YOU[bahn]TUBE

By G.H. Hovagimyan

Abstract

When we go down into the subway there is always in the back of our minds a series of film clips playing. These are subway scenes from movies we have seen during the course of our lives. This is part of a larger media context, a media collective unconscious of shared experience.

For example in the movie Dressed to Kill by Brian Di Palma there is a shot of a long New York subway platform. These platforms have steel I-beam columns. People often lean out and look down the tunnel for the oncoming train. In the Di Palma sequence there is a choreographed scene where people are hidden behind each column. They periodically lean out to look for the train and then retreat back out of view.   Indeed there are hundreds of movie subway sequences that we all know in common such as the famous scene in the Seven Year Itch where Marilyn Monroe's dress is blown up by the air rushing out of a subway grating in the street. Or the special effects Kung Fu sequence from the Matrix or King Kong grabbing an elevated train as it rolls by him. There are many other movie sequences from many different countries that create a rich narrative of subway images. I propose to collect all these scenes into a montage of video for display on various screens in the Berlin Ubahn system. I have named the piece you[bahn]tube because it relates to the idea of a collective moving image experience one can have by researching films on youTube. I have already begun researching these films on youTube and have come up with several clips that fans have uploaded. I have downloaded these sequences and am in the process of assembling the material onto disks. Here is a list of potential movie clips that have subway scenes:

Saturday Night Fever, Taxi Driver, Marathon Man, The King of Comedy, The Godfather, North by Northwest, Prizzi's Honor, Rosemary's Baby, West Side Story, Twelve Angry Men, Do the Right Thing, Network, Midnight Cowboy, Annie Hall, Bang the Drum Slowly, When Harry met Sally, The Matrix , Speed, Little Nicky, Jacob's Ladder, Men in Black, Maniac, Adventures in Baby-Sitting, Die Hard With a Vengeance, Lost in Translation, The Rules of Attraction, My Boss's Daughter, Mimic, The Taking of Pelham One Two Three, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Swat, Blade, Ghost, Swimming Pool, The Italian Job, End of Days, Weekend at Bernie's II, Total Recall, Predator II, Flatliners, Jacob's Ladder, Underworld, Resident Evil, Irreversible, American Werewolf In Paris, American Werewolf In London, Carlito's Way, Ocean's Eleven, Risky Business, Along Came A Spider, Conspiracy Theory, Crocodile Dundee, 48 Hrs, Getting Even With Dad, My Best Friends Wedding, On The Line, Serendipity, Silver Streak, Strange Days, Carlito's Way, The Untouchables, Midnight Cowboy, Bless the Child, Paycheck, The Odessa File, Superman, French Connection, Beneath the Planet of the Apes, The Hunted, The Warriors, Jacobs Ladder, Daredevil, You've Got Mail, Barbershop 2: Back In Business, Luc Besson's Subway, Neverwhere, Suicide Club, Sliding Doors, They, Wings of Desire, Trackman, Pi, Midnight Meat train, Step Up 2, After, Trick, Edmond, taste of Tea,

[Subway scene from The Matrix on overhead monitors in Ubahn car]

Proposal

I propose to assemble a video program that can be displayed throughout the Berlin Ubahn system in a variety of ways. For example, inside the train cars there are video display screens. The video program can be divided into short sequences timed to play in between other video programming on the overhead monitors such as announcements or advertisements. The details lengths etc. can be determined with consultation from the video technicians responsible for programming the monitors. The effect on the riding public should be to create a memory and recognition of the movie sequence they are viewing. Of course they will say something like, " Isn't that the movie the Matrix?" and this will trigger a discussion and some other thoughts or memories within the public especially after they view a few more seconds and realize that it is a collection of subway scenes from different movies.

[Die Ubahn und Der Furst, King Kong, After Hours]

Of course not everyone will recognize every movie scene. It is unlikely that each person will know every scene. This then creates a sort of game in the viewers' mind where they ask themselves, "what movie is that?"

I have in early research discovered sequences that are also animations such as a Ubahn Simulation and a video game called The Warriors which is based on the original movie. These clips will also be added to the mix. Getting these clips depends upon their availability on youTube which ties into the title of the work, you[bahn]tube.

Other Display Methods

Along with the overhead video monitors I propose several other locations and methods for display depending on their availability. One location would be at the Berlin Messe station.

[Berlin Messe with Spiderman on video screens]

At the Berlin Messe there are video advertising displays integrated into the frieze above the doorways in several areas. The you[bahn]tube program or short sections of it could be inserted into existing programming.

 Other methods for display of this program would be free standing video display signage on platforms. Because digital signage is a 9x16

proportion a special video montage could be made consisting of three separate movie clips. This would create a very interesting, "moving subway painting."

Another variation would be to create a video montage that plays vertically instead of horizontally. This would jar the viewers' perception of the images.

[scene from the Warriors displayed vertically]

Indeed, it is possible to utilize the video displays in the Ubahn cars to create video diptychs. These would also offer an interesting juxtaposition of scenes from two different movies. Obviously the diptych comes from a Medieval painting style that was popular in Germany so there is an underlying reference to the origin of the diptych in painting and how it has been transmitted to the current video display technology. It is key however to understand that this whole project rests on the Western pictorial language of painting that has been continued in film, video and now digital media. The whole notion of using digital tools such as youTube and assembling video montages in Final Cut Pro, then presenting them as public images in the Ubahn, encapsulates the ongoing discourse of visual language.

[diptych display, left side-Warriors videogame, right – Midnight Meat Train]

Site Specific Projections

Another potential for site-specific installation would be to utilize a projector and project on a window wall cover with transparent holofoil plastic sheeting. The plastic sheeting would be temporarily attached to the window glass. This sheeting acts like a projection screen and captures the light from a projector turning the window wall into a projection screen. This would be done after night fall and would be most effective if presented during the winter months when the nighttime is much longer. The location for this installation would be the Kottbusser Tor elevated train platform. The windows on the outside of the platform would present a screen that could be viewed both from the street and from the Ubahn platform. Since there is a long platform with many window bays, it is possible to have more than one projection. There is the possibility of two or three projections alternating with the widow bays that have the Kottbusser Tor sign. This allows for multiple projections of the same image or different loops of subway sequences from films.

[multiple projections of Wings of Desire]

The projector(s) can be hung from the steel roof joists and power can be readily supplied with conduit from the ceiling. The data can be stored on a mac mini computer and fed to each projector.

[Kottbusser Tor exterior with two projections; left- The Taking of Pelham 123 and right- Suicide Club]

[Aerial view of platform with three projections]