footage) Passangers on the tram at dawn and street scenes. Footage manipulated with video technology, footage by Mátyás Erdély. Hungarian language, Date of Production: 1992, Duration: 01:02:55 Call no. 388-0-1:17/1

2

Video technology experiments

_ #4 Eyes, Recorded from TV / Szemek, a TV-b®l felvéve (raw footage) Video technology experiment.
(No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1992, Duration: 00:02:07 Call no. 388-0-1:4/7

_ #17 Sándor Gy®r_y's Exhibition / Gy®r_y Sándor kiállítása (raw footage) The exhibition took place in the Poór House, Kapolcs. Besides the exhibited pieces, details of the village home are seen, the footage is manipulated with video technology. (silent) language, Date of Production: 1993, Duration: 00:24:29 Call no. 388-0-1:17/2

_ #19 1/2 Image Mix / Mixelt képek 1 (raw footage) Video animation (silent) language, Date of Production: 1993, Duration: 00:10:34 Call no. 388-0-1:19/1

_ #19 Fractal Suite from Picassos / Fractal Suite from Picassos (raw footage) Video animation with optical feedback images. (silent) language, Date of Production: 1992, Duration: 01:02:58 Call no. 388-0-1:19/2

_ #19 2/2 Image Mix / Mixelt képek 2 (raw footage) Video animation (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1993, Duration: 00:04:45 Call no. 388-0-1:19/3

_ #19 1/2 Image Experiment / Kép - experiment 1 (raw footage) Monitor with scintillating colours. (silent) language, Date of Production: 1993, Duration: 00:14:44 Call no. 388-0-1:19/4

_ #19 2/2 Image Experiment / Kép - experiment 2 (raw footage) Monitor with scintillating colours and video animation of "Image mix". (silent) language, Date of Production: 1993, Duration:

00:26:56 Call no. 388-0-1:19/5

_ #35 Porno from Jupiter for Young Venusians / Porno from Jupiter for Young Venusians (raw footage) A porn _lm processed with video technology, then optical feedback images. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1993-3, Duration: 01:02:28 Call no. 388-0-1:35/1

_ #35 Video Technology Experiment / Video-technikai kísérlet (raw footage) Films recorded from TV processed with vieo technology. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1992, Duration: 01:01:44 Call no. 388-0-1:35/2

TV recordings series

_ #24 TV Recordings with Added Visual E_ects and Coloring / TV-b®l felvett színesített e_ektezett képek (raw footage) Footage processed with video technology. (silent) language, Date of Production: 1992, Duration: 01:02:20 Call no. 388-0-1:24/2

_ # 25 Recordings from Television / Tévéb®l felvett átdolgozott anyagok (raw footage) Footage processed with video technology. (silent) language, Date of Production: 1992, Duration: 01:02:12 Call no. 388-0-1:25/1

_ #27 TV Footage with Visual E_ects / E_ektezett tévé felvételek (raw footage) Experiment with video technology on footage recorded from TV. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1992, Duration: 00:04:37 Call no. 388-0-1:27/6

Animation series

_ #5 Animation 1 / Ani abmáció I (raw footage) Animation made of photos of Ágnes Deák Bárdos. It was made in the studio on the MÁV premises. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1994, Duration: 00:42:28 Call no. 388-0-1:5/3

3

_ #5 Animation 2 / Animáció II (raw footage) Partly animation work made of photos of Ágnes Deák Bárdos, partly other footage, inlcuding pornographic images. It was made in the studio on the MÁV premises. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1994, Duration: 00:36:21 Call no. 388-0-1:5/4

_ #8 Animation 3 / Aninmáció III (raw footage) Photos of Ágnes Bárdos Deák processed with video technology. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1993, Duration: 00:41:54 Call no. 388-0-1:8/3

_ #8 Animation 4 / Animáció IV (raw footage) Photos of Ágnes Bárdos Deák processed with video technology. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1993-4-18, Duration: 00:35:26 Call no. 388-0-1:8/4

Body painting

_ #22 Body Painting / Testfestés (raw footage) Eva-Maria Hantschek's performance at Agora Festival in Óbuda, with the participation of Wolfgang and Angelika. Images manipulated with video technology. (silent) language, Date of Production: 1992, Duration: 01:20:53 Call no. 388-0-1:22/1

_ #22 Body Painting / Testfestés (raw footage) Eva-Maria Hantschek's performance at Agora Festival in Óbuda, with the participation of Wolfgang and Angelika. Images manipulated with video technology. Hungarian language, Date of Production: 1992, Duration: 00:35:49 Call no. 388-0-1:22/2

Optical feedback series

_ #9 Optical Feedback Experiments / Gerjesztés-kísérletek (raw footage) Several TV monitors with optical feedback images in Rodolf Hervé's Harcsa street _at. In the later part of the footage András Szirtes is seen, called Majom in the original description. Hungarian language, Date of Production: 1992, Duration: 00:07:22 Call no. 388-0-1:9/6

_ #20 Optical Feedback / Gerjesztések (raw footage) Video technology experiments on a TV monitor, with background music. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1992, Duration: 00:50:25 Call no. 388-0-1:20/6

_ #26 Optical Feedback / Gerjedések (raw footage) Video technology experiments with footage recorded from TV. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1992, Duration: 00:55:26 Call no. 388-0-1:26/1

_ #26 Optical Feedback / Gerjedés (raw footage) Video technology experiments with footage recorded from TV. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1993, Duration: 00:55:42 Call no. 388-0-1:26/2
_ #29 Optical Feedback / Gerjedés (raw footage) Video technology experiment. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1992, Duration: 00:16:52 Call no. 388-0-1:29/1
_ # 33 Optical Feedback / Gerjedés (raw footage) Video technology experiment. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1992, Duration: 00:16:52 Call no. 388-0-1:33/1
Harsh Varios Raw Misto series
_ #29 Harsh Varios Raw Misto / Harsh varios raw misto (raw footage) video technology experiment.
(No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1993, Duration: 01:26:24 Call no.
388-0-1:29/2
4
_ #30 Harsh Varios Raw Misto / Harsh varios raw misto (raw footage) Video technology experiments
with tv footage including a concert, a porn _lm and a movie _lm. (No dialogue) language,
Date of Production: 1993, Duration: 00:25:18 Call no. 388-0-1:30/1
_ #30 Harsh Varios Raw Misto / Harsh varios raw misto Harsh varios raw misto (raw footage)
Video technology experiments. (No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1993, Duration:
01:27:47 Call no. 388-0-1:30/2
_ #31 Harsh Varios Raw Misto / Harsh varios raw misto (raw footage) Video technology experiments.
(No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1993, Duration: 00:54:43 Call no.
388-0-1:31/1
_ #31 Harsh Varios Raw Misto / Harsh varios raw misto (raw footage) Video technology experiments.
(No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1993, Duration: 01:00:48 Call no.
388-0-1:31/2
_ #32 Harsh Varios Raw Misto / Harsh varios raw misto (raw footage) Video technology experiments.
The creators' conversation is sometimes heard. Hungarian language, Date of Production:
1993, Duration: 01:24:06 Call no. 388-0-1:32/1
_ #32 Harsh Varios Raw Misto / Harsh varios raw misto (raw footage) Video technology experiments.
(No dialogue) language, Date of Production: 1993, Duration: 00:26:20 Call no.
388-0-1:32/2
_ #33 Harsh Varios Raw Misto / Harsh varios raw misto (raw footage) Video technology experiment,
(silent) language, Date of Production: 1993, Duration: 01:01:02 Call no. 388-0-1:33/2
_ #33 Harsh Varios Raw Misto / Harsh varios raw misto (raw footage) Video technology experiment.
(silent) language, Date of Production: 1993, Duration: 00:39:20 Call no. 388-0-1:33/3

Hervé Experimental Videos at OSA.

This document presents the results of my survey of the experimental part of the Hervé collection from an "aesthetically detached" point of view – a way of engaging with the material that focusses on the material itself, as a step prior to biographical and historical contextualisation. I'm planning to use this text – which is not my research report, but a complement to it – as a reference for the writing an paper on abstraction, hapticity and egalitarian aesthetics, centred on the use of optical feedback in the history of video art and using Hervé as one of the examples, as well as in the historical contextualisation of Hervé's work that I am planning to pursue in Paris.
It should be understood that this is a draft and a working paper, but I will nevertheless appreciate any kind of feedback, criticisms or suggestions it might invite from anyone at OSA.

Kinesthetic camera movements and kinetic-based effects.

At times, Hervé uses the camera in a purely kinetic fashion – that is, the camera is less used to articulate space, narrative or discourse in time (as with regular camera movements like the pan or the tracking shot) than it is used to animate the recorded image as a bidimensional surface. We could perhaps use the term "kinesthetic" to characterise such camera movements,[i] in the sense that these camera movements insist on the connection between the camera and the body of the cameraman and in the sense that they foreground the camera as an active operator of movement, rather than as the medium of its transparent representation. In both cases the camera can be felt as that which at once creates and distorts the image. The immediately perceivable result of these kinesthetic movements is a messy and flattened image – in such a way that the effect can be seen to work on the tension between the photographic and the cinematic characters of the video image as well. Examples in Hervé's video works include a swirling shot of the roof of the Pantheon in Rome (4.6), and one of a street in Budapest in 7th District Street (7.8).
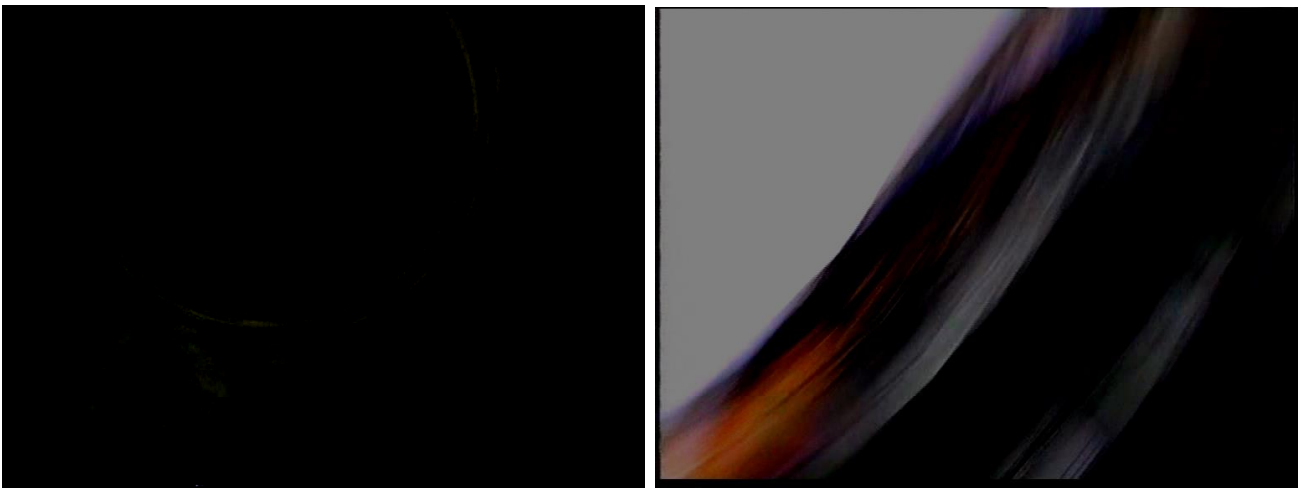
In the first case (see figure 1) the rapid camera rotation on its axis (more concretely, Hervé spinning on his feet) accentuates the linear features and colours of the architecture over their volume, to the point that the vault of the building is transformed in abstract bidimensional moving image. In the second instance (see figure 2), the camera is moved in a sweeping motion over the façades of some buildings, so as to blur their contours into one confused mass of visual matter. The first effect is, like in the case of the Pantheon, one of flattening tridimensional space to two dimensions; here, however,

the kinesthetic process not so much enhances than erases the figural elements of the image being captured, using this erasure not only to induce a feeling of movement but to suggest the impression that the image has a "thicker" material texture, as if the surface of the screen was being painted with heavy brushstrokes.

A similar aesthetic is not foreign to Hervé's photography: some of his polaroids from the 1990s "Budapest Underground" series (#check reference, *Fulgurance* catalogue) employ slightly extended exposure time to a similar effect, obtaining, through a dynamic distortion of human figures, "punkish" or "grunge" expressionist effects (see figure 3).

In the number series other mostly "Tram 6" and videos,

recorded at live concerts and private parties, Hervé also sought after expressiveness in deformation, this time through the use of stroboscope effects, which he applied to the images of patterns, geometries and human faces he framed while riding on one of the tram lines in Budapest. The kind of "strobo" effects he used are in-camera digital effects, but they still rely on really existing motion – the movements of the recorded object and/or the movements of the recorder itself – which Hervé obtained not only by his erratic handling of the camera, but also by making use of the spontaneous jerks of the moving tram.
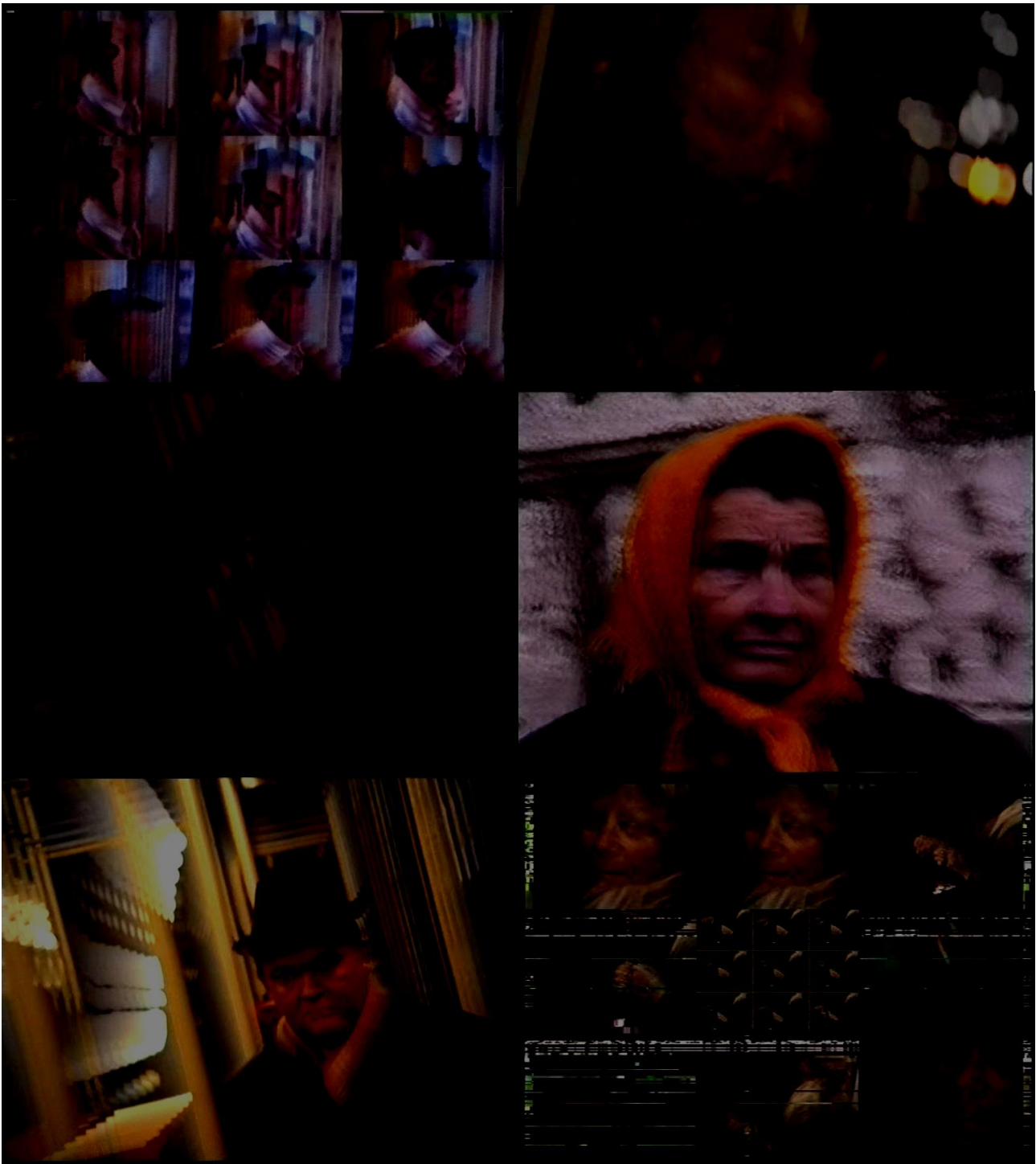
At times, the results are distinctively painterly. For instance, some compositions of screen captures, which Hervé sampled from his own tapes and arranged across a 3x3 split-screen (occasionally, with one of the sub-screens displaying a video feed played in fast forward or reverse mode) have a rather obvious cubist feel (figure 4, 14.1). Others (figure 5, 14.2, and figure 6, 15.1) could be taken as the sentimentalist and rationalist extremes, respectively, in a range of a vaguely futurist video imagery. In figure 7 (14.3), the effect is used to obtain a grainier picture, in contrast with figure 8 (15.1) where it is barely evident on the human face and rather fires up, through a quick zoom-in, the lights and the space surrounding it. Finally, figure 9 is an example of an elaborate video collage, where the strobo effect provides more and less mild blurs and adds some visual noise to a few of the images used in the composition.

In some instances, "clean" abstract geometrical constructions which Hervé was framing are made "messy" through the combination of camera movement and the digital stroboscopic effect (see figures

10, 14.1 and 11, 14.2 from the Tram number 6 series, and figures 12 and 13 from the Grund concert video, 41.1).

