

# EUROPEAN TELEVISION ARCHIVES, COLLECTIVE MEMORIES, AND CONTEMPORARY ART

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## ABSTRACT

The article discusses three moving image artworks produced since 2009, by Finnish artist Laura Horelli, Serbian artist Bojan Fajfrić, and Slovenian artist Aleksandra Domanović, featuring material from television archives in Finland or the countries of Former Yugoslavia. These artworks include fragments of educational programs, coverage of political meetings and title sequences for evening news programs, broadcast during the 1980s or early 1990s. All three artists focus on familial and national connections to the archived material, and use practices of re-editing, re-enacting and re-mixing to situate television in relation to other technologies of media storage and retrieval. As these three artworks focus on failures, absences and gaps in television memory, they offer a counterpoint to the notions of collectivity often emphasized in theorisations of the media event (Dayan and Katz, 1992). The article also considers the work of Fajfrić, Horelli, and Domanović in relation to a broader interest in television history and archives, evident amongst contemporary artists and curators since the mid-2000s.

IN A RECENT ARTICLE EXPLORING THE ARCHIVING OF TELEVISION IN THE UNITED STATES, Lynn Spigel reflects upon Andy Warhol's practice of taping TV shows during the last decade of his life.<sup>1</sup> She notes that his collection of recordings, which includes shows such as *Father Knows Best* and *Celebrity Sweepstakes*, has been preserved not because of its content but because it was assembled by a "unique collector." For Spigel, the somewhat arbitrary nature of "Andy's Archive" underscores the fact that television's preservation continues to be partly dictated by issues of context, offering an important counterpoint to the "fantasy of total accumulation" fueled by the Internet and the proliferation of technologies of storage.<sup>2</sup> These opposing visions of the archive offer a starting point from which to consider how a younger generation of artists who have experienced this proliferation of storage technologies during their lifetime might approach the relationship between television, history, and memory.

This article discusses three moving-image artworks (all realized since 2009) that engage with European television archives and share a concern with absences, gaps, or elisions in collective memory. The three works are *Haukka-Pala (A-Bit-to-Bite)* (2009) by Laura Horelli (born in 1976 in Helsinki), *Theta Rhythm* (2010) by Bojan Fajfrić (born in 1976 in Belgrade), and *19:30* (2010–ongoing) by Aleksandra Domanović (born in 1981 in Novi Sad). All works incorporate television material broadcast either before or during the 1980s and sourced many years later from the archives of national broadcasters. *Haukka-Pala* consists entirely of reedited clips of a children's TV show presented by Horelli's mother in 1984 and 1986 on the Finnish public television channel, TV2. *Theta Rhythm* is structured around the eighth session of the Central Committee of the Communist League of Serbia

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(September 23 and 24, 1987), which was broadcast live on the state television channel, Radio-Television Belgrade, and was attended by Fajfrić's father. *19:30* is much more expansive in terms of the broadcast material and institutional contexts it references and more loosely linked to the artist's familial experience. The project initially focused on idents (introductory graphic and music sequences) for evening news broadcasts on Jugoslavenska Radiotelevizija over several decades, beginning in 1958, but now includes idents for evening news programs from television stations based in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, and Vojvodina. These three works are typically exhibited in gallery contexts; *Haukka-Pala* consists solely of a single video work, usually displayed on a 4:3 television monitor (sometimes known as a "box" monitor); *Theta Rhythm* is a single-screen video projection shown either on its own or together with contextualizing texts and research videos; and Domanović's project encompasses video, collaborative performance events, and an online archive of broadcast material. Versions of these works have also been shown in film festivals, but all three artists seek to operate primarily within the contemporary art economy, offering works for sale via private galleries and sourcing grants and commissions from publicly funded agencies, museums, and other art institutions. It is also worth noting that these artists do not live in their countries of origin and are instead currently based in urban centers for contemporary art production and exhibition, Horelli and Domanović in Berlin, Fajfrić in Amsterdam.

These artists belong to a generation that experienced varied shifts in the political economy of broadcasting during the 1980s and early 1990s that subtly (or radically) altered the role and function of television in the public sphere. For both Domanović and Fajfrić, memories of television are bound up with particularly dramatic and violent transformations in the public sphere. This is because changes in the form of broadcasting coincided with the break-up of former Yugoslavia and are intrinsically linked to the articulation of conflicting claims regarding national identity and statehood. Clearly, this is not the first generation of artists to address the relationship between television, history, and memory. T. R. Uthco and Ant Farm's *The Eternal Frame* (1975), which explores media images of the assassination of President Kennedy, constitutes a particularly important precedent because it uses reenactment, a strategy also deployed in *Theta Rhythm*. It could be argued that *Videograms of a Revolution* (1992), by Harun Farocki and

Andrei Ujică, which focuses on the Romanian revolution of December 1989, is equally pertinent because it examines the physical, institutional, and symbolic role of television during a process of radical political and cultural change.

