Bill Viola's *Nantes Triptych*:
Unearthing the sources of its condensed temporality
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A thought is a function of time, not a discrete object. It is a process of unfoldment, an evolving thread of the living moment. Awareness of time brings you into a world of process, into moving images that embody the movement of human consciousness itself. (Bill Viola 1995, 173)

Bill Viola: An unorthodox video artist

Bill Viola (New York, 1951) is considered a pioneer in the field of video art and is still one of the most prominent figures among contemporary artists. He has exhibited his works at some of the most renowned museums and artistic events, such as the National Gallery (London), the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), the Grand Palais (Paris), and the Venice Biennale. His oeuvre spans from his early single-channel videos to much more complex installations in which the visual, auditory, spatial and temporal elements become intertwined.

However, beyond biographically, he is considered as one of the contemporary artists most concerned with deep questions of the human experience[2]. His oeuvre keeps raising the same questions: What is life? What is death? What does it mean to be conscious of ourselves?

Maybe this craving for raising the same unresolvable questions is at the heart of the frequently intense emotional encounters often experienced when in front of some of Viola's works[3]. Viola tends to use structurally complex interplays to "explore the phenomenon of perception as a path to self-knowledge" (Bernardini 2012,

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[2] "[Viola] himself describes his videos as visual poems in which he grapples with issues of identity and spiritual significance in the modern world" (Rush 2005, 152).

[3] This kind of reaction, triggered by Viola's oeuvre, is a great example of the reaction experienced by Jean-Christophe Amman when first encountering *Room for St. John of the Cross*: "I well remember the shock I felt on seeing *Room for St. John of the Cross*, 1983, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. [...] That day I could look at nothing else. I forgot the much advertised Frank Stella exhibition just one floor below. I returned to my hotel through the streets of New York, which seemed for all the deep world like deep ravines in a mountain range, carrying my heart the trembling tree leaves on that bleak and lofty plateau" (Viola 1995, 15-16).

15). This aim of his oeuvre, in his own words, is related to an episode lived during his childhood: "I had no fear. I was witnessing this extraordinary beautiful world with light filtering down... it was like paradise. I didn't even know I was drowning... For a moment there was absolute bliss" (Walsh 2003, 50).

Viola's main interests as an artist are focused towards creating environments in which he combines sound, image, architectural structures and different temporal narratives to engage the viewers in the experience not only from a rational point of view, but also in a psychological, emotional and transcendental way. The importance of time in his oeuvre cannot be underestimated, since he declares:

> Time is the ultimate invisible world. It's all around us. It literally is our life. We live in it like fish in the water, yet we can't taste it, see it, touch it, smell it. It is a fundamental mystery, defining who we are as human beings in the most profound way (Gayford 2003, 24).

Therefore, this conception of time allows him to deal with human nature, life, and death, conferring an "existential character" (Mennekes 1999, 226) to his works. As Chris Townsend explains, it is precisely this fondness for traditionally philosophical and even religious questions which sets him apart from the majority of contemporary artists:

> To create works that have a spiritual affect, at a time when the institutionally approved styles of contemporary art have been almost wholly directed towards secular and cerebral discourses, seems to me not only subversive but extremely brave (Townsend 2004, 15).

Another remarkable aspect of Viola's idea of art is also the fact that he considers himself neither a slave of technology nor a video artist *sensu stricto*, but only an artist who happens to live in a period in which the medium of video is one of the most relevant in contemporary art (Viola 1995, 152). He thereby lacks reticence to employ techniques judged as ancient or typical of other arts, such as the triptych structure, in his work[4].

In sum, Bill Viola's concern about human nature (even acknowledging the impossibility of offering definitive answers and rather focusing on posing questions), his particular interest in time as "the basic material of video"[5], and his open-minded attitude to other mediums constitute some of the fundamental traits of his artistic work, and specifically, those which we will address in the following pages.