In the "Tram number 6 series" as well as in other videos shot at music performances, Hervé also used strobo effects to create a particular kind of cinematic portraits, which use the camera effect and movement to blur the figure with its surroundings or to mould the subject's features and gesturality together – see figures 14 and 15 (46.1).
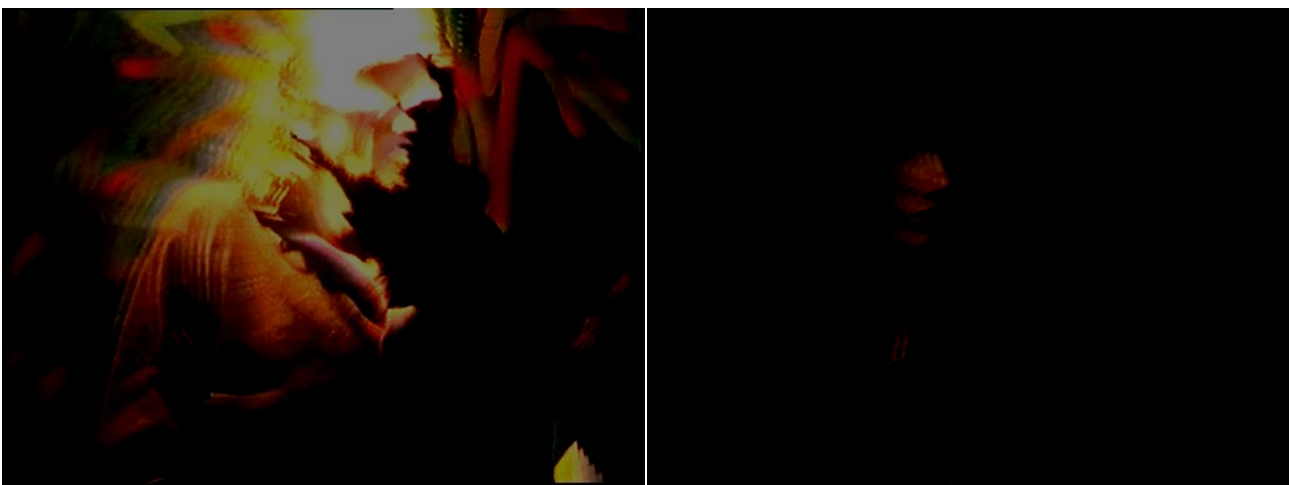
"Closing in".

Another frequent trope in Hervé's videos is a movement of closing in on a figure, object or landscape previously framed from a distance, in order either to bring out a specific detail or to engage with the material texture of both the filmed elements and of the image itself. While a few times this movement is achieved by actually walking closer to the filmed objects, in most cases it is obtained through the camera zoom. In this section I'll give some examples of how Hervé's uses the zoom to capture details or textures and to work against the figural elements of the image to the advantage of its more material and "tactile" ones. So, the zoom does not perform here its most mundane function – that of moving the frame from an ensemble to a specific figure – so much as it is used to shift our perception from figure to singled-out detail or, more peculiarly, from picture to texture or matter, and from image to grain.

Figure and detail.
A repeated movement from figure to detail is remarkably frequent in the "Tram number 6" series, and is significant both as a process to obtain contrasting shots in his multi-screen compositions and in relation to Herve's style of video portraits.
Figures 16 and 17 (17.1) are screenshots extracted from an interview sequence in which the camera at one point leaves the medium shot and begins wandering over the girl's face and clothes, lingering on her watch and the hems of her denim coat, or trailing along the cable of her earplugs. Figures 18 and 19 (17.1), instead, show two ends of a single zooming movement, from the full shot of the sitting youth to a details of his white socks and moccasins. Details which Hervé frames in this way, arresting the movement of the camera, are then often used in the tram series as a single counterpoint in split-screen composition of (mostly) still images, like we see in figures 20 and 21 (14.2).
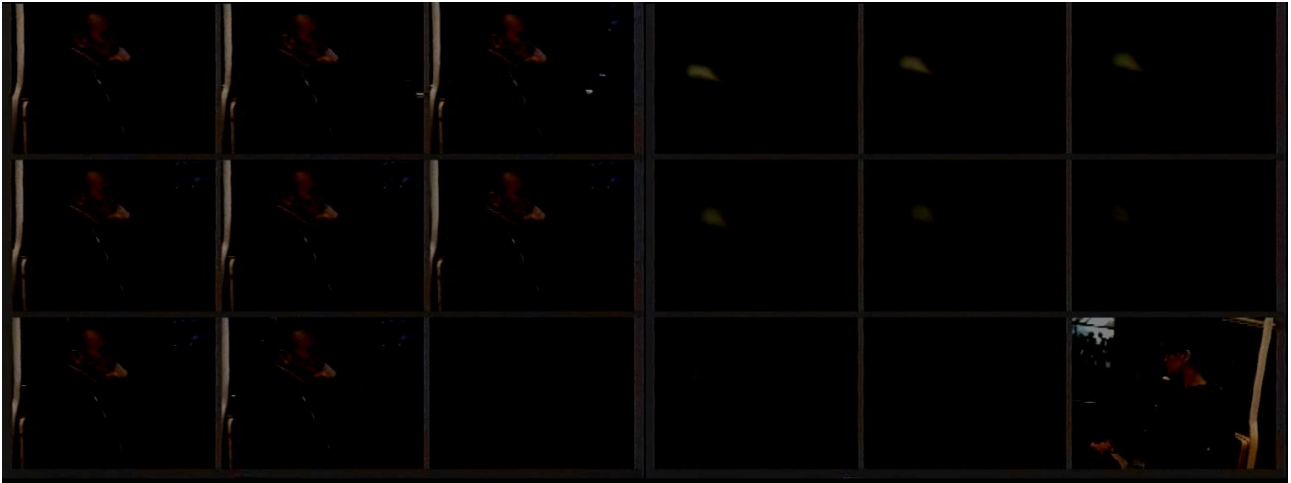
These split-screen compositions can be taken as the minimal form of a reflection on gesture that will find a fuller development in a sequence that is recorded on one of the "Tram number 6" tapes (15.1) but that, quite clearly, should be classified as a separate work. In this sequence Hervé applies an asynchronous split-screen scan to some sequences of a Japanese pulp film (a description can be found in the "Deconstruction of gesture" section toward the end of this document). In addition, these compositions can be considered as part of Hervé's take on video portraits, in which case the detail shots perform an expressive, rather than structural, function.

From picture to texture or matter.
More distinctively, Hervé's particular use of the zoom produces something like an oscillation between figure and matter, a movement from picture to texture: the camera is magnifying a part of the framed in such a way that it is no longer recognizable as an object, but becomes somewhat abstract or, at least, more abstract or more material. Some examples can be found in sequences that bring the frame from a complete shot of an escalator to a detail of two screws lost in the horizontal striping of one of its iron steps in 4.4 (figures 22 and 23); from an outline of building rooftops to a composition of semi-abstract forms on a flat plane in 4.3 (figures 24 and 25); from a horse to the pattern of spots on his mare in 34.3 (figures 26 and 27).
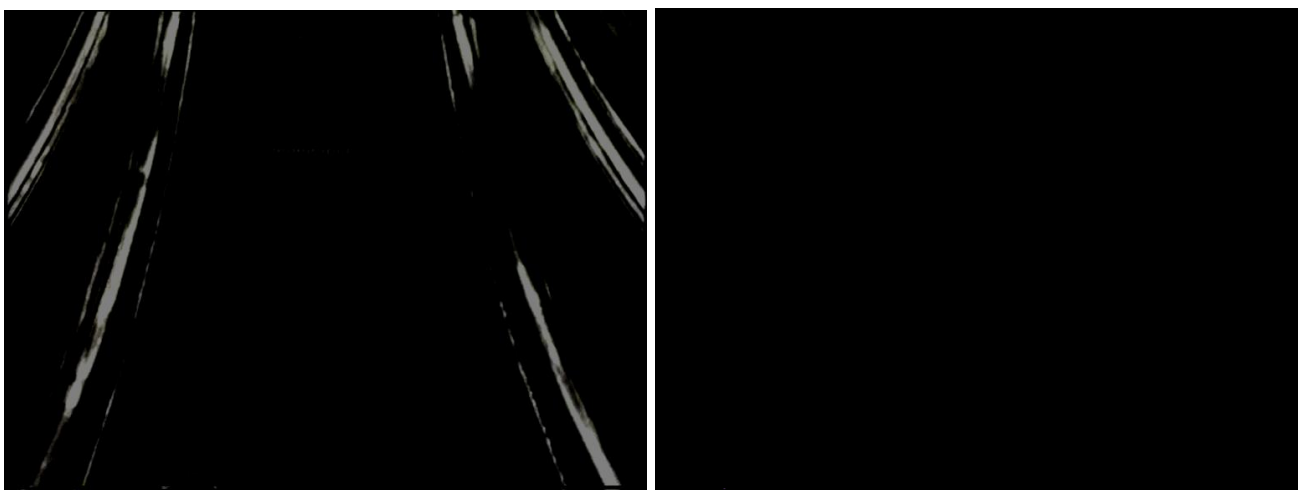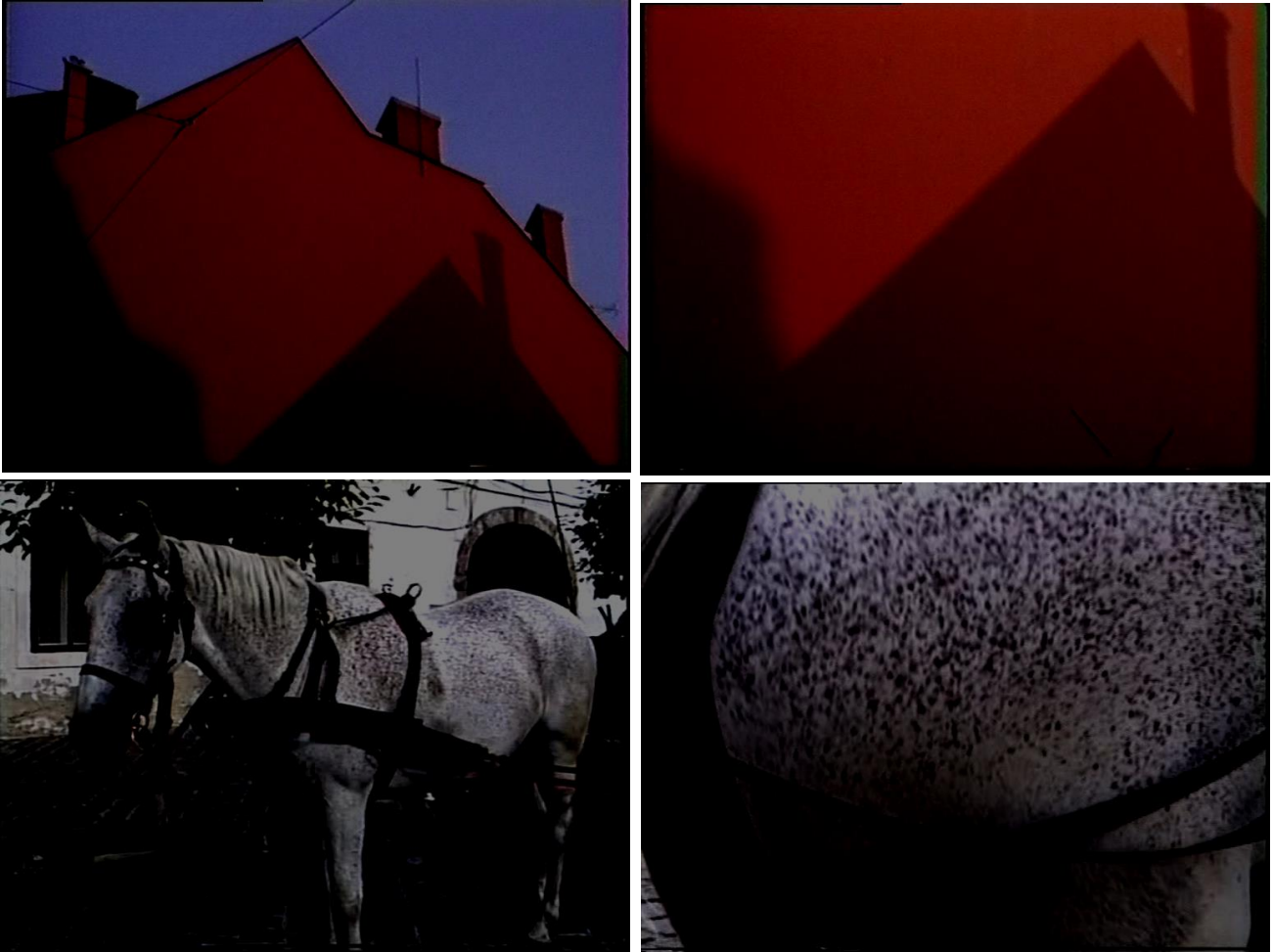
More interesting than these examples, however, for they show a more deliberate and more effective movement of abstraction, are a few segments from two videos shot in Guadalupe, Antilles, in 1989.[ii] In the first one (figures 28 and 29, 3.1), we pass from a shot of a side of a shack sporting an imperative, but somewhat enigmatic, sign in French stating "*pas de credit, pas d'argent, pas de poisson*" [no money, no credit, no fish], to a detail of one of the metal sheets of which the wall is composed. In another sequence from the same video (figures 30-33, 3.1) Hervé begins from a post-card like framing of a bay at sunset, and then zooms-in first on the mass of sunshot clouds, then on the rippling surface of the sea which reflects red and purple hues of light.

In all these examples, the movement of closing in implies less a passage from ensemble to detail than one from figure to matter. Especially in the case of the sunset sequence, the movement of the zoom can be seen to determine a kind of abstraction: the figural, even picturesque, elements that can be recognised in the "establishing" shot are then dis-figured, so to speak, until what comes trough is the materiality and the texture of the elements that compose the picture.
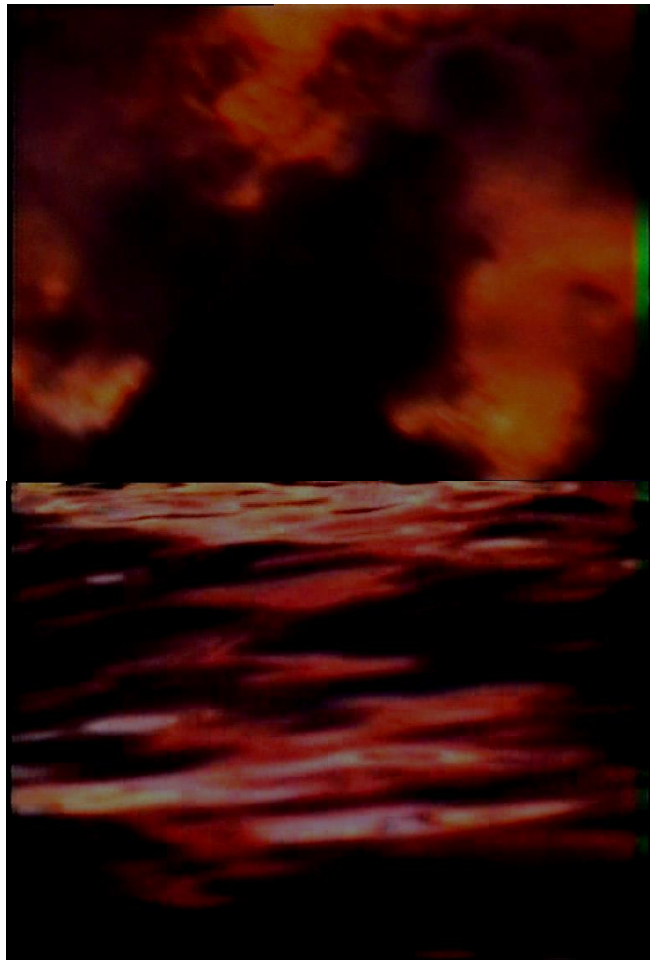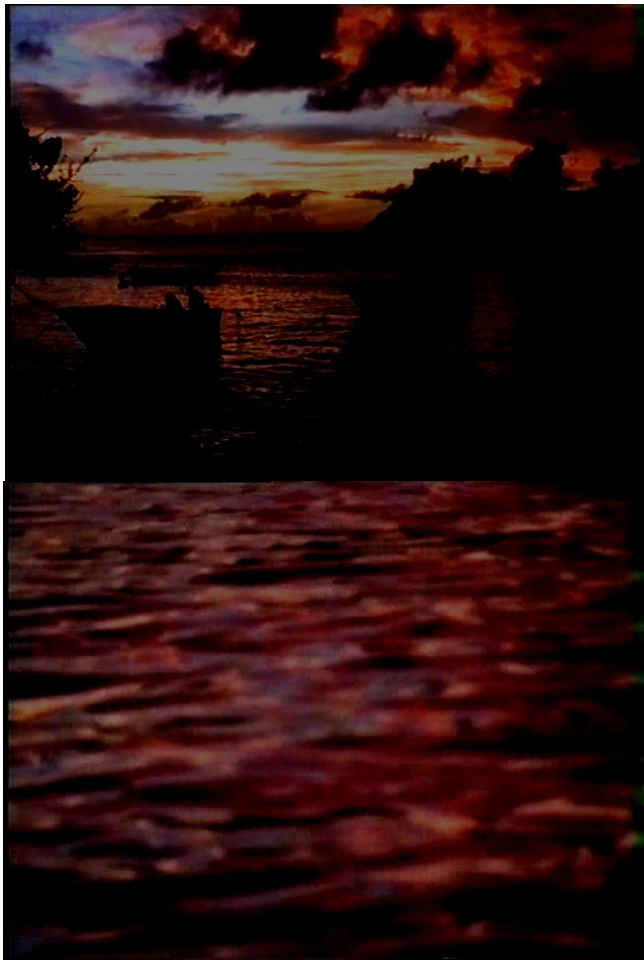
After the close-up, the camera generally zooms back to frame the whole scene, which becomes recognizable once more in its distinct figurative elements. This back and forth movement may remind of the movement of someone looking at a painting first from a distance, then from up close, so that she can engage, in one case, with the figures and the relations between them; and, in the other, with the materiality and plasticity of the paint as such. Closing in, the figural elements of the picture are lost and the material qualities of the paint, its thickness and tri-dimensionality, the dynamics of the brushwork and the particular ways in which the surface of the paint itself captures and reflects light (as opposed to how light is represented in the picture), become more and more apparent, until the figurative dimension of the painting can no longer be recognised. Vice-versa, moving back at a distance from the painting, the figural elements can again be discerned, but the universe of their material support is lost.