There are, however, important differences between the works I discuss in this article and these two earlier explorations of archival material. While *The Eternal Frame* and *Videograms of a Revolution* both address television's role in the making of history, this focus is much less apparent in *Haukka-Pala*, *Theta Rhythm*, and *19:30*. Instead, Horelli, Domanović, and Fajfrić investigate archival fragments that have failed to achieve the status of media events. Through practices of reediting, reenacting, and remixing, these recent works also situate television within the context of a more expansive exploration of technologies of media storage and retrieval, ranging from diaries to media-sharing websites. Before discussing these strategies in more detail, my article considers various accounts of television memory, encompassing but not limited to theorizations of the media event. This is followed by a brief discussion of television, nostalgia, and material culture and a close reading of the three works. Finally, I consider a number of factors—political, economic, and institutional—that have contributed to a renewed focus on television in contemporary art over the past decade.

### TELEVISION, MEMORY, AND MEDIA EVENTS

According to Jerome Bourdon, the relationship between television and memory has tended to be understood in two main ways. He identifies "a destructive model, and a hyper-integrative model based on a single program type: media events."<sup>3</sup> In the destructive model, television is aligned with "forgetting," produced by the continual replacement of one "big story" after the next, while in the "integrative, media-event-based model, television is seen as a major instrument in the shaping of collective memory, especially national, and sometimes global."<sup>4</sup> It is also possible to complicate the distinction between destructive and integrative models through reference to Mary Ann Doane's widely cited theorization of "catastrophe" as an integral component of television's temporal form. Citing television coverage both of the assassination of John F. Kennedy and of the events marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the assassination, Doane argues that "what is remembered in these nostalgic returns is not only the catastrophe or crisis itself, but the



fact that television was there, allowing us access to moments which always seem more real than all the others.”<sup>5</sup>

While Doane emphasizes the commercial logic underpinning television’s orientation toward commemoration, Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz have theorized the media event primarily in terms of a renewal of social connections between familial and national groups.<sup>6</sup> They argue that live television coverage of “ceremonies” ranging from the traumatic to the celebratory (including state funerals, the Olympics, and royal weddings) serve as occasions for shared viewing and for the production of collective memory. But to what extent is the concept of the media event actually relevant to my discussion and to the archived material explored in the three artworks I have cited? Both *Hauka-Pala* and *19:30* refer to prerecorded material (children’s programming and idents) that forms a routine component of broadcast schedules and so cannot be readily identified as media events. *Theta Rhythm* is structured around material that was broadcast live—coverage of the eighth session of the Central Committee of the Communist League of Serbia, the outcome of which helped to ensure Slobodan Milošević’s rise to power. But the 1987 broadcast did not involve an interruption of scheduled programming and is not presented in Fajfrić’s account as a significant occasion for the type of collective viewing characteristic of a media event. In fact, the meeting and its outcome *failed* to resonate publicly at the time of broadcast—this is the central concern of *Theta Rhythm*. So while the concept of the media event may inform understanding of these works, these artists actually address the absences or failures that characterize the relationship between television and collective memory.<sup>7</sup>

All three artists assert a direct (even intimate) connection to the content of television archives, which is both familial and national. But they also explore a sense of temporal distance or dislocation by focusing on the experience of encountering or reencountering broadcast material many years after it was first transmitted. So the development of *Theta Rhythm* began with the artist’s (uncertain and possibly imagined) memory of seeing his father on television in the 1980s and culminated with a dramatization of his father’s recollections of the day of the broadcast. Horelli’s work centers around her encounter—as an adult—with archived footage of a TV show that featured her (now deceased) mother as a presenter. Only *19:30* is explicitly framed through reference to the artists’ own memories of television viewing, and, significantly,

Domanović recalls hearing the music signaling the start of the TV news rather than actually watching the broadcasts.

### CATEGORIZING TELEVISION MEMORIES

In order to fully understand the forms of remembering explored in these three artworks it is necessary to look beyond the integrative and destructive models critiqued by Bourdon toward his own “less radical” account of television memory, based upon empirical research conducted in France in 1993. Bourdon frames French television as broadly representative of European public service broadcasting during this period, which (by comparison with US television) had a “different pace,” with less emphasis on drama in news programming, and was “more likely to be domesticated into daily routines.”<sup>8</sup> Bourdon also notes that French audiences reported watching about sixteen hours of television a week (roughly equivalent to 140 minutes a day) and that much of this viewing took place within “collective family circumstances,” which might include the extended family.<sup>9</sup>

While there are commonalities between the French and Finnish experiences of television during this period, there are also some important differences. A study of public broadcasting in Finland (published in 1989) noted that Finns tended to watch only one hundred minutes of television every day and even less during the summer months. More importantly, it identified a highly intellectual, activist approach on the part of the Finnish national broadcasting company YLE, informed by a socialist (even distinctly Marxist) critique of cultural imperialism, in which television was very consciously conceived as a means “to preserve and enhance the uniqueness of Finnish culture.”<sup>10</sup> This led to a strong emphasis on didactic informational programming on the YLE stations TV1 and TV2 that was still somewhat apparent in the late 1980s, despite growing commercial competition.<sup>11</sup> Yet even though the range of programming choices increased in the following decades, enabling the experience of television to become more private, a later study of social uses of television in Finland (based on data sets from 1996 and 2005) concluded that elements of collective viewing remained important in Finnish television culture, concluding that “most people want scheduled programs from television to experience ‘old-fashioned communality’ in the digital era.”<sup>12</sup>