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[4] "Concerning my use of the classical triptych, the triple image is an ancient form. I am interested in its use as referent to the European Christian tradition, as an image that arises out of the culture and therefore resides within, not without, many of the people who have come to see it in Europe" (Viola 1995, 244).

[5] "It is not the monitor, or the camera, or the tape, that is the basic material of video, but time itself. Once you begin to work with time as an elemental material, then you have entered the domain of conceptual space" (Viola 1995, 173).

Nantes Triptych: video, painting and film

Nantes Triptych was conceived out of a commission for the French *Centre National des Arts Plastiques* to be displayed in a 17th century chapel in the *Musée des Beaux Arts* in Nantes, in 1992 (Manchester 2000, n. p.). This video installation[6] consists of three channels of colour video image projections: the central panel is front-projected onto a 3.2x4.2 meter translucent screen, the other two – the side panels – are rear-projected onto 3.2x2.7 meter screens. The three surfaces are meant to be mounted onto a wall in a dark spacious room. The sound consists of two lateral channels of amplified mono sound and one amplified stereo sound. The video installation runs for 29:46 minutes (Bernardini 2012, 76).

Three powerful images confront us when facing *Nantes Triptych*. In the video situated on the left side we contemplate the process of a woman giving birth to a child. At the beginning of the video we see the woman highly pregnant, in the company of a man who speaks calmly to her and occasionally holds her hand. After that, two midwives appear and help her through the process of giving birth: screams, deep breaths, labour pains. We are given the opportunity to observe the child's head emerging, and after great effort, everything is over. A midwife gives the new-born to its mother. She affirms: "It's so beautiful". Then the child screams and its image gains importance in the video until its head fills the whole screen. We see its eyes opening; we see its first yawn. The video ends with an image of the mother holding her child.

In the video on the right side, a very different story is reflected. It shows the end of a life. There are no dramatic moments in it, just the slow fading away of life from an elderly woman. However, the hospital environment makes the images hard to contemplate. This is a person dying in front or our eyes. As we hear her breathing, she lies with her mouth open in a hospital bed. The camera alternates closer and further shots; there are cuts between them. A person wearing black clothes appears from the left side of the image; he touches the blanket, the hand of the dying woman, he cleans her lips and resumes holding her hand. The edit of the video repeats certain shots, as we hear her weak but constant breathing. A closer shot of her head and her eyes shows them opening slowly. A reflex movement makes her close her mouth, but suddenly she opens it as her breath gets weaker and weaker until it stops. There is a soundless image of her until the picture fades to black.

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[6] There are several criteria for what a video installation is. We follow the one from Eleanor Heartney: "While early Video Art which tended to consist of Single-screen tapes played on television monitors, the field has expanded over the last four decades to encompass elaborate installations. These may incorporate large-screen projections, walls of monitors with multiple computer-coordinated channels, theatrical environmental settings, and recently, even the latest interactive technology" (Heartney 2002, 15).

In the central and bigger screen, five similar but slightly different stories are consecutively projected. These images are not real events as the others; these have been scripted and performed by actors. All of them begin with a clothed figure leaping into the water or sinking. All of them are bluish – almost black-and-white – shots of people as if they were drowning. At certain moments, we see the anonymous protagonist lifelessly sinking into the sea, surrounded by reflections of the light filtered through the water. Suddenly, there are bursts of life and the clothed figures try to emerge from the aqueous element. Certain shots end with the figure rising slowly, one finishes with the person diving to one side of the picture, and the final shot of the series ends with a whirlpool pulling the body upwards.

As has been pointed out, there are several differences between the images shown on the three screens. The process of childbirth, according to Viola, was recorded in 1989 with the intention of incorporating it into several works (Viola 1995, 289), influenced by the fact of having his first son in 1988. The dying woman is Viola's own mother, who passed away in February 1991. When assuming that her situation was irreversible, Viola felt the urge to record these very last moments of his mother's life, who spent her last three months in a hospital after suffering a severe brain haemorrhage[7]. The central panel, an obvious memento to the previously referred almost fatal childhood episode in which Viola nearly drowned, plays a crucial role in the video installation, given its bigger size and the central position. In order to clarify the dynamic interrelation between the three panels, it is time to discuss the triptych structure of the work and how it operates on the viewer's experience of it.

