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Blank Screens: the Revolutionary Aesthetics of Boredom

In the postfordist society boredom is the most threatening of conditions, as it contradicts the moral imperatives of activity. With the traditional hierarchies of exploitation dissolved through society, individuals impose on themselves the positivist obligation of activity. This leads boredom to be experienced in a distressing way, psychologically and morally. However, Walter Benjamin claimed that boredom is “the dream bird that hatches the egg of experience” (Cited in Han, 2014:26). Byung-Chul Han expanded this notion, by stating that “deep boredom is the high point of spiritual relaxation.”(Ibid)

We believe that for countering the neoliberal reproduction of life, boredom becomes urgent and revolutionary. Our hypothesis is that boredom, by creating the conditions for mental relaxation, reveals the structures of dominance as well as the condition of alienation of the subjective experience. Such structures usually silenced by the constant noise of the postfordist society become evident once the later stops. This reflects on the use of the blank screen in the cinema: the absence of a visual structure raises the awareness of the spectator on the structure of the apparatus. This experience of the absence of visual content – or activity – allows the spectator to reach a state of spiritual relaxation. However the most likely is that he will experience boredom negatively.

We will analyse three films where the majority of the visual composition of the film consists of blank screens (white, black and grey): *Hurlements en faveur de Sade* (1952) by Guy Debord, *Branca de Neve* (2000) by João César Monteiro and *Amor Omnia* (2019) by Yohei Yamakado. This three films provide a way into a radical conception of vision and audition, a radical form of cinematic experience. The three films, in very diverse ways, propose visual silence as a form of revolutionary experience of the cinematic senses. Regardless of political intention, these films foster a broadening of ecologies

of knowledge (Santos, 2016) hence creating a new topology of the possible (Rancière, 2010).