The history of broadcasting in former Yugoslavia is clearly more complex both because of the interconnections



between the broadcasters in the various republics prior to the break-up of Yugoslavia and because of the central role played by the media in the development and articulation of nationalism before and during the conflicts of the early 1990s. Writing in 2005, Zala Volcic notes that initially “mass media in general and broadcasting in particular served the socialist goal of the creation of a sense of the Yugoslav national community” and were controlled by the League of Communists of Yugoslavia.<sup>13</sup> So even if the media were relatively “unconstrained” by comparison with other Communist states, broadcasting could not be defined in terms of a Reithian model of public service.<sup>14</sup> By the late 1980s each Yugoslav republic had its own television station, with a system for the sharing of productions, and this period also marked a shift toward a more overtly nationalist discourse. In the case of the Slovenian station TVS, Volcic notes that “Slovenians started to be daily reproduced as nationals, through a whole complex of beliefs, assumptions, habits, images, logos, representations and practices,” and, more specifically, “programmes such as the evening news at 7.30 pm were transformed into shows with a new national focus.”<sup>15</sup> The work of both Domanović (who was born in Novi Sad, Serbia, but grew up in Slovenia) and Fajfrić should then be understood within the context of a significant transformation in the form and experience of national broadcasting during the 1980s.

Turning to the model developed by Bourdon, it is possible to organize television memory into four main categories. In addition to “media events,” they include “wallpaper” memories (relating to habits and routines rather than actual viewing), “flashbulb” memories that have proved especially traumatic, and “close encounters,” or memories of “real-life” interactions between viewers and television personalities. This framework seems especially pertinent to my analysis precisely because it encompasses analysis of memories not defined by *viewing*. The “wallpaper” category underscores the importance of recurrent, and often collective, habits and practices in relation to television, sometimes aligned with (and perhaps contributing to) a sense of the home as a “safe” place. Television is therefore positioned in relation to a whole range of predominantly domestic “clocking” activities that involve “sequencing and the setting of frequency, duration and scheduling” through which the world itself is domesticated, a process that is enhanced by television’s serial form and the presence of familiar figures such as TV hosts and newscasters.<sup>16</sup>

In different ways, Horelli, Fajfrić, and Domanović are attuned to the temporal rhythms of broadcasting and to these processes of domestication. A focus on scheduling is especially apparent in *19:30*, which takes its title from the regular start time of evening news broadcasts. But Horelli’s reediting of *Haukka-Pala* also responds to the fact that children’s television programs typically occupy a fixed position within daily and weekly schedules and are likely to be remembered within the context of everyday domestic routines. These routines are potentially highly normative, as demonstrated by Paddy Scannell’s research into the temporal order of British public service broadcasting.<sup>17</sup> The notion of “close encounters” might also be relevant to the work of Horelli and Fajfrić, although this is a more tenuous connection. Bourdon notes that this experience is marked by “a sense of transgression” because “a bridge is built between two realms that usually cannot be connected.”<sup>18</sup> *Haukka-Pala*, which includes voice-over narration by Horelli, could be said to engage in a process of bridge building, but in this instance the transgression involves the linking of two realms that are separated in time rather than perceptions of the ordinary and the extraordinary that (in Bourdon’s account) separate everyday life from television. An even more pronounced transgression occurs in Fajfrić’s work, because he plays the part of his own father in a historical reconstruction, which incorporates the archived material.

## TELEVISION, MEMORY, AND MATERIAL CULTURE

In recent years, analysis of the relationship between television and memory has also expanded to engage more fully with the issue of materiality. In a study that focuses primarily (although not exclusively) on the British context, Amy Holdsworth identifies “an increased obsession with television memory and the nostalgia for television past.”<sup>19</sup> She is not wholly dismissive of this nostalgic current, however, and instead finds self-reflexive approaches to the representation of television viewing (in which television is conceived as visual medium and material object) in contemporary art, cinema, and television. I am especially interested in Holdsworth’s account of a two-channel moving-image installation by British artist Gillian Wearing titled *Family History* (2006). *Family History* was originally devised for presentation in two “show homes” located in the UK cities of Reading and Birmingham



and presented in conjunction with Wearing's solo exhibition at the (publicly funded) IKON Gallery in Birmingham.

Wearing's installation consists of two videos, one of which is presented in the style of a talk show, hosted by Trisha Goddard (a familiar figure on UK daytime television) and featuring an interview with Heather Wilkins. Now middle-aged, Wilkins became known to British television viewers during the 1970s for her participation as a teenager in the BBC television series *The Family* (1974), an observational-style documentary inspired by *An American Family* (1972). The other video component of Wearing's installation is much shorter and presented in an adjoining room of the exhibition space. It features a young girl (described in the press release as "a young Wearing lookalike") seated in a domestic living room decorated to suggest the 1970s. The girl watches scenes of conflict drawn from *The Family* featuring the teenage Heather, and she comments (in conversation with an off-screen interviewer) briefly upon her viewing experience. Both videos, despite their different running times, end with a slow zoom out that reveals the 1970s living room to be a set, situated (like the TV talk show environment) in a television studio.