Of course, this example does not fit the case of video exactly, because with video we have a further layer between the picture and its material support: the materiality of the recorded object (the paint-like masses of colour of the water and the volumes of light of the clouds in Guadalupe) are distinct from the materiality of the tape and of the video monitor (which would be a better analogon of paint). And in the case of digitized videotape, furthermore, we would have one more layer corresponding to the reorganisation of the video signal in samples and then pixels – pixels that would become themselves visible on a LCD screen when watched from very up close. So, the movement of closing in resolves into a movement toward the materiality of the image, and its grain, both in the sense of a passage from the figural to the "haptic"[iii] qualities of the picture and in the sense of a foregrounding of the material support of the image itself.

Before discussing the grain of the image, however, I still have to mention another kind of abstraction that Hervé obtains through the use of the zoom and, in general, of a tighter framing of scenes that involve moving human figures. In another video shot in Guadalupe, Hervé is recording an amateur dance festival and, at some point during the shooting, he decides to cut out the dancers heads and concentrate the objective on the convolutions of the patterned skirts or on the composition of movements and geometries described by the dancers' black legs and their white airy garments (figures 34 and 35, 3.2). In these cases, however, it is evident that the abstraction is less marked.
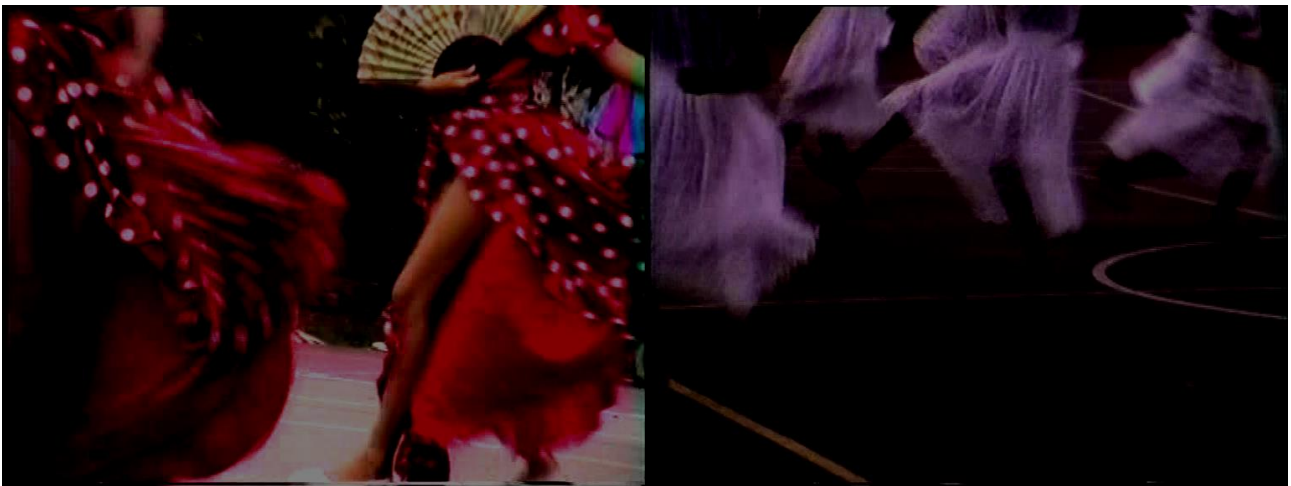
From image to grain.

The final case I wanted to highlight is a passage from image to grain. In video 18.1, shot mostly in the proximity and in part within the mental hospital in Lipótmező, we have a movement from figure to detail, from detail to grain, from grain to matter, and back to grain, detail, full figure and ensemble again: the object of this procedure (which appears to be complex only when described) is a plain traffic sign in a green area, a rather unremarkable object which is subjected to the whole range of translations that Hervé operates on the image in his experimental video works. A less commonplace example of the interaction of different layers of image materiality can be found in the optical feedback series and will be described in the following section.

Figural details.

Not infrequent in Hervé's video works is a framing of details for their own sake, which we can take as a remainder of his photographic practice: the camera first frames, through smaller and smaller movements and then stops and holds – or attempts to hold – a frame long enough for the viewer to get the impression of photographic stillness. In this way Hervé isolates peculiar items (figure 32, 17.1), "found" patterns (figures 34 and 35, 17.1 and 5.2), architectural geometries or stark colour contrasts (figures 36 and 37, 4.2). Here the video camera is used almost as a photo camera.

We can note how Victor Burgin already commented on the artificiality of the distinction between moving and still image, and this indistinctness is in turn particularly relevant to a theory of video art (*In/Different Spaces*, 1994). To further stress this point we find in Hervé several other examples of

cross-overs between the still and the moving image: "stills" are taken from his videos, and then used in still compositions that, however, integrate some kind of movement – from the split screen "collages" to the sequences that deconstruct gesture. Vice versa, the "stroboscopic" portraits we have introduced before carry out in the medium of movement what can be considered to be an essentially static art form. Kinaesthetic effects in their own right constitute a specific trope that at once foregrounds and and downplays the dynamic elements of the cinematic image: by "marking" the movement of the camera over the image, indeed, this movement is made more apparent but, at the same time, all kinetic elements are fused together in a temporally layered image that, in this way, can turn out as somewhat more "static".

Optical feedback.

Optical feedback is an effect peculiar to video, which depends from the possibility of live-playback and occurs every time a video camera is pointed toward a monitor to which it has been previously connected, so that the monitor displays what the camera is recording and the camera is made to record its own input as it is played back by the monitor.

As we can see in figures 40 (9.6) and 41 (20.6), what happens is that the image captured by the camera gets multiplied – in a similar way as when two mirrors are put in front of each other – and reproduced, ideally, *ad infinitum*. But because of the material limitations of the camera and the screen, the image can only be replicated so many times before distortions begin to manifest, until – as its size shrinks, its tilt increases and the monitor rasters eventually fail to render the signal exactly – the image starts to lose its legibility and turns into a plastic flux of light shapes (figures 42-45, 20.6, 46 and 47, 29.1).
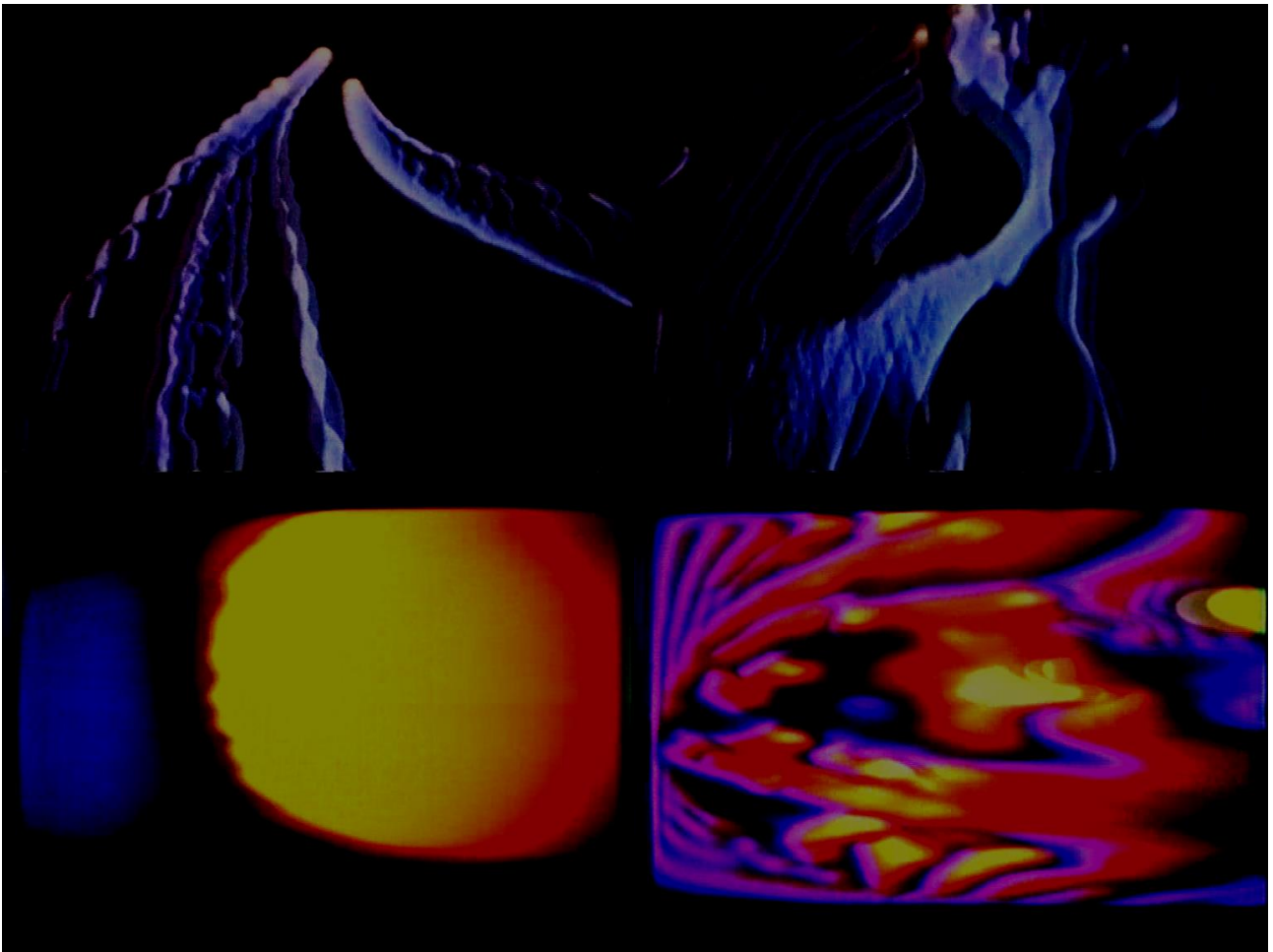
Here's a more technical description of optical feedback given by James Crutchfield in 1984:

> "In all feedback systems, video or other, some portion of the output signal is used as input. In the simplest video system feedback is accomplished optically by pointing the camera at the monitor […]. The camera converts the optical image on the monitor into an electronic signal that is then converted by the monitor into an image on its screen. This image is then electronically converted and again displayed on the monitor, and so on ad infinitum. The information thus flows in a single direction around the feedback loop. [...] This information is successively encoded electronically, then optically, as it circulates. Each portion of the loop transforms the signal according to its characteristics. The camera, for example, breaks the continuous-time optical signal into a discrete set of rasters thirty times a second. Within each raster it spatially dissects the incoming picture into a number of horizontal scan lines. It then superimposes synchronizing pulses to the electronic signal representing the intensity variation along each scan line. This composite signal drives the monitor's electron beam to trace out in synchrony the raster on its phosphor screen and so the image is reconstructed. The lens controls the amount of light, degree of spatial magnification, and focus, of the image presented to the camera." (Crutchfield 1984, 192)

The images obtained through video optical feedback can be manipulated through camera movements, and by altering the initial conditions of what is basically a chaotic system, in order to obtain a limitless variety of movements and patterns.

Hervé experimented with optical feedback in several ways – he used the effect in the "Optical feedback series", "Harsh Varios Raw Misto" and "Animation" series, in some of his "Video

Technology Experiment" tapes and to create the background for "Image Mix". We can break down the works in which Hervé used this particular effect into three groups: the first uses optical feedback to emphasize the continuity and contiguity between the recorded image and its environment, the relation between the image inside and outside of the screen; the second group more playfully revels in the infinitely various bidimensional images that can be produced on the screen through this technique; and the third combines optical feedback with photography and digital colorisation.

Continuity / contiguity.

In figure 48 ("Optical feedback experiments [1]" 9.6) we can see both the effect of abstraction produced through optical feedback and the suggested idea of a continuity between the image on-screen and what exists outside of the screen. As we move toward the bottom left corner of the screenshot frame, the image of the wall and monitor within the screen gradually loses its intelligibility as it is replicated and turns into a more and more abstract, brighter and brighter composition of surfaces of light. The kind of completely abstract imagery that can be seen in other frames obtained through video feedback are then realised by framing a smaller portion of the screen and "closing in", as it were, on the more distorted sections of the monitor.

If we move our eyes toward the top right corner of the frame, instead, we are led to consider the relation between the space outside the monitor and what goes on on-screen. In this respect we can say that the feedback effect, which necessarily works through contiguity and temporal simultaneity – that is, by exploiting the presence of the camera and of the play-back monitor at the same place at the same time – also produces the somewhat uncanny impression that there is in fact no substantial difference between the purely virtual world of the image on the screen and the real world in which the monitor and the images themselves exist as objects. Of course, the frame of the video would itself exist in a monitor whenever the original tape of Hervé's video is played, a monitor that would probably be set in a different space and therefore put an end to the illusion of continuity between the image and the world. In this sense, this segment of this particular video should be seen more as a documentation of a situation – a situation in which this continuity between reality and image, and between image within and outside of the monitor, did in fact exist and was recorded to be represented. This is one of the cues that leads many artists, starting with the "king of optical feedback" Skip Sweeney, to believe that the proper dimension of optical feedback is that of performance.
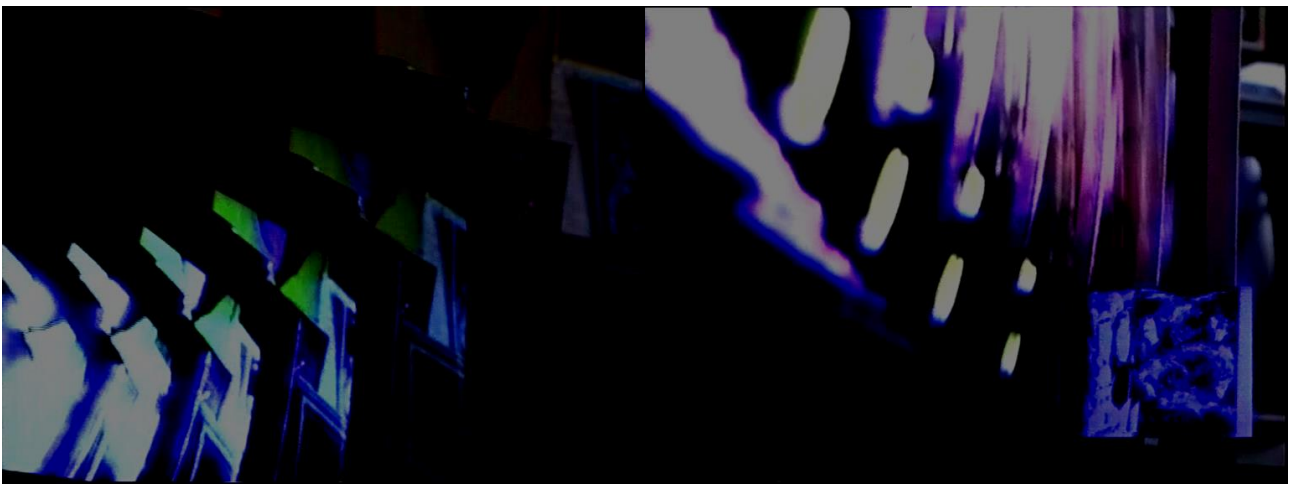
Figure 49 (9.6) is a screenshot from the same video, showing a differently oriented feedback effect spanning on the monitor, together with an overlaid still which was probably obtained through colorisation of the feedback effect on that same monitor at an earlier or later stage: we thus see on one screen the point of view of the tilted camera that originated the feedback and the full frontal point of view of the same camera at another time, patched together on the same screen. Speaking of this screenshot, the difference between "monitor" and "screen" in the description of *video* works becomes quite clear: "monitor" standing for the material object, and "screen" for the ideal plane on which

images can be composited. So in this sense this segment of the video also mobilises the issue of contiguity and continuity, which the other screenshot presented more overtly: in this case, a discontinuity in the time-frame corresponds to a contiguity between the monitor and the screen.
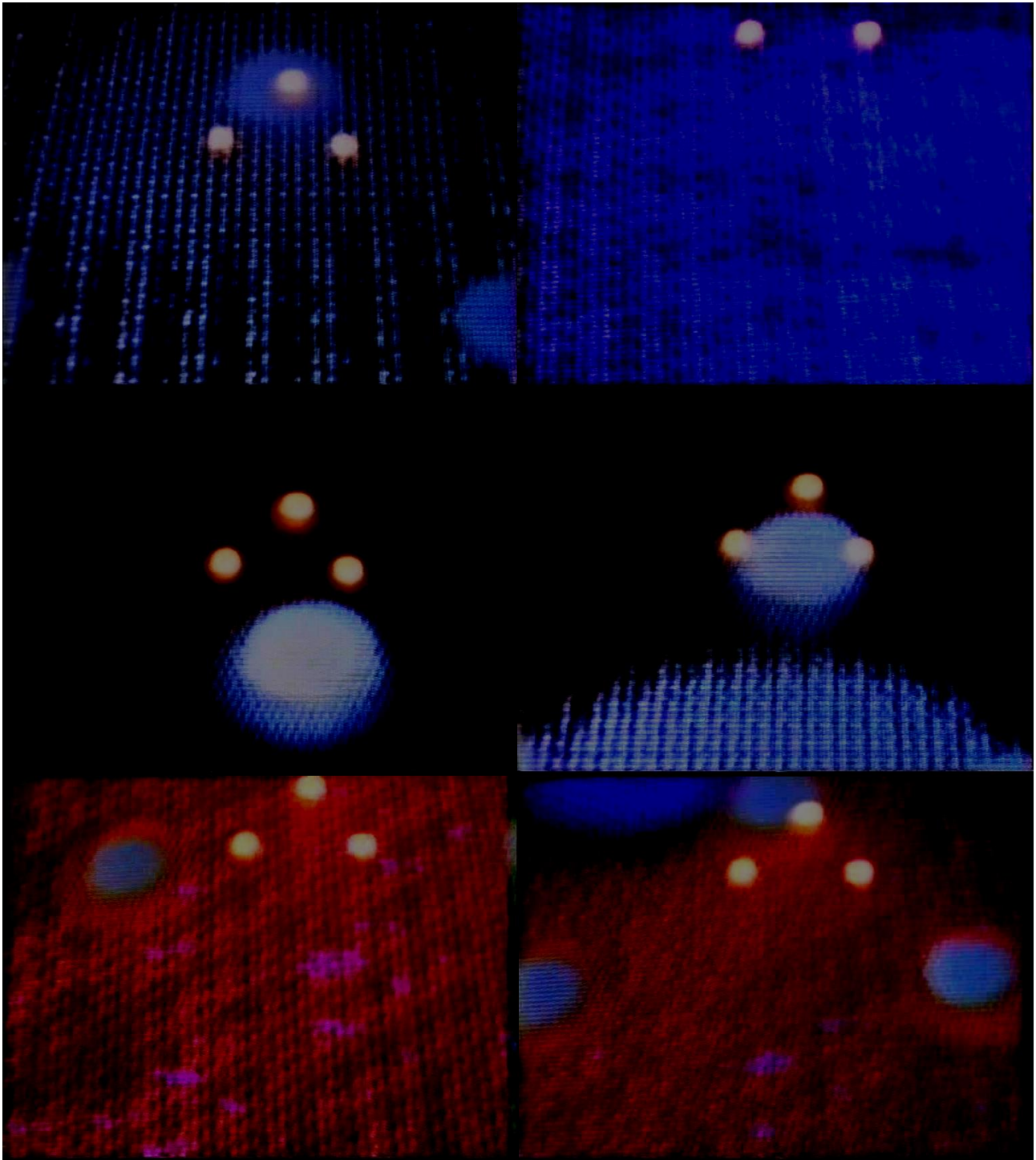