Viola's *Nantes Triptych* was not his first exploration of this particular artistic display[8], but it undoubtedly is the one that delves deeper and more profusely into the singularities of the pictorial concept[9]. The triptychs were originally designated as "paintings with doors" or "paintings with wings", which implies that "the inclusion of wings reconfigures a painting into a structure that maps out boundaries between its different panels and imagery that takes places in different times and spaces" (Jacobs 2012, 4). Although Viola's video

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[7] "For me there was an image in front of me for the first time in my life that I could not understand, I could not accept, I could not grasp. It was like the forbidden image, the worst image that you could possibly imagine and I just had to not run away from that image or close my eyes to that image, but go right through that image. So I took out the camera and I made actually very few video recordings, a couple of days when she was about, I'd say, maybe three weeks before the end and then a very short little session a week before the end and then the last image, which is at the very end of *Nantes Triptych*, where you're in close up on the face and you don't see the light in the eyes anymore" (Viola 2003, n. p).

[8] In *The City of Man* (1989), Viola resorted to the triptych display.

[9] "Whist in *The City of Man* Viola largely deals with the formal characteristics of a triptych, in *Nantes Triptych* he also addresses substantive aspects of the triptych's function and history" (Mennekes 1999, 223).

installation lacks doors, it retains this specificity of portraying different temporalities.

Klaus Lankheit wrote the essay, *Das Triptychon als Pathosformel* in 1959 (Lankheit 1959), wherein he defended the triptych as an expressive mechanism in which the wings tend to be subordinated to the centre, following the ancient tradition of cult images of the Roman emperors and therefore increasing their emotional power (Jacobs 2012, 2). He recurred to Aby Warburgs's obscure concept of "pathos formula" to express his ideas. Unfortunately, however, this influential idea was never completely explained by Warburg. We are therefore forced to rely on the definition offered by Giorgio Agamben – one of the most prominent Warburg scholars – who considers the pathos formula as "an indissoluble intertwining of an emotional charge and an iconographic formula in which it is impossible to distinguish between form and content" (Agamben 1999, 90).

What we have underlined of Lankheit's effort to defend the specificities of the triptychs – the preeminence of the central panel and the emotional component triggered by the tripartite structure – is fully applicable to Viola's *Nantes Triptych*, since he addresses similar questions when referring to this particular work[10]. Because of its size and the more calmed nature of the images projected on it, the central panel constitutes the main focus of our attention. The wings are occluded by liminal concepts as only birth and death can be; in consequence, when contemplating Viola's video installation, we tend to return time after time to these mysterious figures, which seem to be sometimes floating, sometimes drowning. We feel that if there is an answer to the existential riddle proposed by Viola, it necessarily has to lie in the central section.

In order to understand the emotional aspect of the triptychs, not only Lankheit's words are useful but also those written by Gilles Deleuze when discussing Francis Bacon's tripartite paintings. For the French philosopher the primordial law which underlies the triptychs "can only be a movement of movements, or a state of complex forces, inasmuch as movement is always derived from the forces exerted upon the body" (Deleuze 2003, 83). This idea seems to concur with Viola's idea of his own work[11], but the question that arises is: how do these forces emanate from the triptychs differently from other indi-

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[10] "Beyond more technical reasons such as the delicate balance of the number three and its use for comparative contrast and interaction, both visually and especially temporally, ultimately my interest in the triptych form is that it is a reflection of a cosmological and social world view, the 'Heaven-Earth-Hell', and its tripartite structure is an image of the structure of the European mind and consciousness. These aspects can become activated energies when applied to images of contemporary nature" (Viola 1995, 245).