Holdsworth emphasizes the importance of Wearing's work in understanding the material and sensory processes through which memory is made, noting the differences between the forms of domesticity on display in the 1970s living room set, the TV talk show set, and the "show home" environment of the exhibition: "The revealed structure of the set . . . highlights a pattern of reflections; through the simulated past/present of the adjoining 'sets,' one a reconstruction and the other a retrospective, the project interrogates the making of memory within television's living rooms."<sup>20</sup> Like many of the other examples cited by Holdsworth, *Family History* certainly does develop a self-reflexive approach to the representation of domestic viewing. But it also presents Wearing's viewing experience not only as somehow distinctive (because it contributed to her development as an artist) but also as representative of a larger cultural experience.<sup>21</sup>

*Family History* was promoted as an explicitly autobiographical work in the publicity surrounding its presentation in Birmingham (where *The Family* was shot) and Reading (where Wearing grew up). Wearing's experience is also, however, very firmly situated within the context of a larger narrative of collective viewing through Trisha Goddard's interview with Heather, which explores memories of the

production process, Heather's doubled experience as both viewer and participant, and the problems that resulted from the celebrity status bestowed upon the Wilkins family. This celebrity status is illustrated through the inclusion of clips showing throngs of photographers at the wedding of Heather's eldest sister, which might itself be regarded as a "media event." Ultimately, even if Wearing's project develops a critique (through the mimicry of the talk show format) of television's tendency toward nostalgia, *Family History* also mobilizes notions of collectivity in ways that seem to authorize the artist's memory—and history—of television. It emphasizes continuities and convergences between individual and collective experience—in contrast to the insistence on failures, absences, and gaps in television memory evident in *Haukka-Pala*, *Theta Rhythm*, and *19:30*.

#### FAMILIAL AND NATIONAL NORMS: LAURA HORELLI, *HAUKKA-PALA (A-BIT-TO-BITE)*

In 2009 *Haukka-Pala* was exhibited at the Venice Biennale as part of an exhibition of works by Finnish, Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian artists titled *The Collectors* and curated by the artist duo Elmgreen and Dragset. The selection of Horelli's work as part of a national presentation might seem to signal an official endorsement of *Haukka-Pala* as an exploration of Finnish cultural history. But Elmgreen and Dragset adopted a self-consciously disruptive position in relation to norms of national representation by staging the Nordic and Danish pavilions as luxurious villas, emphasizing parallels between the Biennale and a commercial Expo. Visitors to the exhibition were invited to imagine the pavilions as home to imaginary occupants (including an art collector) and presented with often darkly humorous glimpses into these occupants' lives. *Haukka-Pala* seemed somewhat out of place in this lavish setting, perhaps because the on-screen image of domesticity offered by children's public service broadcasting in the mid-1980s was so clearly at odds with the images of aspirational living conjured elsewhere in the exhibition. But the very inappropriateness of the viewing environment may also have served to intensify the emotional affect of the work.

The *Haukka-Pala* television show, which promoted healthy eating and also incorporated references to traditional customs, was written and presented by Horelli's mother, Helena (a nutritionist), during the years shortly before her death. Horelli reedited several episodes of the show, adding





FIGURE 1. Laura Horelli, *Haukka-Pala (A-Bit-to-Bite)*, 2009. Still from color video with sound. 28 minutes. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Barbara Weiss, Berlin.

a voice-over commentary (in Finnish, subtitled in English) and excerpts from the diaries that her mother kept during her early twenties, which are presented in yellow text on-screen. At various points, Finnish dialogue between Helena and her copresenter—a puppet dog called Ransu—is audible, and English subtitles are again provided. Some of these on-screen exchanges prompt memories of Horelli's own childhood, so, for example, a reference to peas in one dialogue calls to mind a memory of picking weeds from her father's pea fields. But at other moments she adopts a more analytical role as narrator and viewer, slowing the video image so that fragments of her mother's gestures can be examined more closely.

One reviewer reads the extension of these gestures through time stretching as both an "act of reduction" and a way of bringing her mother temporarily to life, serving "to animate her, to conjure her."<sup>22</sup> The same reviewer points out that "by investigating her own experience as if it were a paradigm [Horelli] produces works that are formally and strategically intelligent, and which constitute much more than a retelling of one individual's experiences."<sup>23</sup> This "paradigmatic" dimension is apparent when Horelli reflects on her own experience of viewing the tapes for the first time; she recognized her mother's laughter but thought she seemed strange and unfamiliar "from the front." This comment, while communicating a personal response, also draws attention to the mode of address commonly employed in educational television, news programming, and

(in an earlier era) continuity announcements, whereby the presenter faces the camera and addresses viewers directly or implicitly through dialogues with a copresenter. Horelli also comments on formal distinctions between disparate forms of direct speech, which are placed in relation to each other through the interplay between voice-over, video, and diary extracts. The work embraces the televisual fiction of the shared "here and now" while also differentiating between practices of scripted and natural speech and activities of remembering and storytelling, viewing and reviewing. By weaving together the content of the program and her own memories of family life, Horelli also highlights normative aspects of Finnish children's television. For example, when her mother explains to the viewers that it is good to eat with friends once a day, Horelli explains that her own family always ate dinner together at 5:00 p.m., and, noting that Ransu recently celebrated his thirtieth year on Finnish television, she draws attention to the continued significance of children's television in asserting social and domestic norms, whether national or familial.

