

Aldo Tambellini: Electromedia & The Black Film Series

As a key figure of the 1960s Lower East Side arts scene, Aldo Tambellini used a variety of media for social and political communication. In the age of McLuhan and Fuller, Tambellini manipulated new technology in an exploration of the “psychological re-orientation of man in the space age.” He presented immersive, multi-media environments and, having made his first experimental video as early as 1966, participated in early collaborations between artists and broadcast television.

His dynamic *Black Film Series* (1965-69) extends from total abstraction to footage of the assassination of Bobby Kennedy, the Vietnam War, and black teenagers in Coney Island. Tambellini worked directly on the film strip with chemicals, paint and ink, scratching, scraping, and intercutting material from industrial films, newsreels and TV. Abrasive, provocative and turbulent, the series is a rapid-fire response to the beginning of the information age and a world in flux. “Black to me is like a beginning ... Black is within totality, the oneness of all. Black is the expansion of consciousness in all directions.”

Aldo Tambellini will introduce and discuss his early work in film and video.

Programme curated by Mark Webber for Evolution 2007.

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“Electromedia was the fusion of the various art and media – breaking media away from its ‘traditional media role’ – bringing it into the area of modern art – bringing the others arts – poetry – sounds – painting – kinetic sculpture – into a time/space reorientation toward media – transforming both the arts and the media ...” (*Aldo Tambellini*)

Black Film Series

“Tambellini is one of the pioneers of Intermedia. His Black series in film and intermedia is obsessed with Black. His Black is like a ‘blind spot’ – a phantasy with the speed of nightmare. Hypnotic effect of organic microscopic forms. From darkness of the daemon to brightness to sperm to womb to friction contraction expansion. It is a trip for blind America.” *Takahiko Iimura, Eiga Hyoron (Japanese Film Review)*

Black Is

1965, 16mm, black and white, sound, 4 minutes
seed black
seed black
sperm black
sperm black
a film made entirely without the use of the camera
(*Aldo Tambellini*)

Black Trip #1

1965, 16mm, black and white, sound, 5 minutes
Black Trip #1 is pure abstraction after the manner of a Jackson Pollock. Through the uses of kinescope, video, multimedia, and direct painting on film, an impression is gained of the frantic action of protoplasm under a microscope where an imaginative viewer may see the genesis of it all. (*Grove Press Film Catalog*)

Black Trip #2

1967, 16mm, black and white, sound, 3 minutes
“An internal probing of the violence and mystery of the American psyche seen through the eye of a black man and the Russian revolution.” (*Aldo Tambellini*)

Blackout

1965, 16mm, black and white, sound, 9 minutes

This film, like an action painting by Franz Kline, is a rising crescendo of abstract images. Rapid cuts of white forms on a black background supplemented by an equally abstract soundtrack give the impression of a bombardment in celestial space or on a battlefield where cannons fire on an unseen enemy into the night. (*Grove Press Film Catalog*)

Black Plus X

1966, 16mm, black and white, sound, 9 minutes

Tambellini here focuses on contemporary life in a black community. The extra, the “X” of *Black Plus X*, is a filmic device by which a black person is instantaneously turned white by the mere projection of the negative image. The time is summer, and the place is an oceanside amusement park where black children are playing in the surf and enjoying the rides, quite oblivious to Tambellini’s tongue-in-cheek “solution” to the race problem. (*Grove Press Film Catalog*)

Black TV

1968, 2 x 16mm, black and white, sound, 10 minutes (double screen)

The film is an artist’s sensory perception of the violence of the world we live in, projected through a television tube. Tambellini presents it subliminally in rapid-fire abstractions in which such horrors as Robert Kennedy’s assassination, murder, infanticide, prize fights, police brutality at Chicago, and the war in Vietnam are out-of-focus impressions of faces and events.” (*Grove Press Film Catalog*)

ABC-TV Interview

1967, video, black and white, sound, 3 minutes

This interview with Aldo Tambellini was shot on 21st December 1967, at the Black Gate Theatre, for an ABC Television series on the New York Lower East Side Arts Scene. It includes an excerpt from *Black Video One*, his first experimental videotape, which had been made the previous year by shining a light directly into the camera lens, burning out the photoconductive vidicon tube.

Black (excerpt from The Medium is the Medium)

1969, video, black and white, sound, c. 6 minutes

“In 1969 [Tambellini] was one of six artists participating in the PBL programme “The Medium Is the Medium” at WGBH-TV in Boston. The videotape produced for the project, called *Black*, involved one thousand slides, seven 16mm film projections, thirty black children, and three live TV cameras that taped the interplay of sound and image. The black-and-white tape is extremely dense in kinetic and synaesthetic information, assaulting the senses in a subliminal barrage of sight and sound events. The slides and films were projected on and around the children in the studio, creating an overwhelming sense of the black man’s life in contemporary America. Images from all three cameras were superimposed on one tape, resulting in a multidimensional presentation of an ethnological attitude. There was a strong sense of furious energy, both Tambellini’s and the blacks’, communicated through the space/time manipulations of the medium.” (*Gene Youngblood, Expanded Cinema*)

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Screening on a monitor in the foyer :-**6673**

1966-73, video, colour, sound, 55 minutes (looped)

6673 is based on Tambellini’s second tape, *Black Video 2*, which dates from 1966. It was created at the Video Flight dubbing house by manipulating test patterns and other electronic signals. The soundtrack combines audio produced by an oscilloscope (which also distorted the images) with Tambellini’s wordless, vocal improvisation. In 1973, Tambellini added colour and further manipulated the original material using the Paik-Abe Synthesiser at WNET’s artists’ television lab in New York.