

ZERO...  
Viale Premuda 46  
20129 Milano  
t: +39 02 87234577  
f: +39 02 87234580  
info@galleriazero.it  
www.galleriazero.it  
skype: G.Zero

**Jurgen Ots**

**'THE PERIAQUEDUCTAL GRAY SERIES'**

**SELECTA DRAPER DA-LITE REPROTECHNIK BRILANT MERCURIA ARCTURA RANK STELLA**

Opening: 20th November 2014 at 7pm

Until January 10th 2015

Tuesday-Friday from 11am to 1.30pm and from 2.30pm to 7pm

Saturday from 3pm to 7pm.

### **Flickering before my eyes**

Staring at screens defines life in our time. It is a common experience to leave the screen that we have stared at during work and merely substitute our employer's screens with personal screens. We glance at smartphone screens to the point where we can ignore our friends, lovers, and pets for videos of strangers' lives and acquaintances kittens. There is no moralizing to be done here about the loss of lived experience for mediated reality, as it is a choice we have collectively made. Few of us manage more than temporary reprieve from our screen addiction- self-consciously going offline for a few days.

It is, however, worth analysing the allure of screens, and Jurgen Ots new series Periaqueductal Gray serves as perfectly catalytic objects for this consideration. The artist starts with the old-fashioned sparkly projector screens that he collects in thrift shops. This uniquely identifiable material speaks of an earlier time- a media age-of-innocence when screens were unfurled before the assembled family with the majesty of sacred objects. When the potential enthrall of moving images left the movie palace for the home the potential for today's screen-world was born whole.

Ots takes these found screens apart as a spectacularly loaded material, slicing them into strips to better understand their power. He also combines ones from different periods, and as particularly volatile material the older ones are more yellowed- the most universal comprehensible sign of aging next to human wrinkles.

Someone under 35 years old is unlikely to have any memories of family films projected on these ungainly freestanding screens. It happened so rarely as to be of significant effect when it did occur. Our jazzy super-eight camera was a pride and joy of my Dad's who understood that film was supposed to tell stories with motion. I remember family squabbles over my mother's inability to take his direction. Instead of performing the action my father was trying to capture she would freeze and just wave at the lens, and get a slightly pained expression as my dad urged her to walk, wave jump, anything other than "stand still and wave". (At some point these were transferred to VHS, watched once for comic effect and there they sit, decaying on the shelf to this day.

More often on that sad screen we watched these weird edits of popular Hollywood kids movies on super 8 that were available at the time and still found in flea markets-, such as "Abbott and Costello meets the Mummy. " I could watch those repeatedly causing the old screen to come out of the closet more than the endless home movies.

More loaded though was the tattered leather briefcase I found as a snoopy pubescent. I assumed rightly that anything locked and hidden was of interest. Pulled from the back of my Dad's closet I quickly picked the lock and enjoyed on the same, now tattered screen super 8 porn loops- amusingly amateurish by today's standards. One that involved the forced sexual seduction of a conspicuously swishy gay couple by two Amazonian women at knife point was burned into the memory of this proto gay kid.

While I don't feel good about not respecting their privacy that tattered screen sexual images are what pops into my head before old screens more than our family visit to the Parthenon. An arty gay bar in NY called Pork realized that this was a common association of old screens for many and replaced their clichéd video monitors with freestanding screens and stacks of plastic-reeled films. This referenced the underground history of "smokers," parties for ostensibly straight men where they would smoke cigars, drink beer and whiskey, watch porn on super eight and allow themselves to masturbate alongside other men, a gateway for male desire for many. I was amazed how anyone of my generation, born in the early 1960s had a similar erotic resonance with these screens, their tatters testament to our endless scopophilic desire. The aging yellowing on Ots' screens is equal parts smoke and desire.

I share these family histories as an available case study for the power of the moving image, entering the home and our brains. There was considerable debate about whether these new image technologies might actually be harmful, whether evolution would have a chance to catch up for the image world being born. When Ots hand makes in shredded screens a technological history, adding to it a mess, gooiness and a fleshiness he speaks of the introduction of image technologies into our bodies. The browned material on the surface speaks of the messiness of visual desire, and each tatter records some untold event. Ots owns these history with his cuts and glue, taking as his right the unique joy being a much younger man, employing his own generations' distance from these pre-digital screens. Technological histories are always shifting, we write the stories we need to better understand where we are now. Ots works once exhibited become historical objects themselves. How will they appear when the last person who has seen their lives and lusts flicker before them has passed from the planet. That is the final open-ended question of Periaqueductal Gray.

- text by Bill Arning -