[11] He defends the need of art to offer "power images [which] are like wake-up calls, and I feel today there is a need to wake up the body before you can wake up the mind" (Viola 1995, 251).

vidual paintings? If we follow Deleuze's reasoning, in these tripartite paintings "an immense space-time unites all things, *but only by introducing between them the distances of a Sahara, the centuries of an aeon*" (Deleuze 2003, 85). This difference of temporospatial potential is inherent to triptychs and implies a feeling of irresolution in what we are contemplating. A triptych breathes in a specific way, its space is open to interpretations, to wandering, and its architecture generates forces which traverse the three different panels.

Without forgetting this, in order to address the filmic component of *Nantes Triptych*, we intend to present another concept developed by Deleuze: the interstice. This irreducible difference between two images generates,

> A spacing which means that each image is plucked from the void and falls back into it. [...] This is not an operation of association, but of differentiation, as mathematicians say, or of disappearance, as physicists say: given one potential, another one has to be chosen, not any whatever, but in such a way that a difference of potentials is established between the two, which will be productive of a third or of something new (Deleuze 1989, 179-180).

Let us pause for a moment and gather our ideas. First, we considered the specific differences of potentials of the triptych paintings, which in Viola's video installation are exponentially increased by the fact of not being paintings but videos. Each of the panels – since they keep on "endlessly re-launching [an] exchange which is dissymmetrical, unequal and without equivalence" (Deleuze 1989, 78) – would work as a crystal image with its own interstices, but when we think of the work as a tripartite whole its power increases qualitatively. Because each crystal image "consists in the indivisible unity of an actual image and 'its' virtual image" (Deleuze 1989, 78), *Nantes Triptych* arguably offers three untimely virtualities[12] to experiment: the virtuality of birth, the virtuality of death and the virtuality of being suspended in between. However, given the dynamic nature of the triptych and the nature of the crystal-images of the videos, a bigger and new virtuality has the potential to arise: the virtuality of human existence as a whole.

The pathos formula, which characterizes the triptychs, is enriched by these interactions and apertures which generate a dialectic that demands participation from the viewer, forcing him to engage with what it is shown in the panels. In Friedhelm Mennekkes' words, *Nantes Triptych* "makes us call ourselves into question. It destabilizes the meanings we have constructed to explain our world" (Mennekes

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[12] "For Deleuze this virtual dimension exists alongside the actual dimension, parallel to those numbers we can plot and those things we can touch. But life is full of things and durations that exist beyond the actual. Memories, the past, the future, intuition, déjà vu, dreams, the rhythms of individual durations (such as the experience of time for a fly or a fish), unactualized genetic tendencies (such as the potential for a man to be a woman), and geological potentials (such as the potential for an earthquake or volcanic eruption) all occupy the virtual or untimely dimension of time" (Leston 2013, 45).

1999, 231). It forces us to reflect on the impossible synthesis between the image of a woman in labour and another woman dying. Furthermore, it offers us the uneasy image of aquatic figures as the ones that we tend to identify with, triggering feelings about our transitory states in the cycle of our own lives.

But, until now, it has been analysed only how this destabilization happens. We have discussed Viola's combination of pictorial and filmic elements in order to render an expansion of both realms into a completely different one with its own rules possible. The emotional appeal of the triptych is potentiated by the interrelations generated by the interstice and the virtuality of crystal-images. From now on it is time to debate the emergent temporal effect caused by *Nantes Triptych* on the viewer; in order to do this it will be necessary to delve into the notion of kairological time.

