

## Glitch Aesthetics and Impossible Flights

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Tapes by Luca Patella, Federica Marangoni, Michele Sambin, Guido Sartorelli and Lucio Pozzi, despite their variety, share a set of common thematic and iconographic interests. Central to these themes and motifs is the passage of time. Video is a time-based medium, and despite the claims of instant replay, as Sambin's videoloops confirm, there is always delay and process between recording and playback. In several tapes, either the image or screens covered in static or soundtracks humming with electromagnetic noise form important formal elements of the works. In others video feedback, audio looping, and a variety of forms of symmetry-breaking point towards the emergence of signal from an originary or teleological flow, an encompassing environment of what appears to us as noise, but is in effect the physical basis on which all electronic equipment, especially recording and transmission, are premised. When we watch early tapes like Patella's *Viaggio*, we expect to see – and have almost taught ourselves to ignore – the artefacts of the equipment used then: the glitches that intervene between edits, the slow response to changing light levels, and the lack of distinction between words and noises in noisy acoustic spaces. These are however not faults, and it is false to see or hear in them evidence of failure. Instead they are the marks of the presence of the equipment, and of the materiality of the tapes themselves. Like the patina on old paintings, they give evidence, not so much of a pure existence, but of a continuing process which electronic media undergo, marking their passage through the world and the autonomous life of the chemical and physical apparatus which is their material form. Patella is explicit about the need to attack grammar: the life, the afterlife, of video is a form of idiolect, concerning the absolute specificity of each individual copy of a tape. In Marangoni's *Volo Impossibile* the fragility of signal is made apparent in the relation between sound and image which occurs as an artefact of the digital transfer, but it was always there in the scrolling static of her untuned screens. We always lose signal, always confront the vanishing of the image which is integral to the video interlace, where no image is ever complete and is always disappearing, a quality then used by Patella and Marangoni as substrate to their artistic practices where ephemerality and the passing of time are integral to the performances they record: Patella and Marangoni disappear from their works before the works come, abruptly or delicately, to their ends. Sartorelli plays through the static as the basis of the western pictorial tradition, from its earliest to its latest manifestations, in the short, elegant *Analogie*. Noise is not the enemy: it is the ocean in which the video signal swims. To make art is to make order from the mess of the world, to break apart the universal symmetry of entropic decay. Lucio Pozzi's little *Portrait of Portrait of Maria Gloria* is such a creation of order from the disappearance of the personal and humanistic, the mechanical empiricism that is profoundly anthropocentric. Archivists must respect noise because the glitch is an integral aspect of video aesthetics; and because there is no perfect origin to which we can return – only the primal ocean of electromagnetism.