#### ALTERING THE RECORD: BOJAN FAJFRIĆ, *THETA RHYTHM*

*Theta Rhythm* engages with a genre of broadcasting that is generally devoid of visual interest: television coverage of political party meetings and conferences. As already noted, this work is a reconstruction of a specific day in September 1987, focusing on the daily routine of Fajfrić's father, who at that time worked as an administrator for Belgrade's City Committee. The day's events included a meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist League of Serbia, the outcome of which contributed to the rise of Slobodan Milošević. The session was broadcast live on national television, and Fajfrić's father was one of several people in attendance to be caught sleeping on-camera during the lengthy and protracted meeting. Fajfrić emphasizes, however, that the act of falling asleep was barely noticed at the time, as it was a relatively common occurrence at these meetings: "At the time when Milošević was fighting for power, the sessions and meetings were endless. His strategy was to allow anybody attending the meeting to speak about anything vaguely connected to the subject of the renewal of the Communist Party without time limit . . . so the majority of the participants would vote yes without formulating their critical judgment just to



be able to go home.”<sup>24</sup> Fajfrić notes that the specific session during which his father fell asleep was later recognized by historians as “a symbolic turning point that led to the rise of nationalism and wars in former Yugoslavia.”<sup>25</sup> His father, who opposed Milošević’s politics, subsequently left the political administration in 1990 to begin a new career based on his hobby of horse riding.

For Fajfrić, the innocent act of falling asleep is a metaphor for the failure of his father’s generation to alter the course of history, and the fact that this specific image entered the historical record makes it possible to conceptualize other possible outcomes—even if only imaginatively. So *Theta Rhythm* constitutes an attempt to identify and visualize a specific moment when the course of historical events might have been altered, and the title of the work refers to brainwave activity observed during certain states of sleep and wakefulness and associated with memory and learning, introducing a quasi-scientific framework. Shot on HD cam, with production values and an attention to period detail that match the standard of much commercial television, the reconstruction features a central performance by Fajfrić in the role of his father, complete with a convincingly retro haircut and suit. In recent decades the practice of reconstruction has become relatively commonplace in contemporary art, but Fajfrić’s work is distinctive because his film incorporates archived broadcast footage, and this footage has been altered.<sup>26</sup> At a key moment historical accuracy gives way to fictionalization as Fajfrić uses compositing technology to insert his own image into the archive footage, recalling film narratives such as *Zelig* (1983) and *Forrest Gump* (1994) but also underscoring the fact that the images of the Belgrade meeting were *not* viewed as “iconic.”

*Theta Rhythm* also includes a much more ambiguous sequence in which Fajfrić (playing his father) is seen riding a racehorse on a track, costumed as a jockey. Photographed at sunrise, these shots are much more obviously dramatic and arresting than the preparations for the party meeting or the archive material. Appearing in fragmentary form, precisely at the intersection between sleep and wakefulness, these scenes are both fantastical and highly compelling, suggesting either powerful memories or desires that were subsequently to be fulfilled by Fajfrić’s father following his change of career. Through this juxtaposition of the dramatic and mundane, *Theta Rhythm* explores the difficulty of recognizing and representing significant moments in the flow

of history. It also demonstrates that significance can be subjective and that the public time of broadcasting intersects with other temporalities, which include the unfolding of a career or a family history. It is worth noting that when this work is shown as a looped moving-image installation, the transition from evening to morning (interspersed by the dreamlike sequences) is especially ambiguous, inviting reflection upon the boundaries between sleep and wakefulness as well as between past and present. While perhaps more suited to a gallery context than a cinema screening, as suggested in one review of the Oberhausen International Short Film Festival 2011, *Theta Rhythm* has been shown extensively at festivals, and Fajfrić has sought to preserve aspects of the looped form in the festival edit of the work by incorporating opening and closing scenes that are very similar.<sup>27</sup>

#### THE ARCHIVE IN PROGRESS: ALEKSANDRA DOMANOVIĆ’S 19:30

Domanović’s ongoing project *19:30* is not simply a moving-image work but rather, as already noted, a much more expansive exploration of the graphical and musical form of idents preceding evening news broadcasts. Reviewing the work within the context of the exhibition *Free* at the New Museum, New York, Karen Rosenberg identified it as representative of the “intense desire for communal experience” that was articulated in the show as a whole.<sup>28</sup> Encompassing the production of multiple artworks in various media, the core of

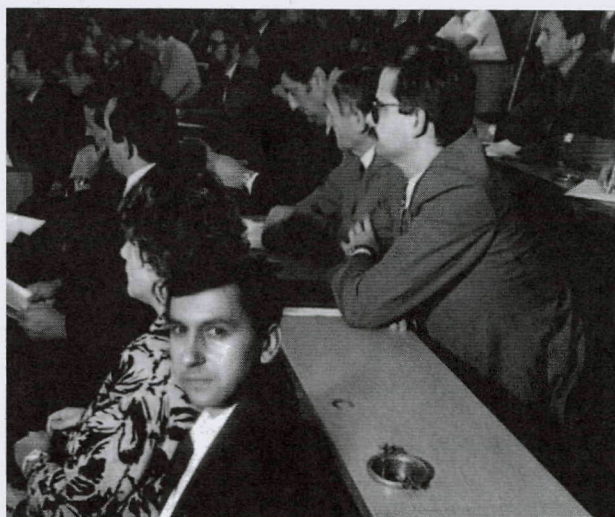


FIGURE 2. Bojan Fajfrić, *Theta Rhythm* (2010). Single-channel installation in loop, 17 minutes. HDCam.