A kairological experience of time

The Greek notion of *kairos* implies a qualitative concept of time – and because of this it is somehow different from the linear temporal concept of *chronos*. *Kairos* refers to something that can only happen at that precise time, it marks an opportunity that will not return, it is, in short, the "right time" (Smith 1969: 1). In order to join together the last section and the present one, we should go back for a moment to Deleuze's concept of interstice. He affirms that "it is the direct presentation of time, or the continuity which is reconciled with the sequence of irrational points, according to non-chronological time relationships" (Deleuze 1989, 181). Given the fact that the non-chronological time by excellence is the *kairos*, the discussion of this Greek temporal idea will be helpful so as to grasp a better understanding of the temporality presented to the spectator in *Nantes Triptych*.

The experience of this video installation has been described as something that "imparts to us the suppressed brutal facts of existence, and thus reminds us the drama of struggle and pain, victory and failure, life and death" (Mennekes 1999, 232). This interpretation of Viola's work refers to certain suppressed facts, but according to Deleuze's terminology, these facts can be understood as virtualities inherent to the crystal-images: they may not be part of our typical temporal experiences, but they are undoubtedly part of our existence (Leston 2013, 47). Also, because of the abysmal narrative fissures existent between the different events portrayed in *Nantes Triptych*, we are forced to think the outside of these images. Both the virtual and the interstices demands us to gather the lacking elements which will be taken from our own mental activities: memories, the unthinkable future, our actual being. What this experiment is, is "a confrontation of an outside and an inside independent of distance,

this thought outside itself and this un-thought within thought" (Deleuze 1989, 278).

That is the reason for us to defend *Nantes Triptych* as a possibility to experience time as "out of joint". We are confronted with an unstable seized temporality[13] which aims to provoke an intense experience of our existence as a whole. However, this seized experience is not only due to the individual videos (since they portray events extended for several minutes), but rather a consequence of the confluence of the three images, which together cause the intensification of the viewer's temporality. Each video is supplemented by the others and the confluence in our perception of the three episodes overloads our present with the effort of withstanding the coexistence of birth, death, and a floating figure and trying to make sense out of it.

Keeping this in mind, Paul Chan's concept of "kairological artworks" perfectly suits the characteristics of what we are discussing: "[Kairological artworks] embody a desperate immanence; [...] they evoke the vertiginous feeling of seeing something emerge by being made and unmade at the same instant. They last as experiences by not staying whole as forms" (Chan 2010, 85).

The challenge often posed by Viola's work is also hinted at by Giorgio Agamben, who affirms that "if one had to define the specific achievement of Viola's videos with a formula, one could say that they insert not the images in time, but time in the images. [...] There is a life of images that it is our task to understand" (Agamben 2011, 61). This time encapsulated in *Nantes Triptych* overflows our usual temporal coordinates, for it is an impossible chronological condensation: it appeals to an impossible recollection of our own birth and the no less impossible anticipation of our own demise. However, despite the impossibility for us to have a personal and immediate experience of both events, we are certainly moved by them[14]. They remove us from ordinary and punctual time. As we become simultaneously a viewer and an integral part of the work, its naked truth and its universal nature reverberate with our own life. They shape an unavoidable existential loop that circumscribes the central screen, in which appears a "clothed male body that appears to have escaped the 'rule' of the force of gravity and to have freely embraced the unstable and precarious nature of life" (Bernardini 2012, 21).

These submerged figures are the ones which remain suspended in-between life and death. They are the ones that appear to have choice and are free, since some of them move upwards and others

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[13] If we are to follow Agamben's ideas, *kairos* is not something completely opposed to *chronos*, but "seized *chronos*" (Agamben 2005, 69).
[14] "Modern media have a very high accepted truth factor in our society and can thus perform the same function as panel paintings in earlier centuries" (Neumaier 2004, 69).

relinquish their fight and disappear downwards. Thus, the possibility to identify ourselves with one of the options is given, and therefore an opportunity to decide which side to choose is received. It could be said that Viola allows us only one crack to go through: that of the unstable figures of the centre of the triptych, for the lateral screens are occluded by birth and death. Therefore, we could say that there is a chance for us to grasp: a *kairos* operating within *Nantes Triptych* - a temporal aperture consigned in the central panel.

