

# AUDIOVISUAL ESSAYS: UNVEILING THE MYSTERY BEHIND THE OBJECT

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## ABSTRACT

There is today a fluctuation around the conceptualization and potentialities of audiovisual essays. The beginning of a peer review section in the Journal of Science and Technology of the Arts dedicated to these objects aims at accepting these essays in the academic field, alongside traditional written papers. Furthermore, it also has the goal of creating a space of discussion of the gestures within audiovisual essays, as well as crafting criteria for their evaluation and critical analysis.

Keywords: Ricardo Vieira Lisboa; Audiovisual essay; Film studies; Critical analysis.

Over the last few years, due to the impact of the digital revolution and easy access to non-linear editing software, the use and manipulation of moving images became a popular form of expression. Fields like film criticism or film studies began to use and edit moving images to review, research, essay about cinema and audiovisual works themselves. As a consequence, we witnessed the birth of a new kind of objects, although already thought of and conceived since the beginning of cinema, and in particular experimental and essayistic film. These have been called various names – video essays, audiovisual essays, videographic works. The fluctuation of this terminology is a good symbol for the inquiry into the nature and essence of these objects. These are, in many cases, in between several possibilities on conceptualization: pieces of film criticism, filmic analysis, theses or recurrences in the history of cinema, artistic objects per se, pure adjacent objects of written pieces on film and media theory. Moreover, the use of audiovisual essays has also become part of many other areas of research, oriented towards a practice-based methodology.

The beginning of an audiovisual section in the *Journal of Science and Technology of the Arts* has two main goals:

the first one is contributing for the acceptance of these objects in the academic field, especially within the most common practices and criteria of acceptance, reviewing and publishing. For this, we'll have in each number a call for audiovisual essays, that will be submitted to a peer reviewed system of evaluation. Each audiovisual essay will be accompanied by a research statement written by the author, articulating research aims and the process of work. After acceptance, the audiovisual essay and author's statement will be published alongside the reviewers' critical evaluation of the work.

the second goal of this section will be to create a conceptual discussion around audiovisual essay as a pedagogical and academic tool, in order to generate concepts and criteria for evaluation and scientific consideration.

In this first edition we decided to invite one of the most interesting and prolific Portuguese audiovisual essayists, Ricardo Vieira Lisboa, to create a singular and original video specifically for the *Journal*. Ricardo has already created several audiovisual essays about directors such as Terence Davies, Raoul Walsh, John Ford, Alfred Hitchcock or Reinaldo Ferreira. But the main reason we chose Ricardo's essay for the opening of this new section is because he embodies the conceptual mystery that still lies behind these cinephile objects. Ricardo is a film critic that writes using words, but is also a film director and a film programmer (at the moment at Casa do Cinema Manoel de Oliveira). In a certain way, his position in between all these areas of work and reflection illustrates perfectly the balanced position of audiovisual essays nowadays: in between film criticism, artistic creations, film and media theory and scientific production in many areas of knowledge.