Figures 50 through 55 (20.6) show the interaction of recorded light on the external surface of the monitor, the shapes created by that same light as it is put through the optical feedback loop, the texture obtained through the loop as it test the limits of the monitor's capacity for reproducing the image, and finally the very grain of the analog and digital image that become apparent as the camera and our eyes close in on the monitor. The three (in figure 51 we see only two) whiter dots of light are the same dots that can be seen earlier in the video (figures 43-53): while they might seem to be already an image in the loop, and specifically the reproduction and intensification of the spots of light appearing on the round object on top of the TV-set they are in fact the direct reflection of light, probably from

a hanging lamp, on the *external surface* of the TV's glass screen. The same three dots then take a light blue tinge after they have gone through a video feedback loop once, and they are magnified as they go through it twice, creating the bigger and darker blue stains; the blue and red textures are created in the further iterations of the loop and, finally, the very elements of the image support become to show though in an almost textile-like texture. Again, this is a way to mobilise the continuity and contiguity of the live-playback image which does not merely produce enticing kaleidoscopic images on the monitor, but deconstructs and rearticulates the different planes that compose the image.

Raster revelling.
The second group of optical feedback videos revels in the play of colours and shapes – some times involving digital colorisation effects and possibly#check making use of magnetic distortio, re-recording and frame-by-frame animation as well (figures 56-59, 26.1). Most sequences in the Optical Feedback and Harsh Varios Raw Misto series can be classified in this groups; at times, they could be taken as psychedelic music video clips: they are indeed sometimes accompanied by a free-form rock sound-track of the kind of Frank Zappa and Captain Beefheart's (while most other experimental videos are either completely silent or merely accompanied by background noise or static).
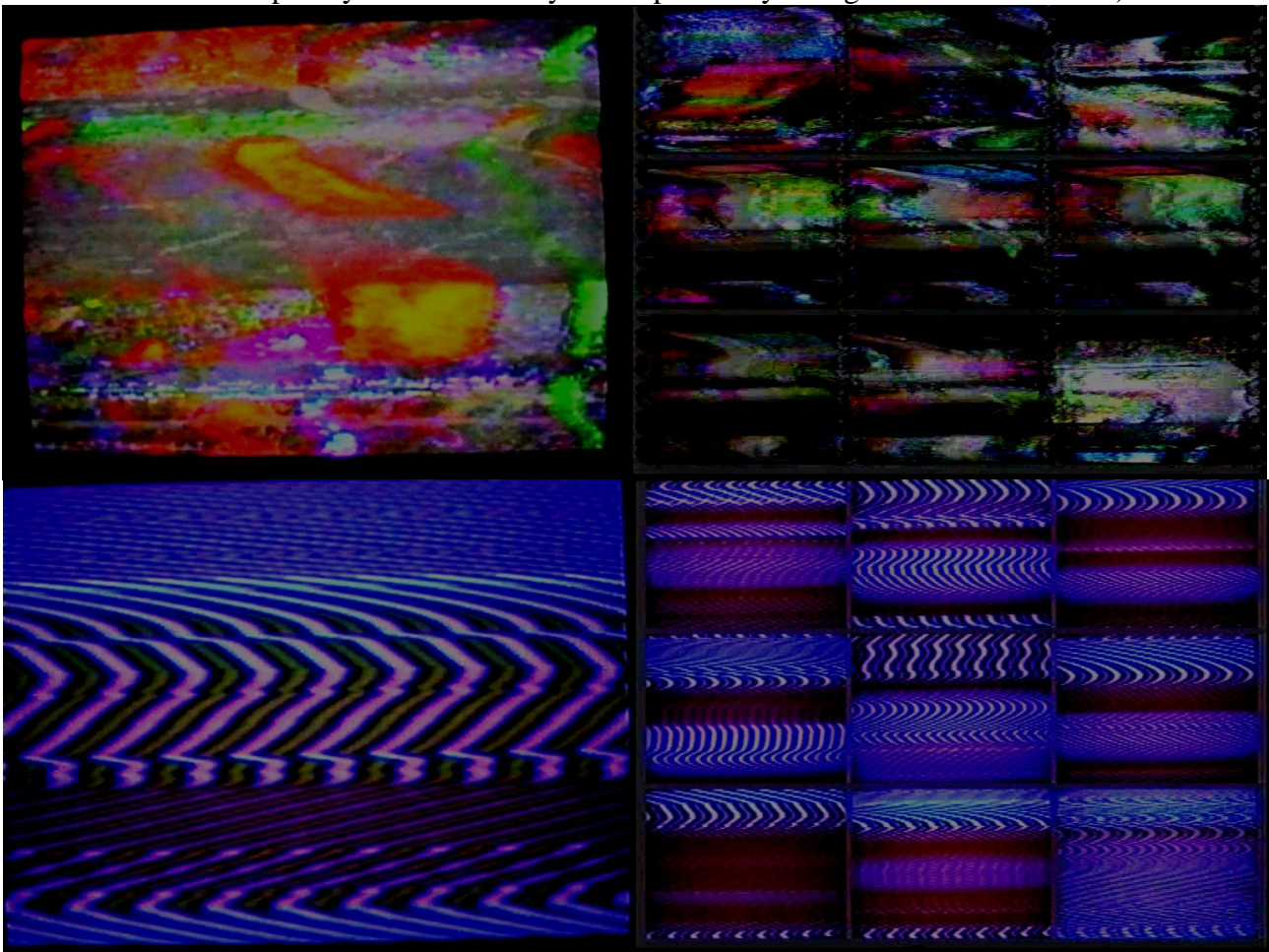
In one of the sequences from Optical Feedback 3 (figures 60-63, 26.1), the camera closes in on the monitor until the wavelike forms agitating the screen come out of focus and become blurred, until you can eventually make out squares which were created by the digitisation process.
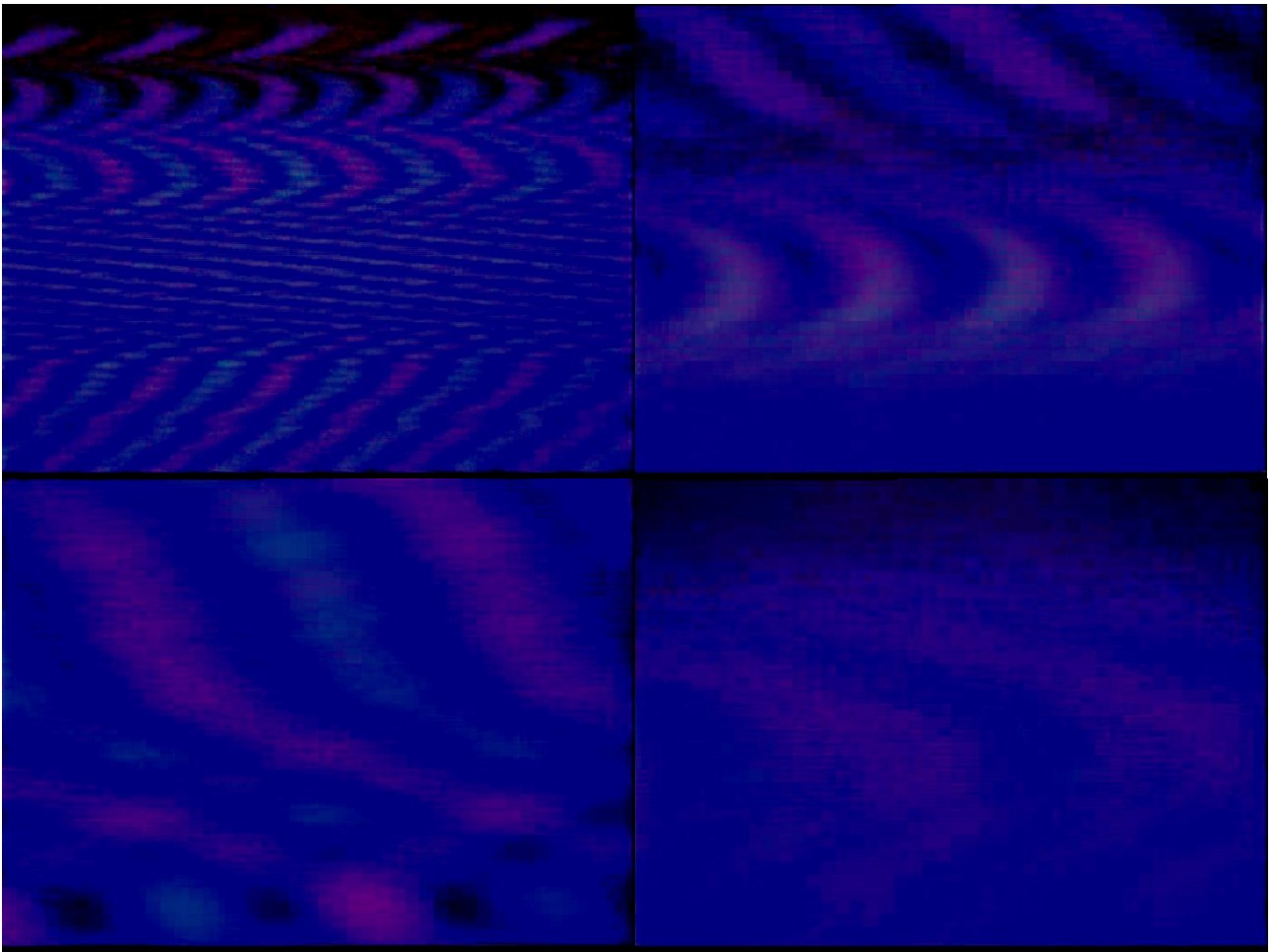
Other images from the same video (figures 64 and 65, 26.1) present ripple effects obtained through "feedbacking" the rectangular shape of the monitor, which is then possibly overlaid with other digitally realised colour effects. Or else, they frame a smaller portion of the monitor, enhancing the sense of bidimensionality and the painterly character of the shapes that appear on the screen (figures 66-69, 26.1).