According to Agamben "what we take hold of when we seize *kairos* is not another time, but a contracted and abridged *chronos*" (Agamben 2005: 69). As a result, and thanks to the intertwined and related structure characteristic of the triptychs, this emergence of the "right time" in the middle of the video installation allows us certain freedom, which is enough to grasp the *kairos*. Following this idea, our decision conditions the interpretation of the whole work and orientates the existential flow represented; it is able to alter our understanding of the emergent temporality from the video installation.

The whole flux of birth, death, and the decisive moment will revolve around our interpretation of the central submerged figures. It is important to note the fact that Viola does not offer a precise and unique solution to be found at the heart of this work. He only gives us a medium to explore ourselves and reach our own conclusions, "they [Viola's works] do not provide a systematic overall concept, they offer [...] a life suspended in art" (Mennekes 1999, 232). Thus, the decision is necessarily individual, and by allowing us to have a choice the feeling arises that the ultimate depository of the portrayed history is each one of us[15].

In consequence, we are given the opportunity to experience freedom at the heart of time. The temporality offered by Viola in *Nantes Triptych* is not deterministic because it emphasizes our possibilities to choose while we are alive. As Otto Neumaier defends, "Bill Viola belongs to that group of artists whose works seems intended to make us aware of our own mortality which defines the nature of human beings" (Neumaier 2004, 47).

However, Viola not only tries to awake this awareness of our mortal condition, he also gives us the possibility of cling to the *kairos* as a potentially cathartic event capable of transforming our relation with chronological time. The video installation, as it has been discussed on the previous pages, works in two ways: it harshly shows us the frontiers of our existence forcing us to reflect upon what we have been and what we will become, but it also gives room for freedom by

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[15] The artist defends that "the real place the work exists is not on the screen or within the walls of the room, but in the mind and heart of the person who has seen it" (Viola 1995, 252).

favouring the apparition of what can be referred to as a kairological event.

Nevertheless, *kairos* has to be grasped by an individual. If not, it will remain as a lost opportunity. In order to solve this last point of how we can finally embody a temporal event portrayed by an object, the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose philosophy shows connections with some of the ideas behind Viola's work, will be used to cast light on the matter.

First, Merleau-Ponty considers "the notion of time [...] as a dimension of our being" (Merleau-Ponty 2005, 483), privileging the present, up to the point of affirming that "time exists for me because I have a present" (Merleau-Ponty 2005, 492). This importance of the present is shared by Viola, who "brings [the viewers] face to face with the very texture of the present" (Hansen 2004, 616). In many of his works, the artist focuses on the possibilities of the now, trying to dilate it as much as possible via different strategies[16]. In the case of *Nantes Triptych,* in order to accommodate these events the extreme polarity drawn between birth and death forces our experience of time to expand, resulting in a vivid contrast with the quasi suspended time of the submerged figures. As we have seen, the interstices generate a difference of potential between these two poles, which result in a saturation of the present, strengthening its kairological nature.

The *kairos* is a specific kind of time which "allows for the possibility of my achieving and taking hold of it [...] The time we take to bring to an end, to achieve our representation of time" (Agamben 2005, 67). Thus, by definition *kairos* can only have a present dimension since it is a time of which we have to be aware and make a decision and only the temporal dimension of the now enjoys the privilege of being the zone "in which being and consciousness coincide" (Merleau-Ponty 2005, 492). This is possible because time "discloses subject and object as two abstracts 'moments' of a unique structure which is *presence*" (Merleau-Ponty 2005, 500). And this *presence* is the decisive pathway between the work and the viewer. It unifies subject and object, allowing the "subject [...] no longer to be understood as a synthetic activity, but as *ek-stase*" (Merleau-Ponty 2005, 498). *Ek-stase* is a term borrowed from Heidegger's philosophy which is closely related to *kairos* since both imply a seizure of time, in this case operated by the being:

> 'In' my present, if I grasp it while it is still living and with all that it implies, there is an ek-stase towards the future and towards the past which reveals the dimensions of time not as conflicting, but as inseparable: to be now is to be from always and forever (Merleau-Ponty 2005, 491).

