

*Pushed to their margins even obsolete media become sensitive enough to register the signs and clues of a situation... Time determines the limit of all art, which first has to arrest the daily data flow in order to turn it into images or signs. What is called style in art is merely the switchboard of these scannings and selections.<sup>1</sup>*

*Who could have imagined that in the future an ordinary day like this might be forgotten or remembered as anything more or less significant than a walk in the park.<sup>2</sup>*

Diego Marcon's SPOOL series provides both a service and a problem. It is, at its basis, an exchange: Marcon digitises home movies, regardless the format—those dusty stacks of cassettes and unplayable reels are made more readily accessible once again. In return, he creates his own video from the archive of footage provided. The project is, in part, a technological archaeology of the past thirty years, so far reaching back to 1988 and drawing on VHS-C, S-VHS, Hi8 and MiniDV, evidencing the stumbling, overlapping disappearance of analogue recording. But in combing over the accumulated private moments that have happened to be captured over the years, Marcon's also prodding at something a lot more fundamental: in a lifetime of moments, what distinguishes one from the next?

It's not an unfamiliar situation, one parent dragging out the camcorder and pointing it at their kids while they make faces and squirm or vamp. Most of my dad's footage from the 80s no doubt would simply consist of us scowling and whining, 'Are you filming?' over and over again through the years. And, like most of these family movies, they have never, ever been watched. Marcon's SPOOL is an incremental response to these tidal waves of thousands of hours of invisible footage. Each video in the series has a name: Martina, Roger, Rita... This ostensibly tells us our subject whose life we are glimpsing. It is a privileged view of first steps, returns home, family excursions, family dinners and goofing off. Although it usually is special events (birthdays, gatherings, etc.) where the family documentarian pokes a camera in people's faces, those are notably absent here. Marcon's edited selections, although intimate, are more an indirect, almost abstract, portrait. He seems attracted to those quiet moments that happened to have been captured between events. We find a mother who narrates herself breastfeeding, a silent father's obsession with the textures taken by the camera's autofocus, or times when the camera is accidentally left on.

SPOOL induces, or maybe permits, a peculiar form of voyeurism. This isn't just the access of a documentary film, but a document that is at once more vulnerable and less ethically dubious. It somehow feels unquestionably permissible, and familiar, to be watching, like in *SPOOL / Tape 07. Cecilia*, a young girl apply lipstick to her forehead, to watch children grow older before our eyes. These inconsequential instances cumulatively mark the passage of time, and it is that passage that becomes the content and subject of the project. The potency of 'avant garde' moving image practices such as Stan Brakhage and Jonas Mekas, when they have informally filmed private, unstaged, sometimes quite boring non-events, has always been the implication that every moment is just as important as any other. This deliberate refocusing of cinema has bloomed: it is a democratic levelling of spectacle that we have witnessed in the countless inanities uploaded daily. But even if they were fulfilling budding Spielberg fantasies in their heads, I'd be fairly certain in saying that the ontological equalising of the image was most likely nowhere near the minds of these home filmmakers. What Marcon's re-shaping and public re-presentation of these any-moment-whatevers happens to point out is that the distance between the home and the 'avant garde' is non-existent, unconsciously shaping their own experimental cinemas. Anything, and everything, is worth capturing, is meaningful. The distinction sits between one moment and the next.

<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, 1986, trans. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz, Stanford University Press, 1999, page 3.

<sup>2</sup> Zinedine Zidane, quoted in *Zidane*, Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreno, 2006.