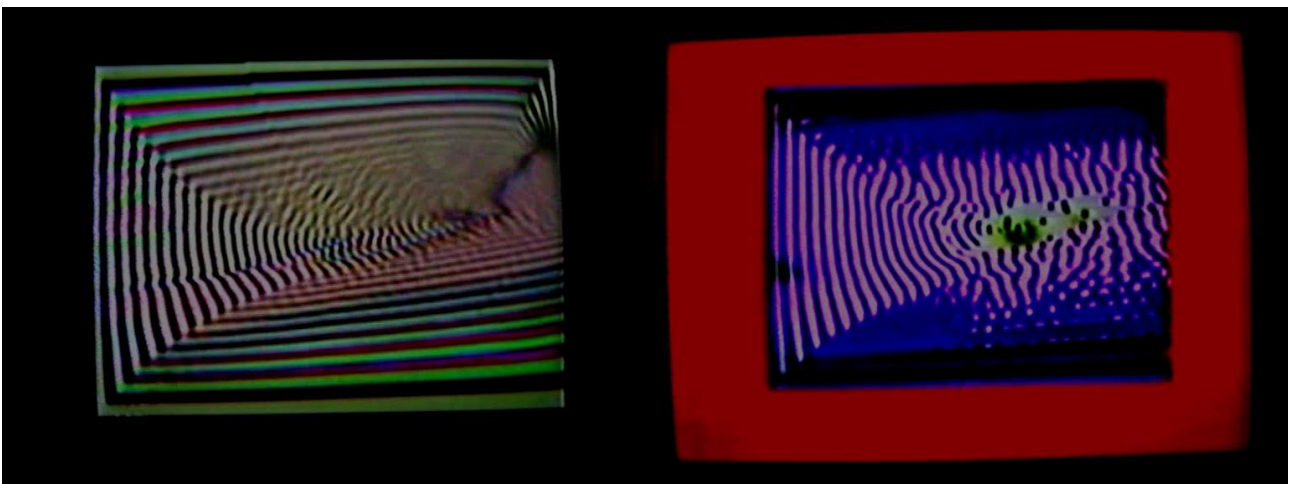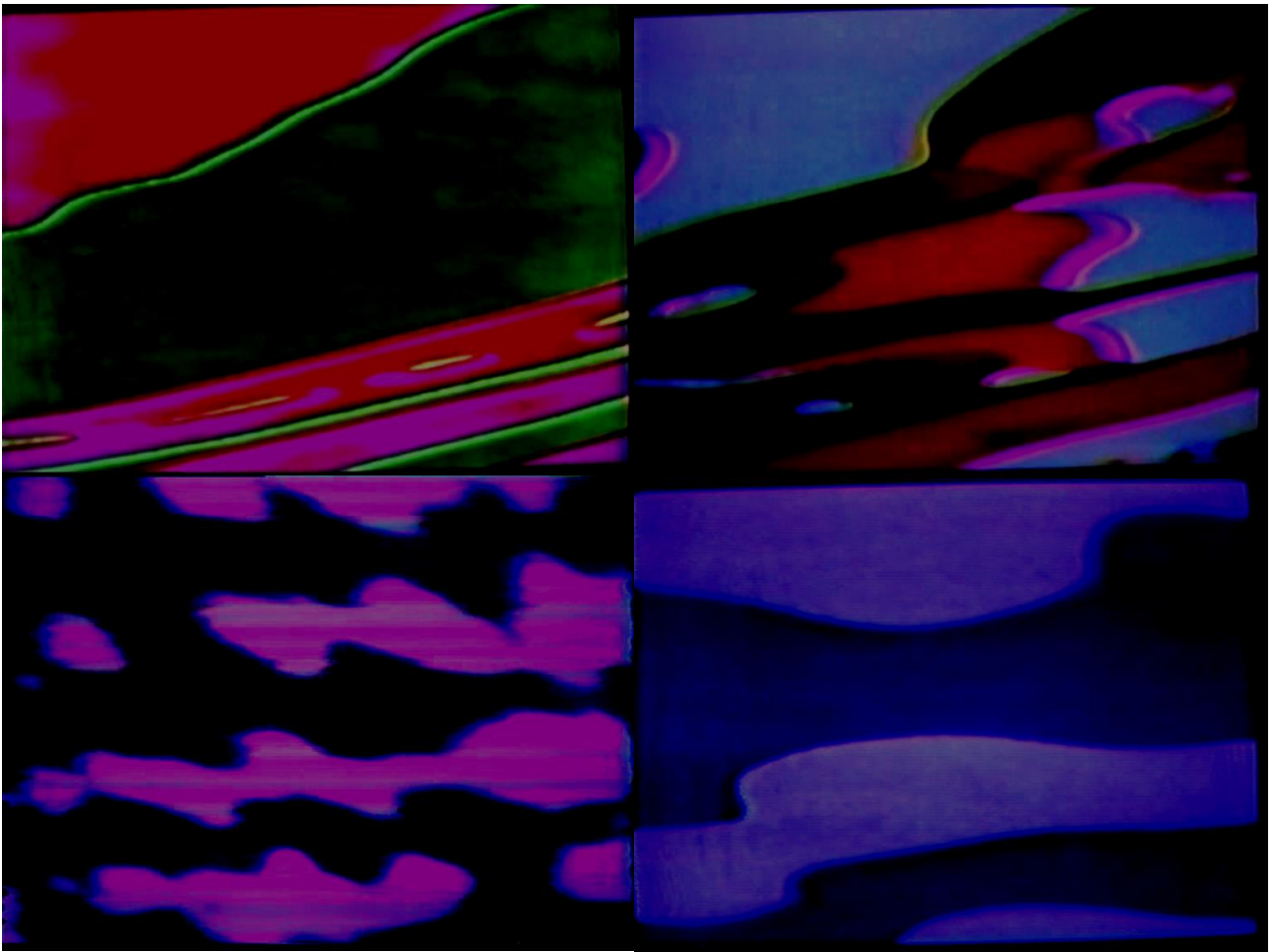
Similar painterly effects can be found in Optical Feedback [4] (figures 70 and 71, 26.2), together with electronic animation versions on an Hokusai-like wave and various "Neon-expressionist" seascapes (figures 72 and 73, 26.2).
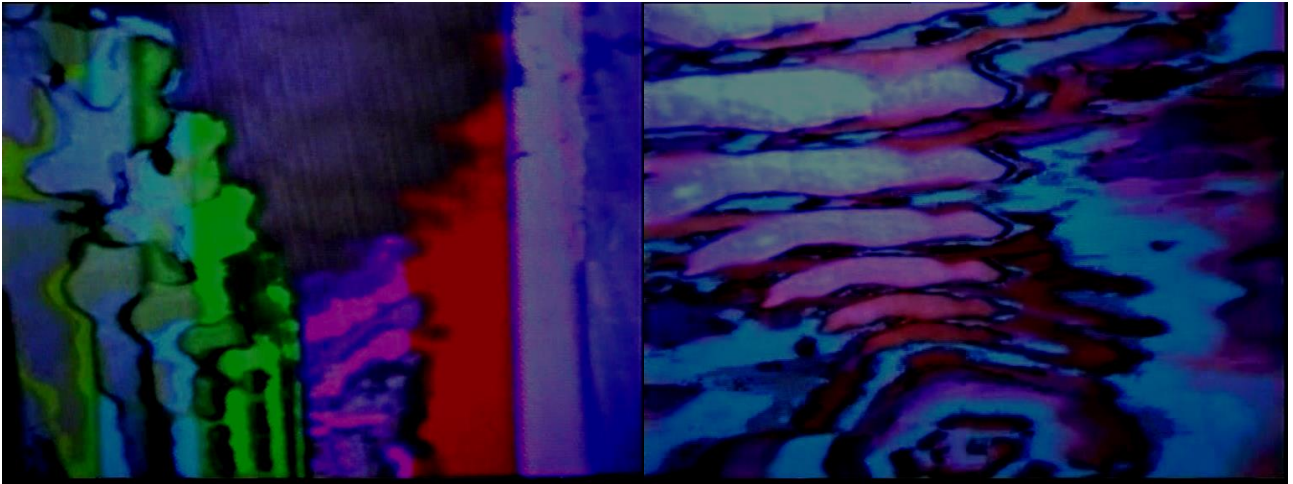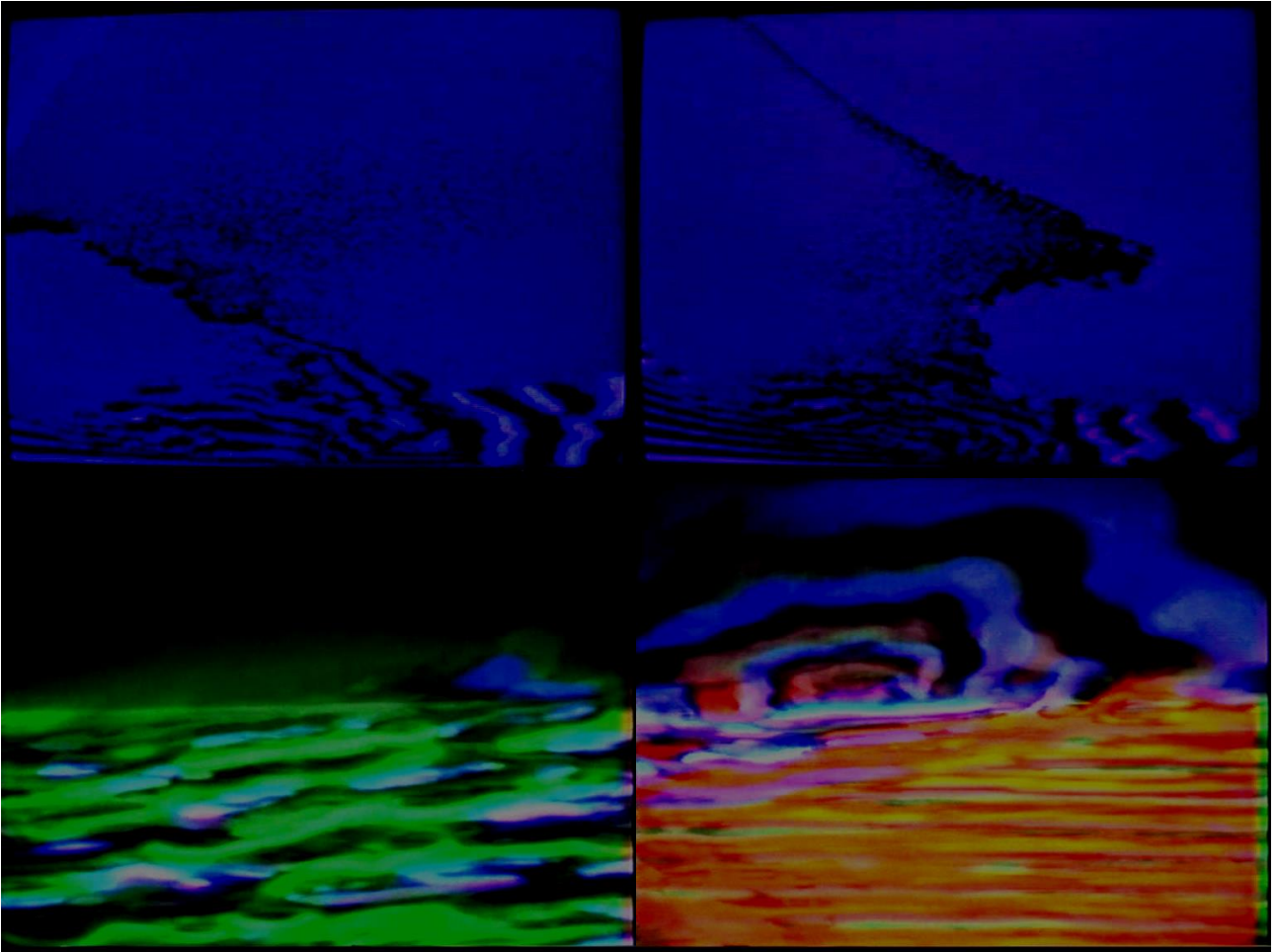
Color variations on pulsating stripes arranged in an irregular round shape, radiating from a point attractor, somewhat resembling the centre of a rosebud, in the bottom mid section of the screen (figures 74 and 75, 26.2).
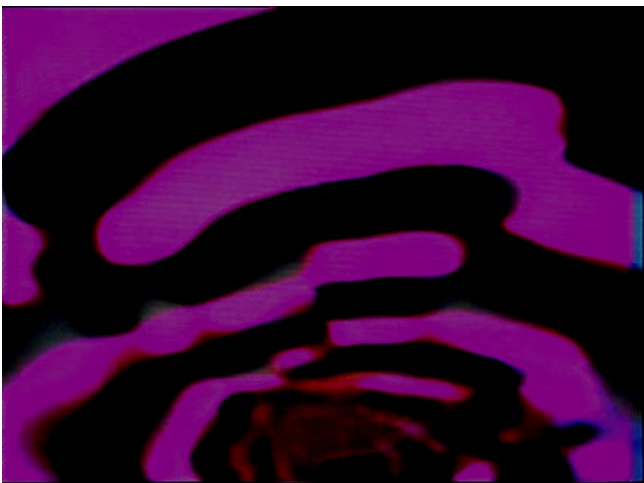
Subtler "watercolour" gradations can be found in "Optical feedback [4]" (figures 76 and 77, 26.2).
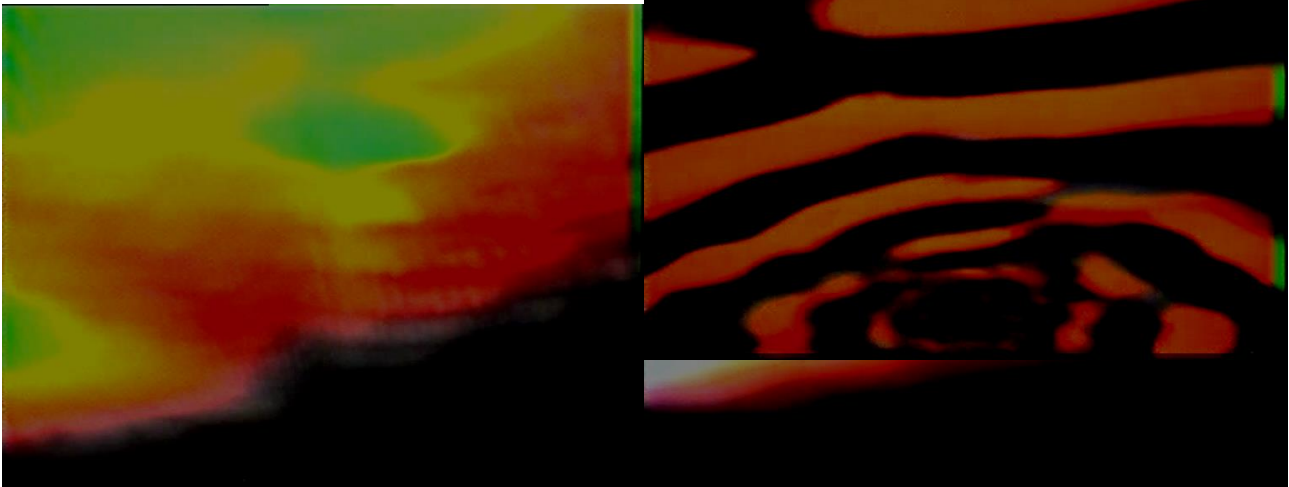
Examples of starker contrasts and compositions of geometrical elements and different form of video noise can be found in "Porno from Jupiter for Young Venusians" (figures 78-81, 35.1).
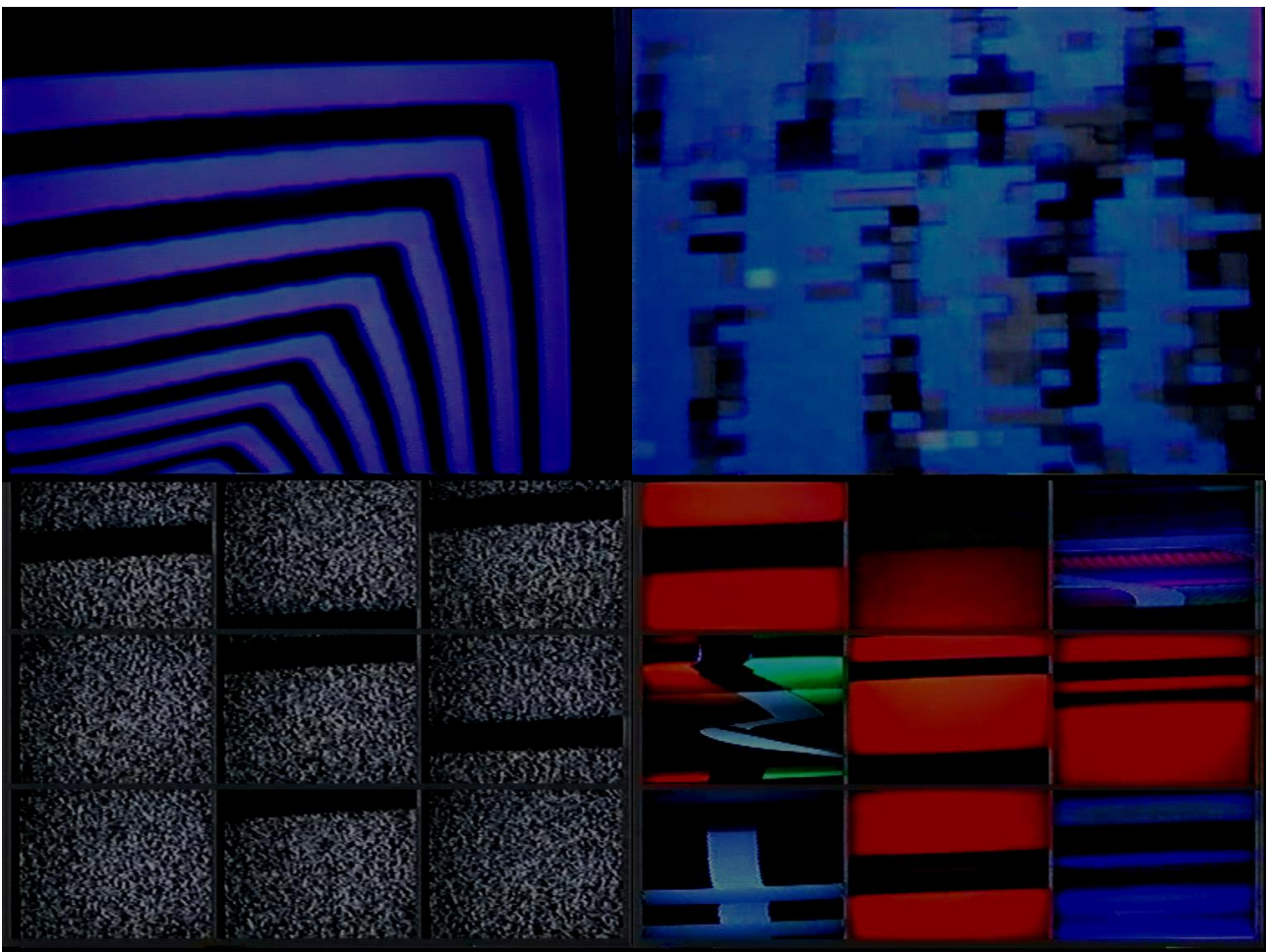
Figures 82 and 83 are screenshots from "Image experiment 2" (19.5): we see a pixellated mosaic and another painterly effect also playing on the topos of the screen (and used then as background for the Image Mix video).
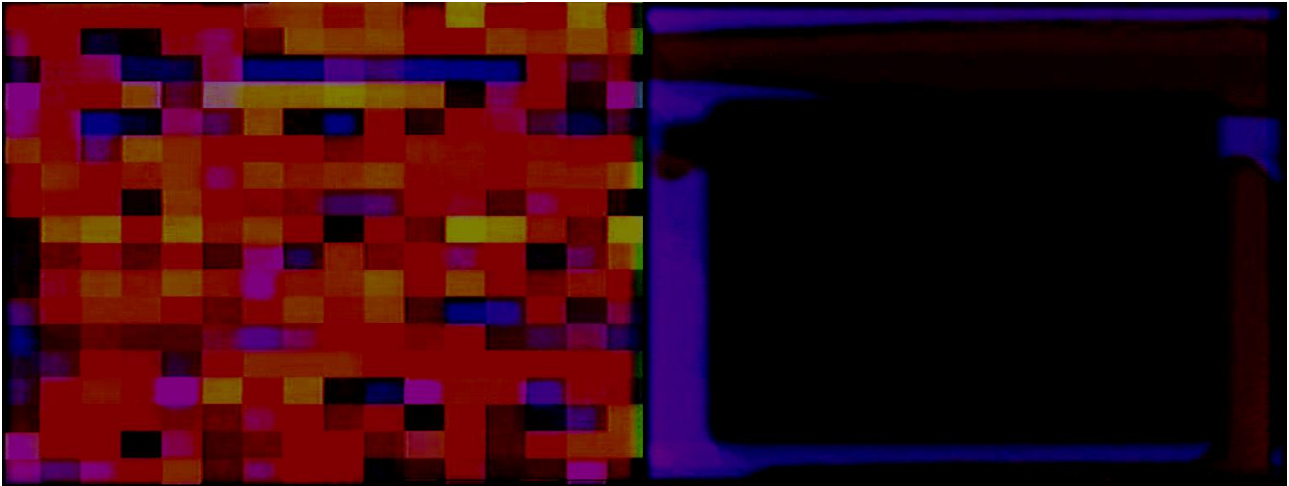
The following screenshots come from the Harsh Varios Raw Misto series, in which optical feedback is also used to a certain extent. In an epigraph screen right after a title screen from the earliest tape in the series (figures 84 and 85, 29.2) Hervé misquoted – hard to say if purposefully or by mistake – a passage from Antonin Artaud's 1925 text "Le Pèse-nerfs": in the video, the quote reads "je voudrais qu'on imagine un *néant* arrêté, une masse d'esprit enfouie quelque part, devenue virtualité" (emphasis added), while the original text has *état* instead of *néant.* So, instead of saying that he would like that we imagine an "arrested" state, a mass of spirit that has been put somewhere and has become virtuality, Hervé has us imagine an arrested "nothingness", possibly updating our sense of virtuality with the voidness that is generally ascribed the post-analog media. Both the misquote and the idea of virtuality that Artaud's text evokes, indeed, are easy to relate to the impermanent and ethereal nature of images that are created exclusively through digital manipulation of the video signal or through manipulation of other images. Like abstraction can be seen to deconstruct the figural elements of the image, virtualisation occupies a precise position in the timeline of video technology and video art of which Hervé's videos are a testimony, in between earlier analog video experimentations from the 60s and the not yet fully fledged world of purely digital imaging that will characterise the new millennium.

The Harsh Varios series is quite various. In it we can find variations on the trailing light effect that summon vaguely organic cavities, such as in figures 86 and 87 (29.2).