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[16] "This mediation of a moving reality, in order that its affect may be felt more intimately and that the qualities of this affect elucidated, commonly involves [in Viola's works] the extension of time via techniques such as slow motion, jump cuts, and repetition" (Barker 2012, 86).

Upon our arriving to the *ek-stase* we have found a common ground with *kairos*: our opportunity to embody the existential experience which lies in *Nantes Triptych* resides in these two condensations of time. One presented in the emergence of the floating figures in relation with the other panels and the other by the disclosure of both the relation subject/object and the temporal dimensions operated by the temporal being proposed by Merleau-Ponty.

The resulting experience upon encountering Viola's video installation, as we have said, depends on each individual, but *Nantes Triptych* certainly is conceived to give room to an episode of freedom within the frontiers of birth and death[17]. This is achieved by confronting *chronos* with *kairos* and reclaiming our participation to complete the narrative.

Thus, the kairological aspect of *Nantes Triptych* is the corollary of the other layers previously discussed. On account of the dialectical tension brought up by Viola's video installation, our existential foundations are confronted. The possibility of experiencing *kairos* is brought forth in the form of the complex episode provoked by the unstable equilibrium between birth, death, and the fleeting instant. Its form is an opened question that forces us to be conscious of our relation with the events reflected on the panels, and in consequence, only our own existences could emerge as the fourth panel able to grant some closure to the existential audio-visual question proposed by Viola.

Conclusions

The aim of this text was to study how Bill Viola's *Nantes Triptych* explores the traditional film experience and the effect on the viewer of the singularities of this video installation. By analysing the different dimensions that are simultaneously operating on it, we have defined three different layers which configure the specifics of the encounter with this video installation. For the sake of clarity, our explanation has proceeded step-by-step, but obviously there is no hierarchical order in the moment of the direct contemplation of the work.

First, its pictorial triptych structure sets an interrelated dialogue between the three videos. On top of that, the radical significance of the events depicted in the lateral panels reinforces the level of pathos inherent to the triptychs. Second, the filmic charac-

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[17] This idea is shared by Viola who, reflecting upon the death of his mother and *Nantes Triptych*, declares: "The death of my mother in 1991 was the moment when the barrier between life and art disappeared. In a way it wasn't even a barrier because I didn't know it existed. The borderline between life and death is not a brick wall that you battle your way through, it is fragile and porous, like a soap bubble. This is a profound thing, and it gives us this urgent need in life to touch the infinite" (Guzman 2009, n. p).

teristics of the images projected onto the three screens –different shots, loops of certain segments, the composition of the frames– allows for the appearance of Deleuzian interstices within each individual video and among the three of them as a whole, as well as the characteristic virtualities of the crystal-images, which we propose is a suitable category to be applied to the videos conforming *Nantes Triptych*. These elements result in the emergence of an even more complex network of emotional links between the three stories reflected. Last, the sheer impact of the liminal panels and its influence over the opened nature of the central screen is what renders the video installation possible to offer a kairological event. This temporally seized moment concentrates the power of the video installation by offering the possibility to orientate the whole existential structure, depending on the decision made regarding the fate of the submerged figures of the central panel. This featured emergence is due to the confluence of forces granted by a pictorial structure reinterpreted via video at the service of very precise scenes and, last but not least, the empowered clothed figures at the centre of the video installation.

The collision of these different elements make a kairological experience possible, which according to our discussion of the philosophy of temporality developed by Merleau-Ponty, could be related to the idea of the *ek-stase*, which also refers to a condensation of the chronological time. The confluence of these two events is what allows the viewer to ultimately engage with *Nantes Triptych*, holding in itself the possibility of different interpretations thanks to the freedom of choice it allows us.

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