19:30 is a publicly accessible archive in the form of an online collection of image and audio files. Domanović lived through the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, and her interest in television was shaped by childhood memories of hearing the title music that announced evening news broadcasts on television every evening at 7:30 p.m., at which point adult activity and street life would pause, particularly during the war years.<sup>29</sup> This title music was usually instrumental, often produced with electronic technology, and typically devised to induce a sense of urgency and intensity.

Domanović's adult interest in this material (and her own memory of television) was prompted by subsequent events—specifically, her encounter with fragments of this music that had, during the 1990s, been remixed by techno DJs and music producers, acquiring a kind of second life online through YouTube and other sites. Realizing that this material was largely overlooked in academic media studies, she set about researching it with the support of a grant from Rhizome. Initially focusing solely on the music used in news idents, she later expanded her analysis to include the visual elements of the sequences, which tended to have high production values by comparison with other national TV productions, generally incorporating sophisticated animation and graphics. Domanović has now built a collection of research material by personally visiting broadcasters all over the former Yugoslavia, and this material is accessible in an online “chronology.”<sup>30</sup> Reflecting on her research process, she notes the limited resources available to some broadcasters and points out that access to archived material in these contexts is often dependent upon personal connections, the intervention of cultural agencies, or payment of commercial fees, as title sequences constitute a potential source of income for these broadcasters.

But even though she has sought to systematically gather, organize, and contextualize elements of broadcasting history, Domanović does not solely identify with the custodial role of archivist. She is instead committed to making this material available for reconfiguration by others, broadly in keeping with the ethics of open source programming, and she contributes to its afterlife by collaborating with DJs on live performances and parties, developing ongoing remixes of sound and image files, elements of which are incorporated into her video installations and single-screen works. The live performance events, which are sometimes staged within the programs of major exhibitions, are especially

interesting because (unlike gallery installations) they create the conditions for a self-consciously collective experience of this material. It is possible—though by no means clear—that these performances could also elicit shared memories of television in ways that might echo some of the social and discursive functions attributed to media events. But Domanović makes no attempt to mimic the temporal rhythms and routines of broadcasting; instead, her performances and parties emphasize and exploit the pronounced dislocation of these archival fragments from the television schedule.

### BROADCASTING, MUSEUMS, AND THE PRIVATIZATION OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE

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It might be argued that, in seeking to assemble, organize, and preserve these fragments of broadcast history, Domanović's project forms part of a broader nostalgic current within contemporary culture, echoing the fascination with television's impending disappearance noted by Holdsworth in television, cinema, art, and academic discourse.<sup>31</sup> More specifically, Domanović, Fajfrić, and Horelli seem to be grappling with some of the same questions highlighted in media studies concerning television's shifting role within public life. John Caughie, for example, laments the loss of the “public space” offered by culturally prominent television in an earlier era, citing the reception of the 1966 BBC television play *Cathy Come Home* while also reflecting upon the (more recent) role played by television in “the waning of the public sphere.”<sup>32</sup>

There is also evidence of a broader fascination with television's past in contemporary art, echoing aspects of the earlier “cinematic” turn during the 1990s.<sup>33</sup> This is viewed by some commentators partly as an articulation of nostalgia and anxiety concerning impending technological and material change in cinema.<sup>34</sup> The presentation of Tacita Dean's *FILM* at Tate Modern in 2011 signals a continued interest in these issues, but since the mid-2000s television has also generated renewed interest amongst artists and curators. Numerous art museums and galleries in Europe and North America have staged curated exhibitions exploring the historical relationship between art and television. *Remote Control* at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (April–June 2012), London, was timed to coincide with the end of analog broadcasting, and it included displays of decommissioned





FIGURE 3. Aleksandra Domanović, *19.30* (2010–). Single-channel HD video. Courtesy of the artist and Tanya Leighton Gallery, Berlin.

broadcast hardware alongside canonical examples of artists' television, including Ant Farm's *Media Burn* and an extensive program of events that included a one-off screening of Domanović's *19:30*. Other European examples include *Changing Channels: Art and Television 1963–1987* at Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien (MUMOK, Vienna, 2010); *Channel TV* (2010–11), a collaboration between three institutions located in France and Germany; and *Are You Ready for TV?* at MACBA in Barcelona (2011).<sup>35</sup> The MACBA show specifically emphasized the importance of European public television both as a setting for artistic interventions in an earlier era and as an important platform in its own right for the critical analysis of media. Some curators also openly critiqued the commercialization that occurred in the 1990s; *TV Gallery* (presented at several venues in Serbia during 2007–8) lamented the decline of formerly generous state supports and resources for artists working with television.<sup>36</sup>