In the same video, we find many images that insist on the bidimensionality of the screen, almost resembling film burns (figure 88, 29.2) and shapes appearing on the screen for a split second, like flickering painting marks (figure 89, 29.2); others instead work on the rectangular form of the screen and either mould the video signal rainbow or integrate it in a composition of feedback waves (figures 90-93, 29.2).
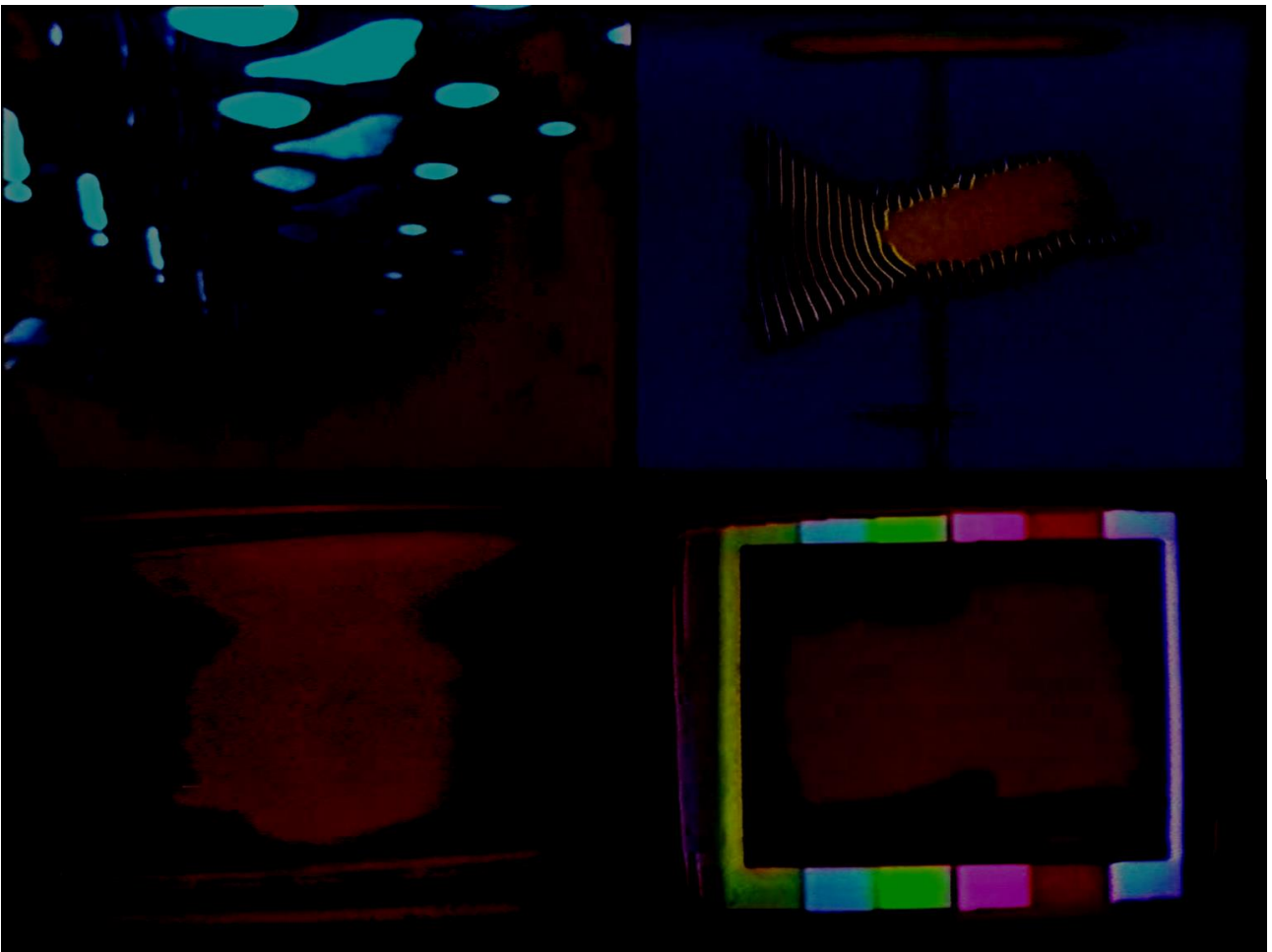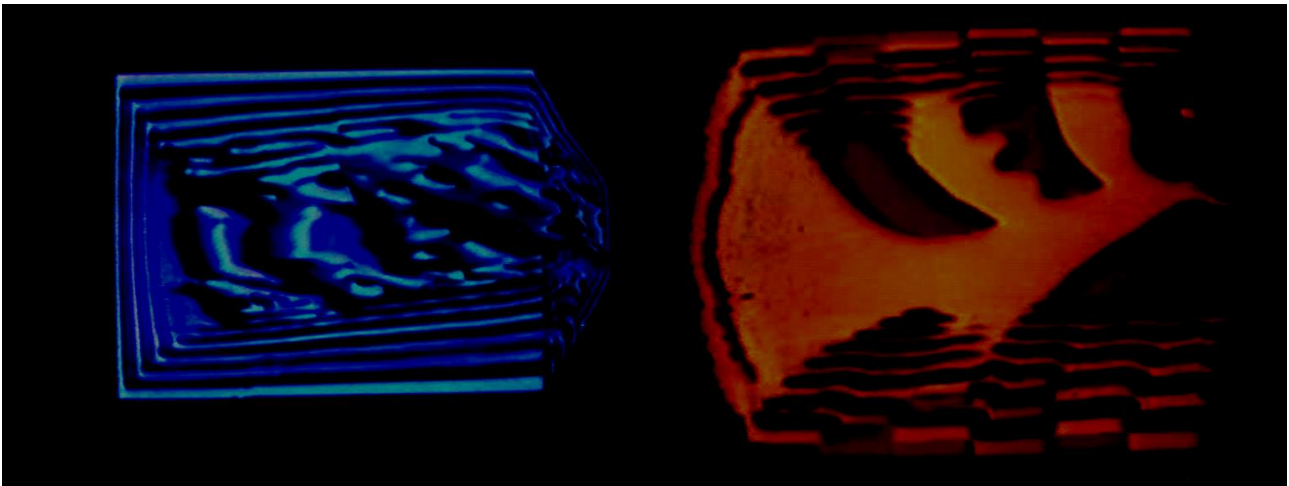
Two distinctive segments from Harsh Varios Raw Misto 2 (30.1, figures 94 and 95) are composed of a myriad of split-screen black and white images – some identical, some extracted from a sequence and rearranged in irregular patterns – roughly divided in to vertical bands, a brighter one on the left of the screen and a darker one on the right (which is also alternately colorised); over this background is "superimposed" a triangle-shaped colorised area pointing left. In the segment, the screen flickers as the background images change, but the frame as a whole maintains its rather static structural configuration.

A similar treatment, but with fewer split-screens, is reserved to a few sequences sampled from a pornographic film, which have also been colorised in order to jokingly appeal – as does the title of another work, "Porno from Jupiter for Young Venusians" - to some alien race across all intersexual and interplanetary divides.
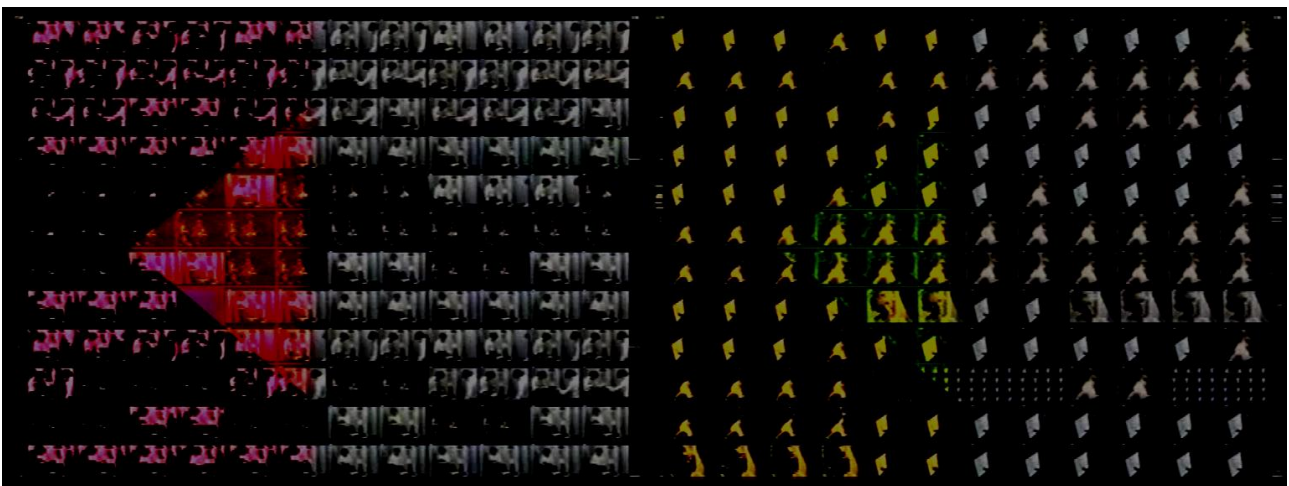
Videos number three and four in the series use some images from a professional billiard match recorded from television (96, 30.2 and 98, 31.1), as well as a more varicolored version of the wave patterns that can be found in other tapes (figure 99, 30.2) and a particular pixellation effect only to be found in Harsh number three (figure 97, 31.1).
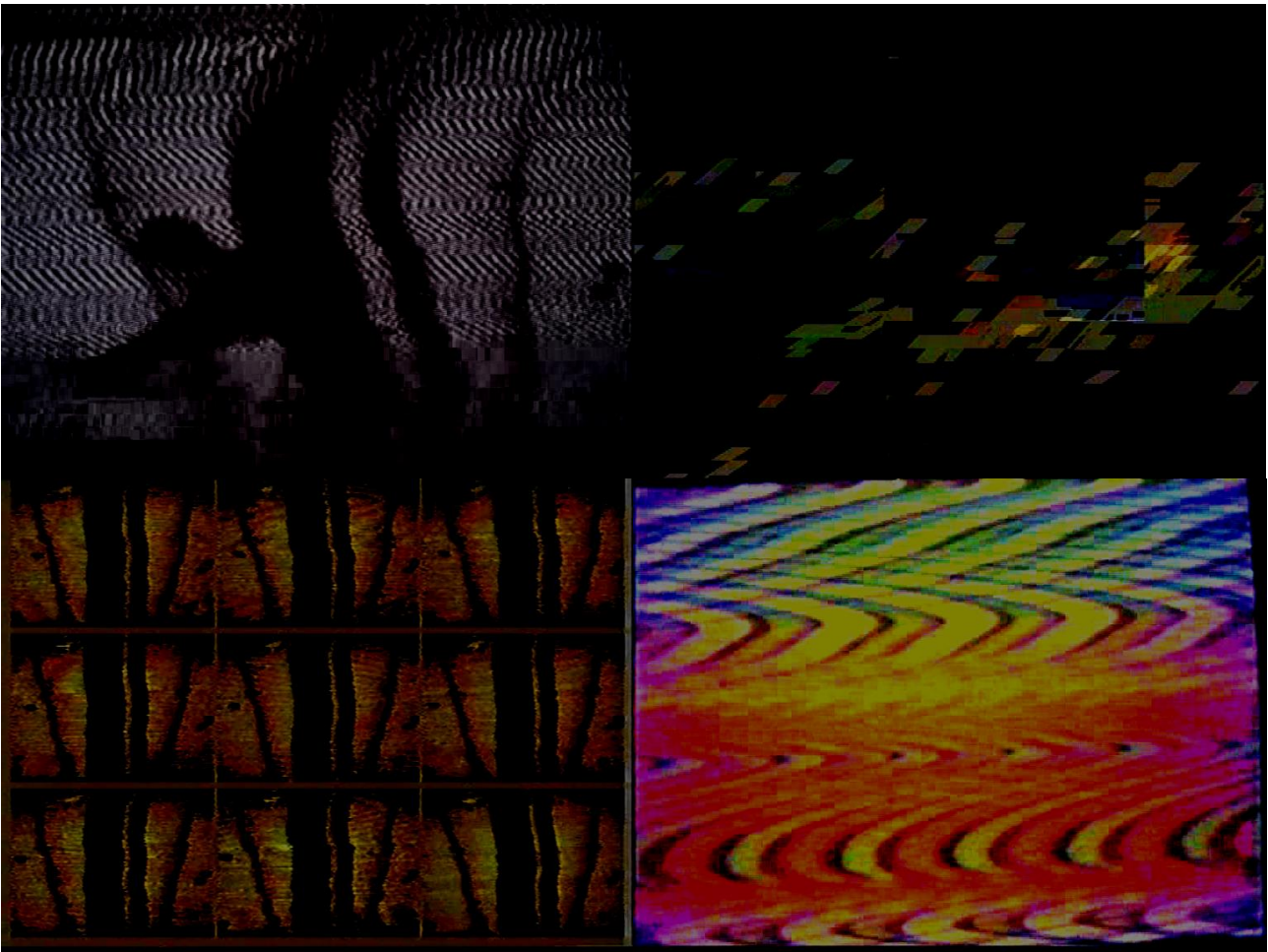
Tape five employs a more saturated palette and pastes in some images from a documentary about the first man who escaped from Alcatraz jail swimming (figures 100 and 101, 31.2), and which we will find again in a tape entirely made with heavily colorized TV recordings.
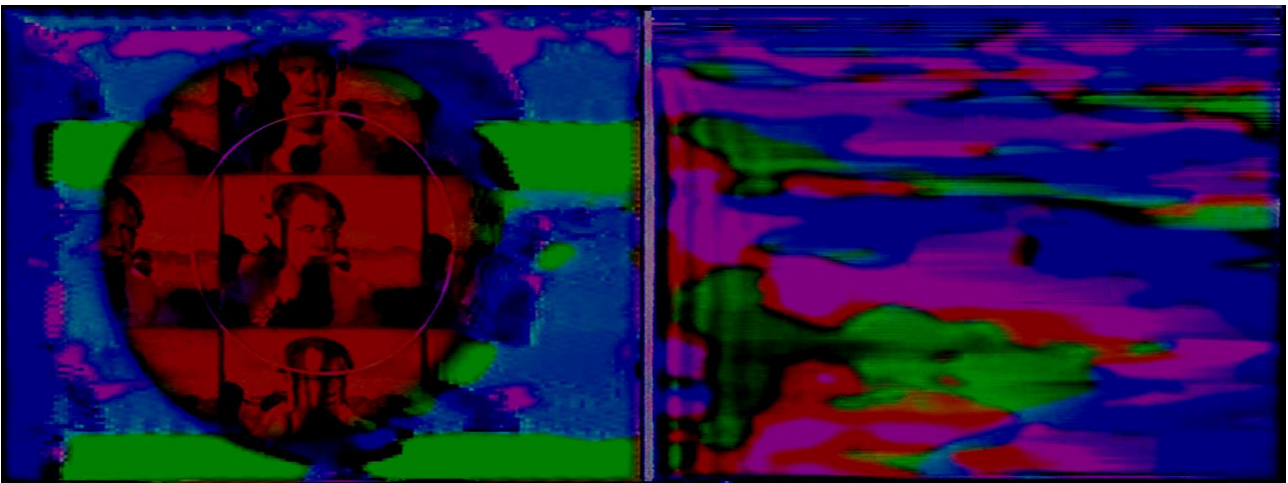

The combinations of digital effects and optical feedback in Harsh Varios Raw Misto number 6 are organised around the circle, with an overall effect that at times may suggest microscope footage of cells, at times, a planet or a painting by Delaunay (102-105, 32.1).
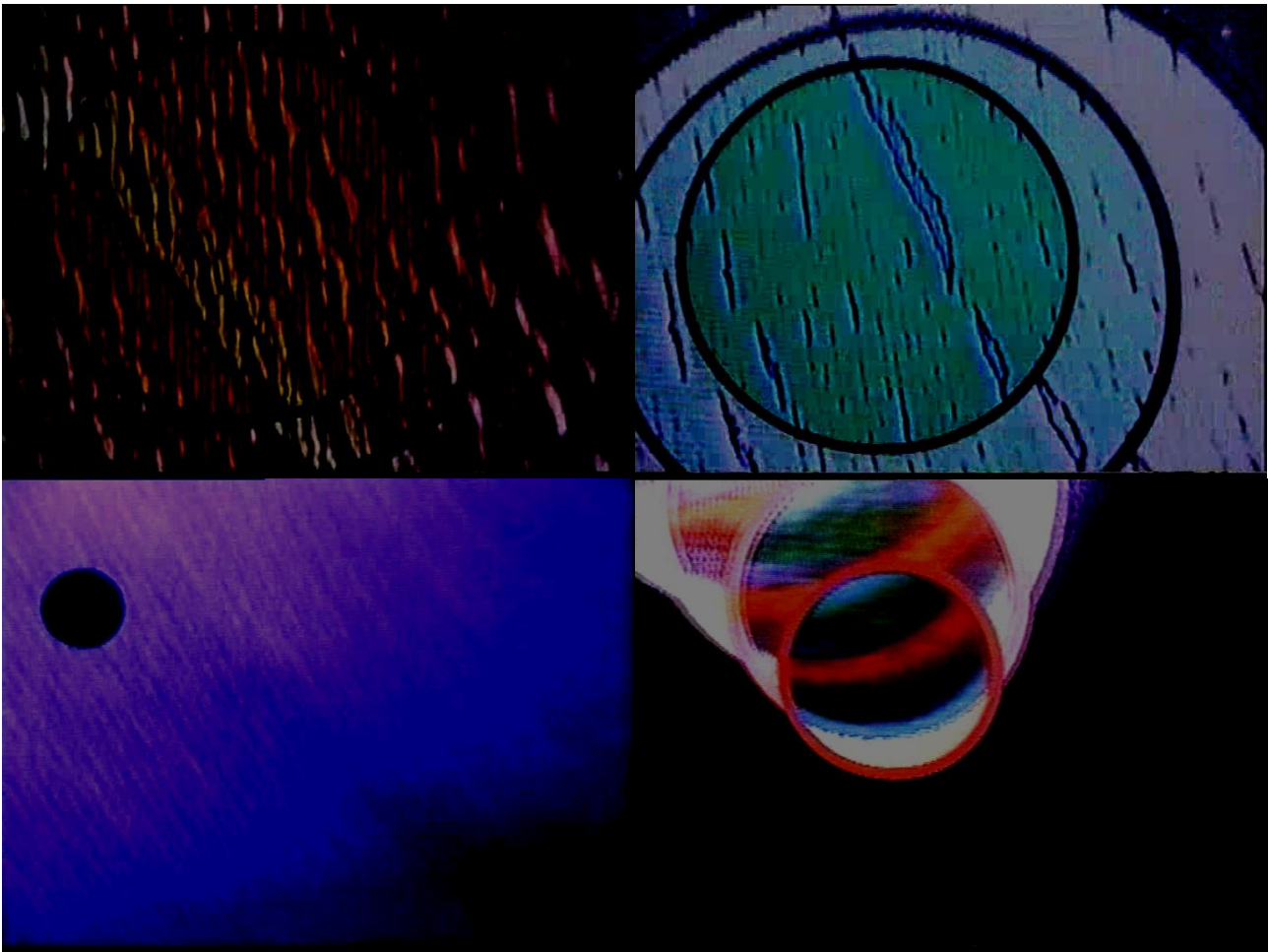
The final three tapes in the series offer an ever varying compendium of digital and feedback effects producing waves, screens, stains, patterns and shuffling pixellated areas. (figures 106-113, 32.2; figures 114 and 115, 33.2; figures 116 and 117, 33.2).
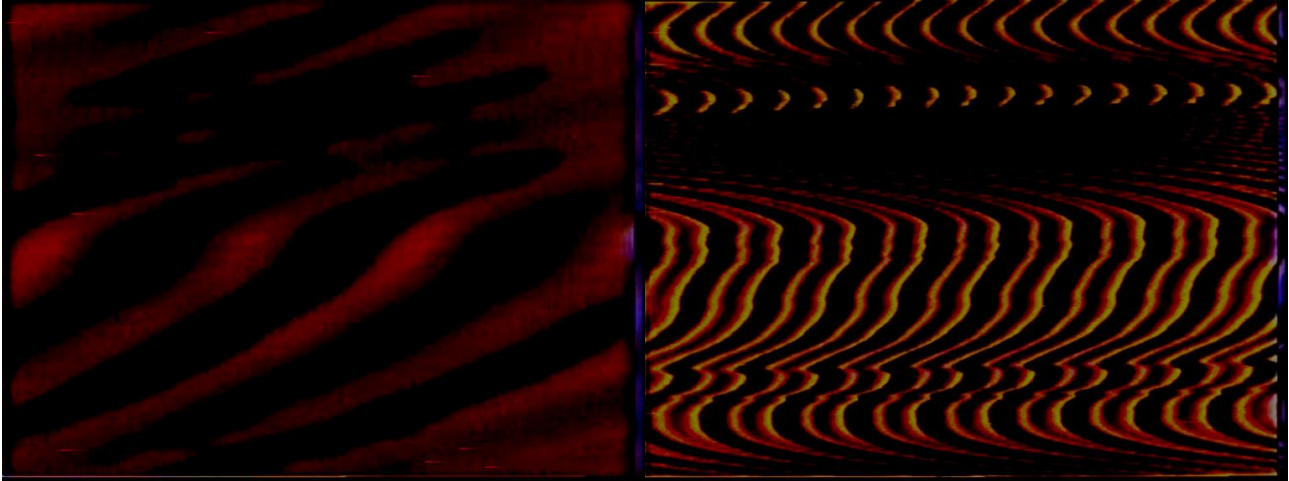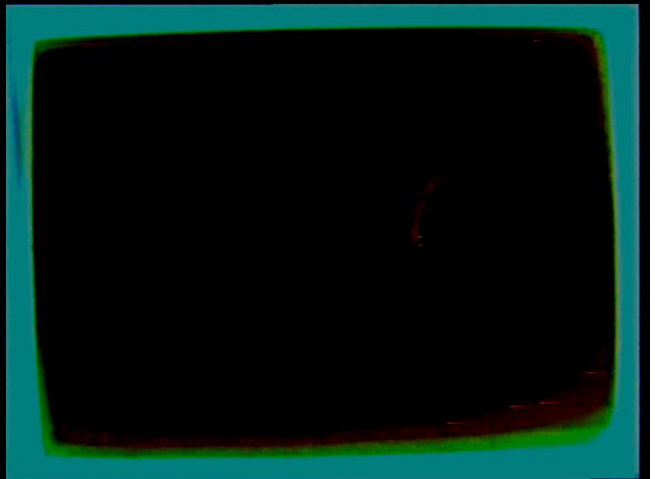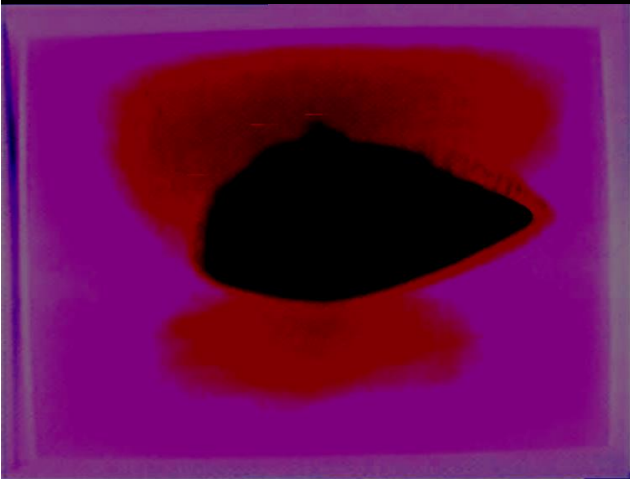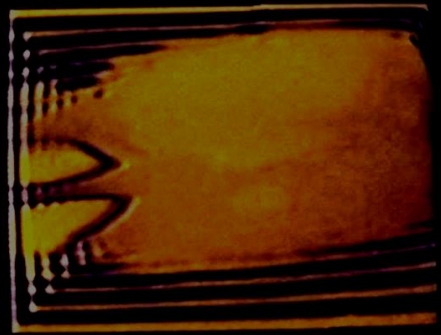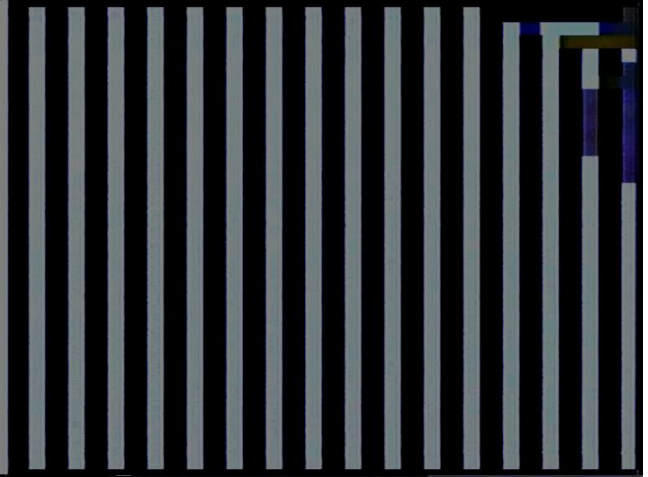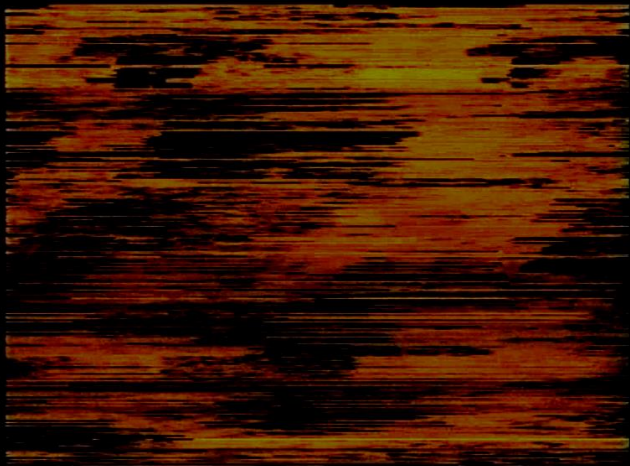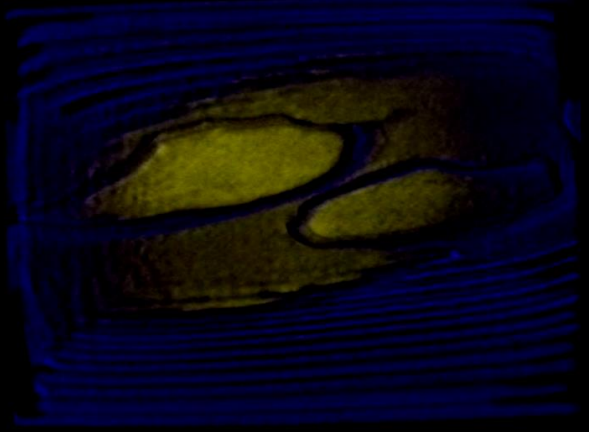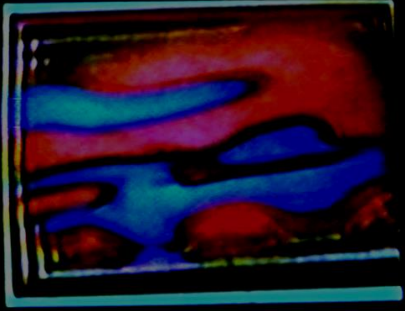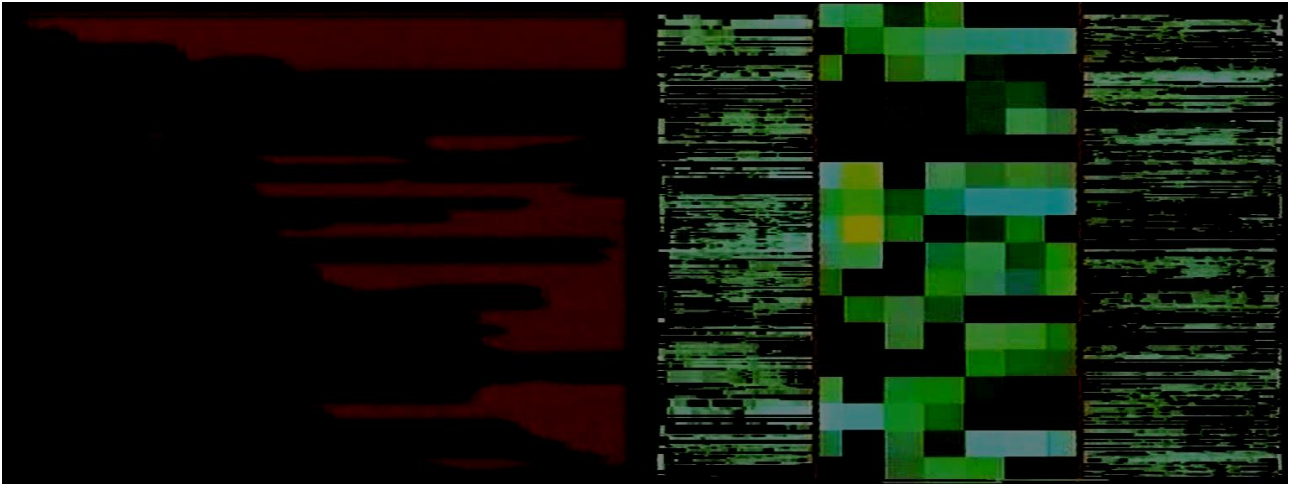
Animation series.

The series is based on a few colorised photographs of Agnes Déak Bardos, an Hungarian punk singer. The series simply moves through different colorisations and reframes of these pictures (figures 118-121, 5.3; figures 122 and 123, 8.3) or combines them through overlaying with optical feedback, giving as a result a mash-up of body parts and fractal shapes (figures 124 and 125, 8.3; figures 126-129, 8.4), occasionally synchronised with some early Nick Cave.
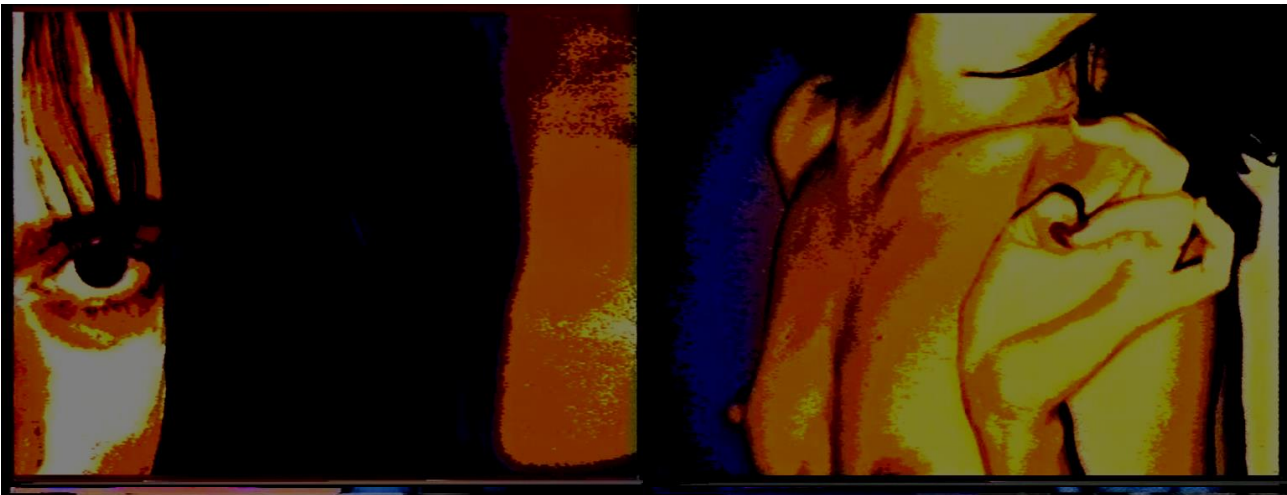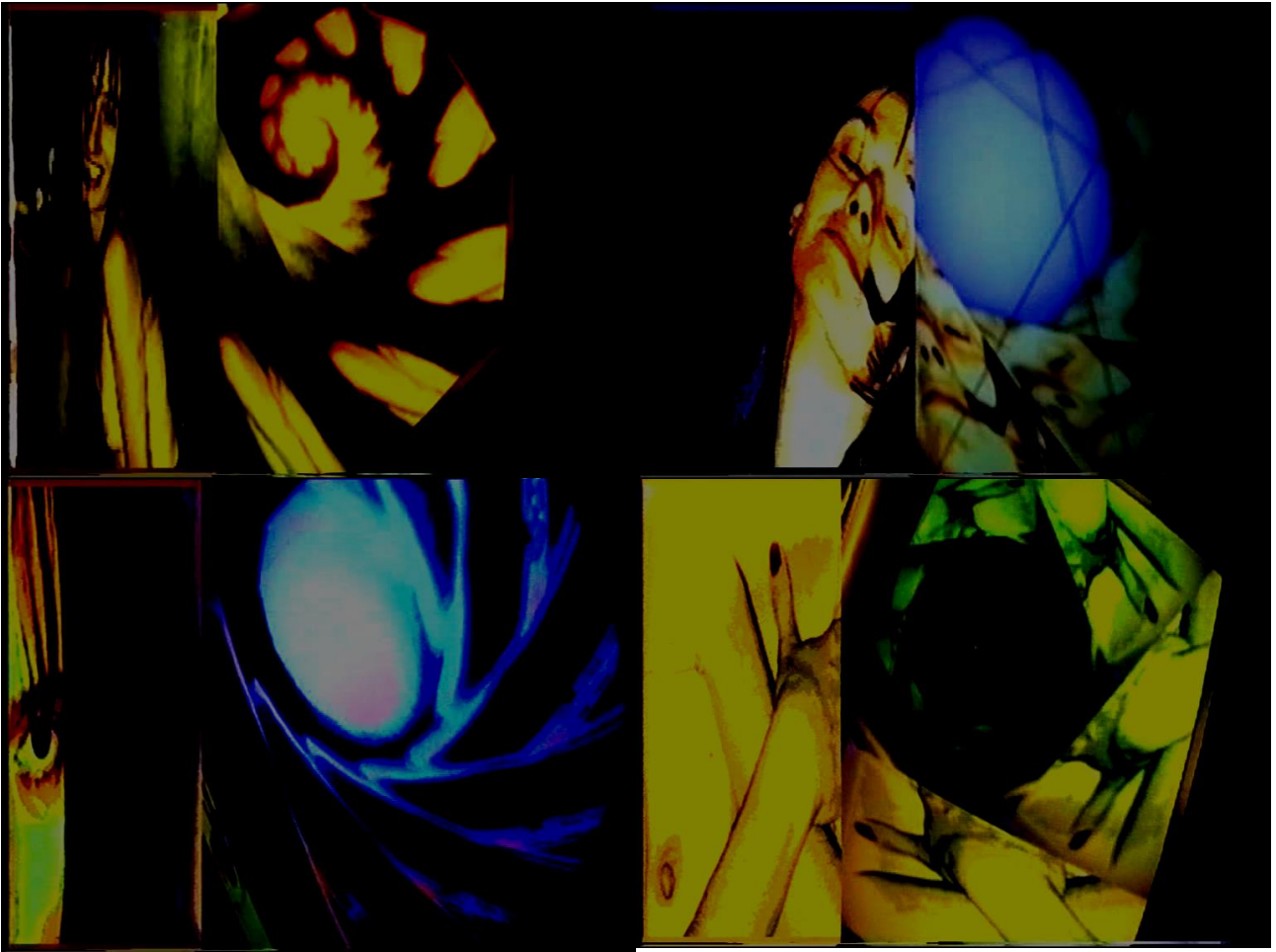
Television recordings.

Less original by definition, being exclusively reelaborations of recorded television images, but in most cases no less striking than images obtained through other manipulations, a few tapes are dedicated to colorised television recordings from popular USA reality television and films to North American, French and German adverts.