In diverse ways, these exhibitions seem to document changes in the experience and imagination of television as a public cultural form while implicitly asserting the importance of the art gallery or museum as a setting for the reevaluation of television's past. The current institutional

focus on memorializing television should, in my view, be understood within the context of broader anxieties concerning the privatization of the public sphere, especially in the UK.<sup>37</sup> It seems possible, for example, that curators are drawn toward analysis of the historical relationship between art and television because of increased uncertainty about the future of broadcasting and other forms of public services. As publicly funded institutions, many European art museums and public service broadcasters are facing reductions in state subvention and increasingly dependent upon philanthropy or commercial sponsorship. Art museum professionals now routinely bemoan the need to operate within the broader "experience economy" by producing exhibitions and events that *entertain* as well as inform and educate, bringing them closer to the historical mandate of public service broadcasting.<sup>38</sup> There are also other areas of convergence; just as broadcasters have had to engage more fully with practices of archiving and collecting to generate income or meet their public service remit, many forms of television viewing now involve activities of database searching and sharing as well as practices of collection, selection, and categorization that echo aspects of curatorial frameworks historically associated with the museum.<sup>39</sup>



## CONCLUSION: TELEVISION, MEMORY, AND PUBLICNESS

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Television's past has also served as a focus for curatorial attention within the United States, as evidenced by exhibitions such as *Television Delivers People* (Whitney Museum, 2008) and *Broadcast* (a touring show co-organized by the Contemporary Museum, Baltimore, and Independent Curators International, 2007–10). But these exhibitions differ from the European examples I have cited, as they are less overtly focused on the changing form of public service broadcasting.<sup>40</sup> Public television also occupies a relatively peripheral position in one of the most important recent theorizations of artists' television in the US context—David Joselit's *Feedback: Television against Democracy* (2007). Describing television as “the first major public medium experienced in private,” Joselit does not pay much attention to PBS and instead laments US commercial television's “transformations of democratic publics into statistically defined markets.”<sup>41</sup> Even though many of his examples of artistic and activist practice are drawn from the 1960s and 1970s, Joselit seems to envisage a public form of television that might be achieved in the future, framing his study of “aberrant or utopian pathways across the locked-down terrain of television” as a way to “open circuits.”<sup>42</sup>

For artists such as Domanović, Fajfrić, and Horelli, however, television's imagined “publicness” does not exist either in an idealized past or in a utopian moment that is yet to come. In contrast, television's status as public cultural form is presented as open to question and subject to processes of continual redefinition. These processes encompass the reenactment of broadcast events that failed to generate public discourse at an earlier moment (Fajfrić), the development of archival resources that serve as a focus for social gathering and media sharing (Domanović), and the exploration of the role played by children's television in mediating between public and private realms (Horelli). So rather than imagining television as “locked-down terrain” to be contested or invaded in the interests of producing a public medium, these artists consider the many different ways in which publicness might be temporarily manifested—or contested—through practices of remembering.

I have argued that Bourdon's framework—particularly his concept of “wallpaper memory”—is more relevant to these works than “destructive” or “hyperintegrative”

notions of memory because it emphasizes how practices of remembering television may be linked to everyday habits and routines. All three artists share a focus on these routines—evident in Domanović's attention to broadcast schedules, in Fajfrić's reenactment of a televised event from a participant's perspective, and in Horelli's interweaving of her mother's public speech with diary entries. But they also communicate a relationship to television memory, and to broadcast archives, that emphasizes temporal dislocation. These works articulate a distinct sense of detachment both from the moment of transmission and from the everyday habits and routines that may have shaped the experience of television at that moment. They also propose a model of the archive that is at odds with conventional institutional formations, typically organized around the storage and management of content, including “iconic” footage that can be used to signify collectivity for the purposes of critique or nostalgia. Instead of treating broadcast archives simply as repositories of program content, Domanović, Fajfrić, and Horelli draw upon archived material to question how memories of television are structured and mediated by technologies of storage. Through strategies of remixing, reenacting, and reediting, their work seeks to communicate, and indeed share, an experience of television founded upon temporal dislocation rather than recollection. So they do not work toward the production of an ideal archive conceived in terms of the total accumulation of program content but instead draw attention to precisely those aspects of the experience and memory of television that resist conventional archival storage and preservation.

### About the Author

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### Notes

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1. Lynn Spigel, "Our TV Heritage: Television, the Archive, and the Reasons for Preservation," in *A Companion to Television*, ed. Janet Wasko (Oxford: Blackwell, 2010), 67.

2. *Ibid.*, 91.

3. Jerome Bourdon, "Some Sense of Time: Remembering Television," *History & Memory* 15, no. 2 (2003): 5–35, quote at 6.

4. *Ibid.*, 6.

5. Mary Ann Doane, "Information, Crisis, Catastrophe," in *Logics of Television*, ed. Patricia Mellencamp (Bloomington: BFI and Indiana University Press, 1990), 234–35.

6. It is also worth noting that, even prior to Doane's formulation, artists had been drawn to explore the relationship between television, death, and memory. See Marita Sturken, "The Politics of Video Memory: Electronic Erasures and Interruptions," in *Resolutions: Contemporary Video Practices*, ed. Michael Renov and Erika Suderberg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 1–12.

7. Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, *Media Events: The Live Broadcasting of History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

8. Bourdon, "Some Sense of Time," 32. For a related exploration of media events and their limits in relation to the production of publics, see also Daniel Dayan, "The Peculiar Public of Television," *Media, Culture & Society* 23 (2001): 743–65.