Here below we can see solarized images from the long-standing reality television series "Cops" (figures 130 and 131, 24.2).
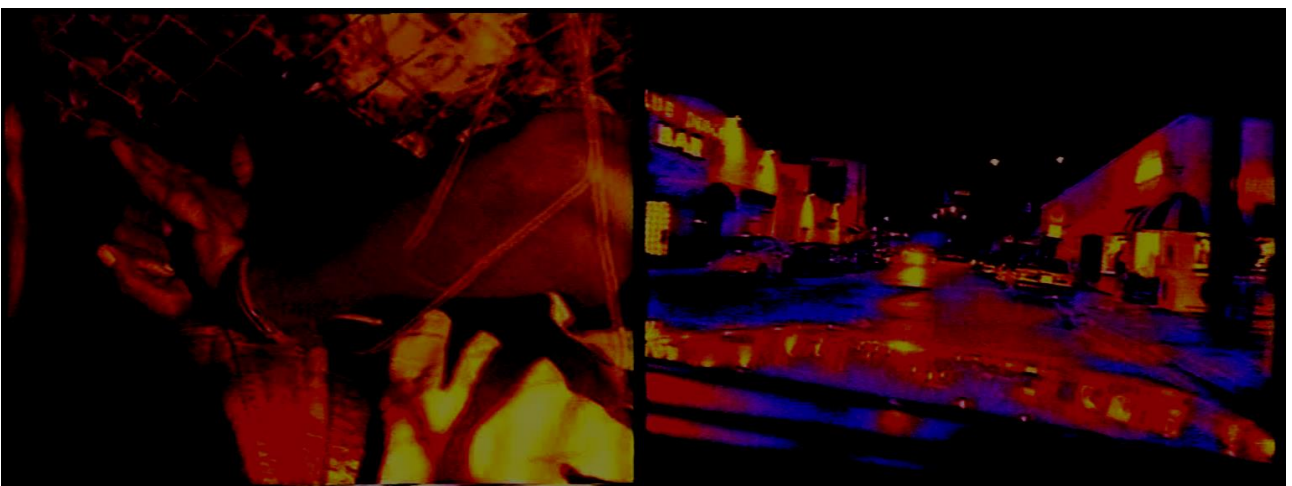
Pixellated advertsing images from television commercials (figures 132 and 133, 24.2; figures 134 and 135, 41.1)
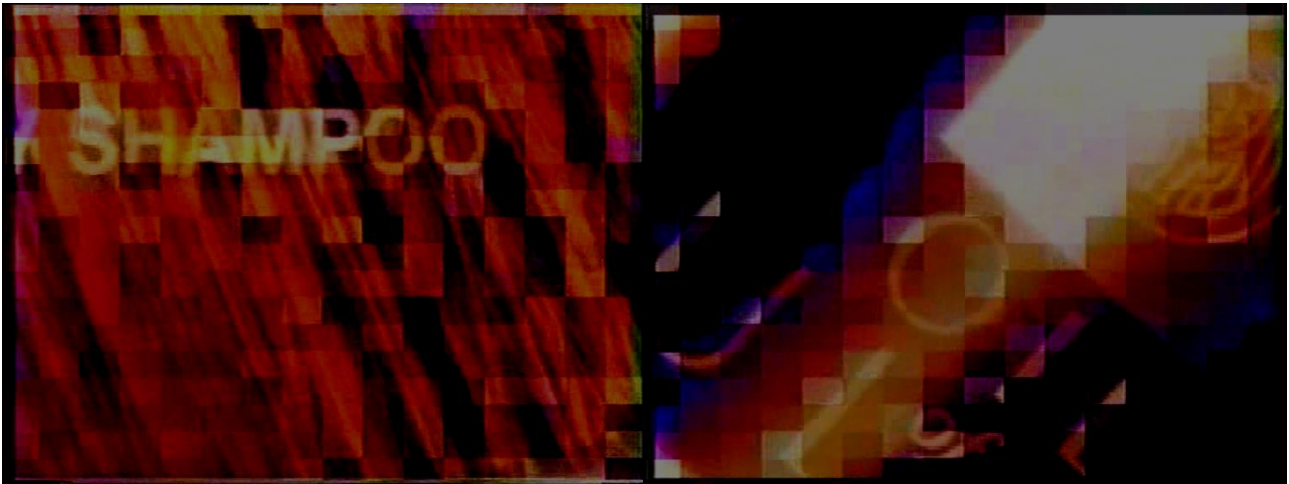

Colorised sequences from Walter Hill's 1979 *The Warriors*, a film portraying teenage gang violence in New York and a short clip from a Wrestling show transformed by a flurry of coloured pixels (figures 136 and 137, 24.2) – two faces of American violence.

Above, an explosion and a suitcase with burning money from John Dahl's 1989 neo-noir *Kill Me Again* (figures 138 and 139, 24.2). Below: colorised waves and a swimming sequence from 41.1. A documentary, mentioned above, about a man who escaped from Alcatraz prison.
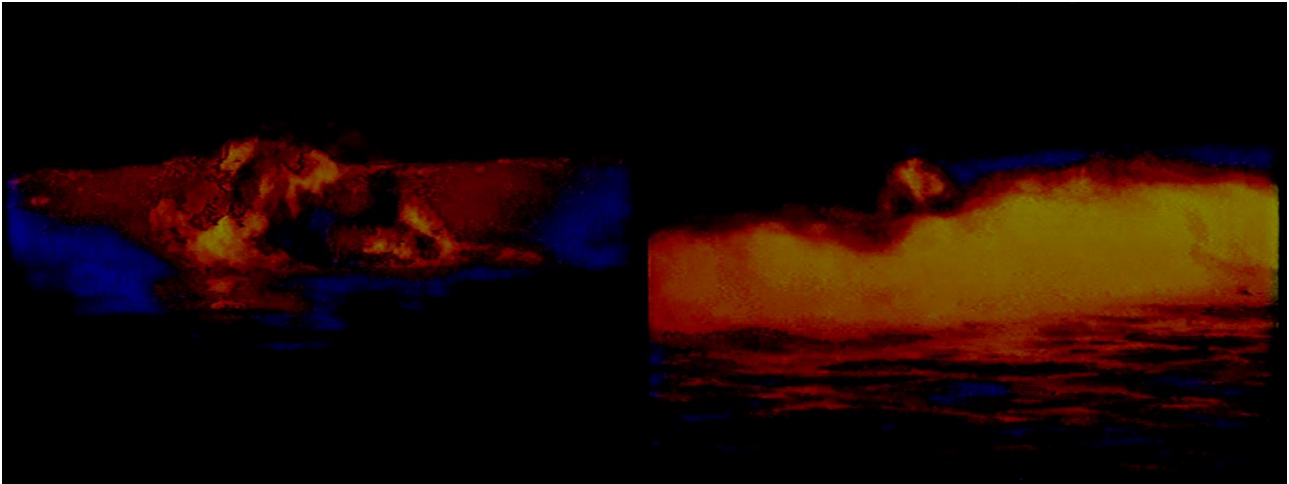
Sandor Gyoffry's exhibition.

More than a documentation of the exhibition, Hervé provides with this video an interesting representation of an aesthetic gaze: the works in the exhibition are not recorded, but rather interacted with, so that their video image does not try to correspond to them, but rather "with" them, as it were, intensifying some of their qualities at the expenses of others. At the same time, Hervé was dedicating the same kind of attention to the artworks and to patterns or chance combinations of architectural elements which were present in the gallery space: we have in this a very clear example of the Rancièrian idea that the aesthetic gaze consists in an equally suspended attention toward objects, regardless of their belonging to the sphere of Art or that of everyday life. So, the mass of hay in figure 140 (17.2) is given the same tratment through strobo effect that Hervé's gives to the mass of trees outside the windows of the exhibition space in figure 141 (17.2), which transformed both in a a vibrating texture of light. Similarly, it would be difficult to distinguish between an element of Gyoffry's sculptural ensembles and a section of the ceiling, but both acquire from the point of view of the aesthetic gaze the same "artistic" potential (figure 142 and 143, 17.2).
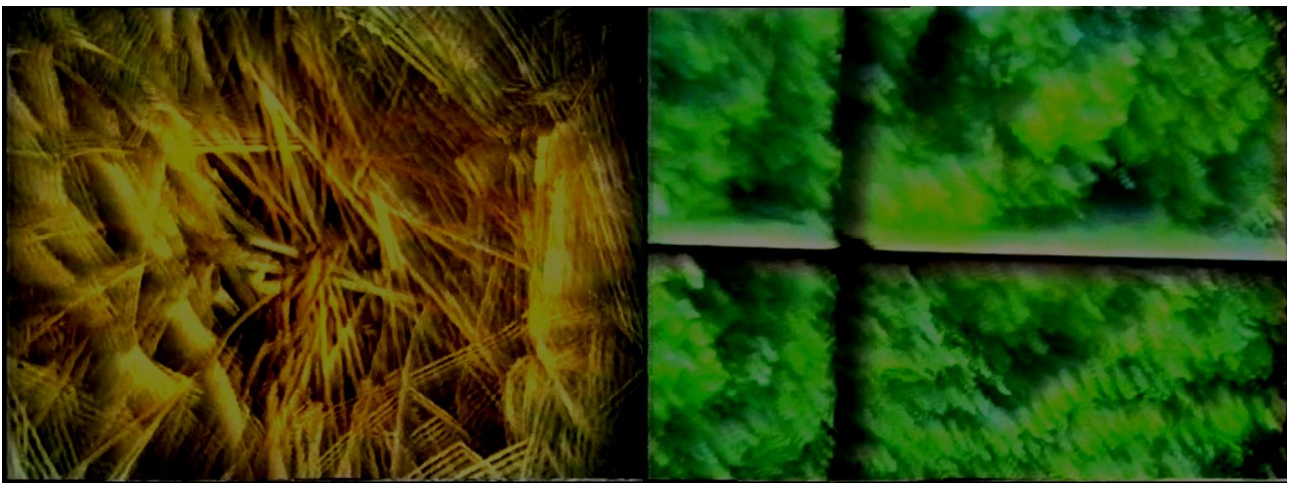
Image mix.

"Image Mix" is a more conventional, surrealist video collage, tape, of which we also have, in separate tapes, the different elements that Hervé has used in its composition: the background realised through optical feedback and colorisation, the images recorded from television and montaged / superimposed, and the digital effects that have been added to them. Also because of the found footage elements, the video can be read as a reflection on television: we find the theme of eyes and hypnosis, we find moving (train) and "signifying" (typewriter) machines, and images of exoticism and femininity, projection and shadow play, freedom and lack thereof (figures 144-151, 19.1)
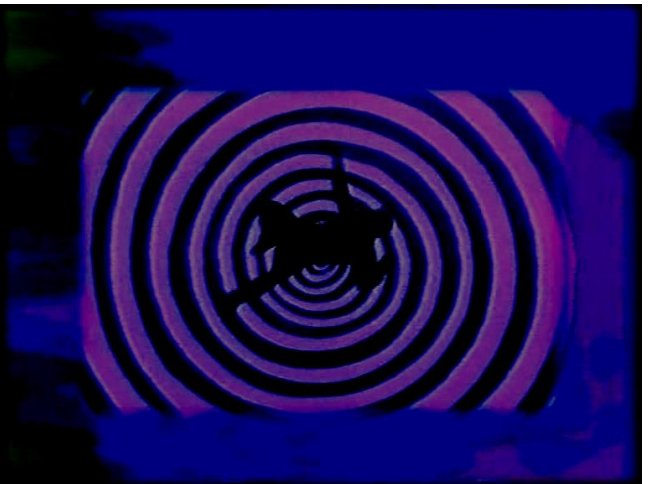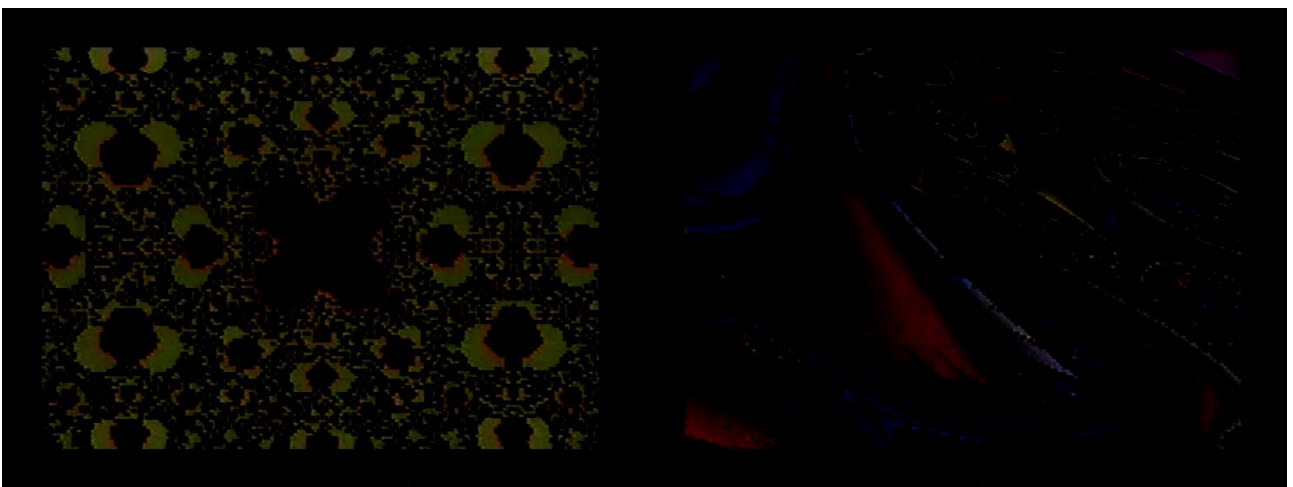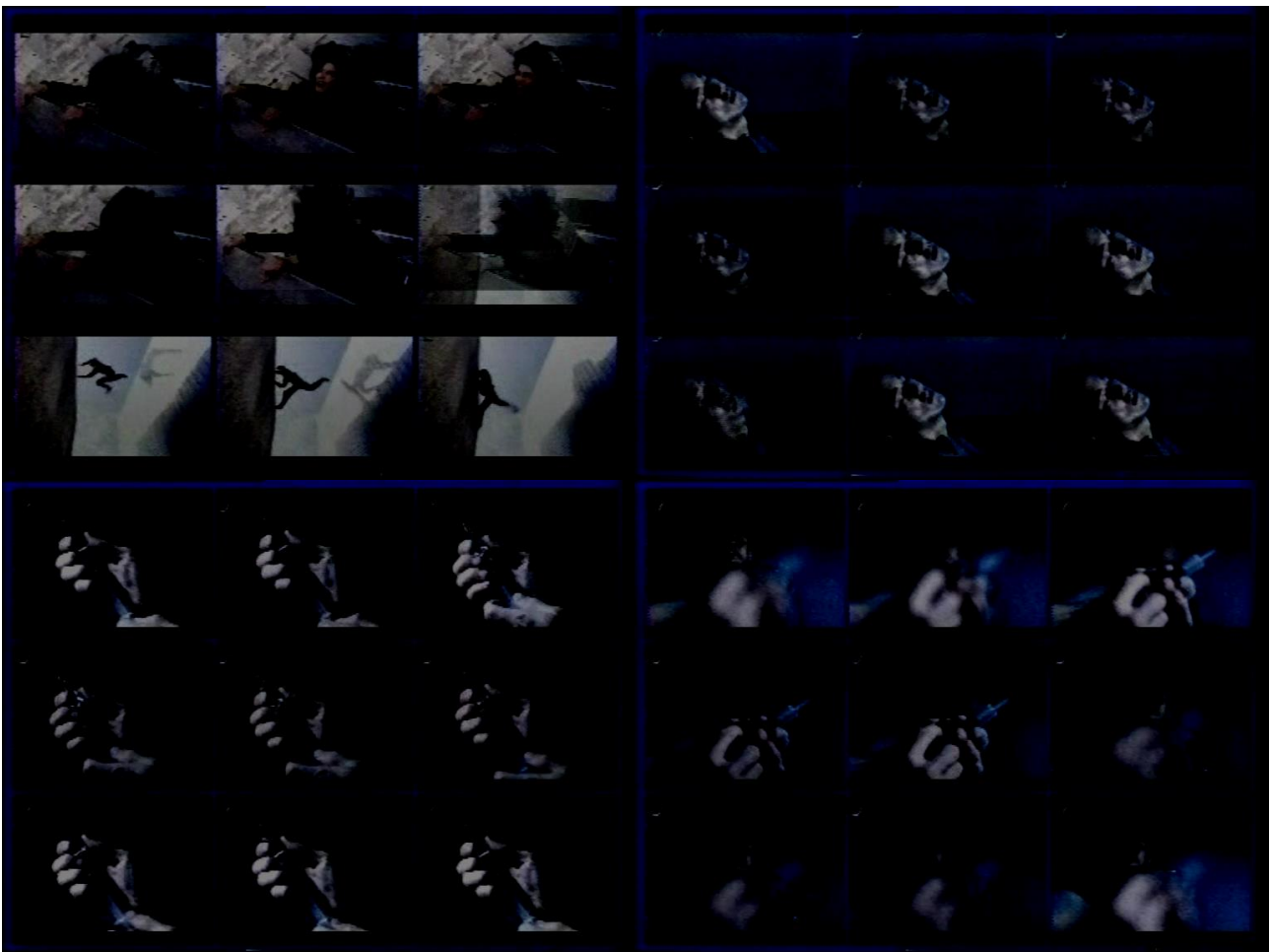
Fractal suite from Picassos.

This seems to be a fully digital work, but in some segments it still echoes the kind of organically flowing shapes of the optical feedback tapes (figures 152-155, 19.2).

Deconstruction of gestures.

This is a segment contained in the Tram Number 6 tape number 4 (15.1), but quite clearly not belonging to it: although its structure is the same 3x3 rectangular split screen grid as some of the segments from the Tram series, its material is quite clearly a recorded film. What is interesting about this video is how the sequences and gestures that Hervé has sampled from the film are rearranged in such a way as to make their gesturality more evident. The slip screens are swept from left to right, top to bottom, at a refresh rate of about three seconds, but the order of the images in the split screens

is scrambled, so that the original order of the sequence or gestures is altered. Most of the time the sequence actually begins from the central sub-screen and then develops first on the bottom, then on

[i]"Kinesthetic" originally refers to the body's perception of its own movements, and was then employed by film theorist Laura Marks in her discussion of image hapticity. See bibliography.

[ii]The video is catalogued as from 1988, but in one scene from 3.1 we see a pennant at a celebration marked with the date 15-8-1989. One may assume, then, that the tape has been shot a little later.

[iii]I am referring to Laura Marks' definition of haptic visuality in *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Film, Embodiment, and the Senses*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000. On page 162, Marks writes: "Haptic visuality is distinguished from optical visuality, which sees things from enough distance to perceive them as distinct forms in deep space: in other words, how we usually conceive of vision. Optical visuality depends on a separation between the viewing subject and the object. Haptic looking tends to move over the surface of its object rather than to plunge into illusionistic depth, not to distinguish form so much as to discern texture. It is more inclined to move than to focus, more inclined to graze than to gaze."