9. Bourdon, "Some Sense of Time," 9.

10. Joseph W. Slade and Leonard J. Barchak, "Public Broadcasting in Finland: Inventing a National Television Programming Policy," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 33, no. 4 (1989): 355–73, quote at 356.

11. But even though funded primarily by license fees, the public broadcaster Yleisradio was from the outset required to lease time (twenty hours a week in 1989) to a private company, which could in turn resell a small percentage for advertising. Consequently, while the public stations TV1 and TV2 promoted imported commercial programming, advertising also formed a part of the schedule. Slade and Barchak also note that satellite television (retransmitted by private cable companies) was also available in 20 percent of Finnish households by the late 1980s (*ibid.*, 365).

12. Jukka Kortti, "Multidimensional Social History of Television: Social Uses of Finnish Television from the 1950s to the 2000s," *Television & New Media* 12, no. 4 (2011): 313.

13. Zala Volcic, "The Machine That Creates Slovenians': The Role of Slovenian Public Broadcasting in Re-affirming and Re-inventing the Slovenian National Identity," *National Identities* 7, no. 3 (2005): 287–308.

14. The word "unconstrained" is Volcic's (*ibid.*, 292).

15. *Ibid.*, 294, 295.

16. Bourdon, "Some Sense of Time," 19.

17. See Paddy Scannell, *Radio, Television and Modern Life: A Phenomenological Approach* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996).

18. Bourdon, "Some Sense of Time," 26.

19. Amy Holdsworth, *Television, Memory and Nostalgia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 4.

20. *Ibid.*, 21.

21. See *ibid.* The publicity material circulated in relation to the exhibition emphasized Wearing's long-standing interest in television and also identified *The Family* as an important precursor to reality TV.

22. John Beeson, "Laura Horelli's 'The Terrace,'" *Art Agenda*, December 14, 2011, <http://www.art-agenda.com/reviews/laura-horelli-s-the-terrace/>, accessed May 2012.

23. *Ibid.*

24. See <http://www.bojanfajfric.net/pages&fotos/Theta%20Rhythm.html>, accessed December 2011.

25. See <http://www.bojanfajfric.net/pages&fotos/Theta%20Rhythm.html>, accessed December 2011.

26. Mark Godfrey situates reconstruction amongst a range of strategies used by artists engaging with history in "The Artist as Historian," *October* 120 (2007): 140–72.

27. Sirkka Moeller, "All Creatures Great and Small: The 57th International Short Film Festival Oberhausen," *Senses of Cinema* 59, June 23, 2011, <http://sensesofcinema.com/2011/festival-reports/all-creatures-great-and-small-the-57th-international-short-film-festival-oberhausen/>, accessed May 2012.

28. Karen Rosenberg, "A Show Is All Cyber, Some of the Time," *New York Times*, October 21, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/22/arts/design/22free.html>, accessed May 2012.

29. Aleksandra Domanović, interview by the author, September 2, 2011.

30. See <http://nineteenthirty.net/chronology/>, accessed October 2011.

31. Holdsworth, *Television, Memory and Nostalgia*, 4.

32. John Caughie, "Mourning Television: The Other Screen," *Screen* 5, no. 4 (2010): 492. For an exploration of related issues focusing on television studies in the United States, see Elana Levine, "Teaching the Politics of Television Culture in a Post-television Era," *Cinema Journal* 50, no. 4 (2011): 177–82.

33. For a discussion of the cinematic turn, see David Campany, *The Cinematic: Documents of Contemporary Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press and Whitechapel, 2007). See also Tanya Leighton, introduction to *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader*, ed. Tanya Leighton (London: Tate Publishing in association with Afterall, 2008), 7–40.

34. See Chrissie Iles's discussion of the relationship between the cinematic turn and cinephilia in Ian White et al., "Does the Museum Fail? Podium Discussion at the 53rd International Short Film Festival Oberhausen," in *Kinomuseum: Towards an Artists' Cinema*, ed. Mike Sperlinger and Ian White (Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König, 2008), 115–55.



35. These institutions are Kunstverein Harburger Bahnhof, Hamburg; CNEAI, Chatou, Paris; and the Halle für Kunst, Lüneburg.

36. For an overview of this project, see Branka Ćurčić, "Television as a Symbol of Lost Public Space," European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies (EIPCP), December 2007, <http://transform.eipcp.net/correspondence/1197491434#redir>, accessed September 2011.

37. Polly Toynbee, "How the Badly Maimed BBC Can Stand Up to Parasitic Sky," *Guardian*, January 2, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2012/jan/02/maimed-bbc-parasitic-sky>, accessed January 2011.

38. Tim Griffin, "Postscript: The Museum Revisited," *Artforum* 48, no. 10 (2010): 328–35.

39. For a critique of the museum's role in the legitimization of certain forms of television production and reception, see Michael Z. Newman and Elana Levine, *Legitimizing Television: Media Convergence and Cultural Status* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

40. The exhibition *Change the Channel: WCVB-TV 1972–1982* at Apex Art, New York (2011), is also worth citing, although it focused on innovation and experimentation at a commercial station.

41. David Joselit, *Feedback: Television against Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 21, 25.

42. *Ibid.*, 41.



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