

## What is 'Expanded Cinema'?

Lara Kamhi summarizes the question that is also at the conceptual core of the exhibition as follows:

“Although Steven Spielberg points out that in the virtual world the audience is urged not to be guided by storytellers, and is granted with too much liberty to make their own choices, Morton Heilig’s prediction that ‘the cinema of the future will no longer be a visual art, but an art of consciousness’ is becoming increasingly relevant. Today, cinema has reached a state which can be compared to the experimentalism wave of late 1800s and early 1900s. We might finally be asking a long-overdue question: “What if the distinction between storytelling and storyliving hasn’t disappeared, but never really existed?”

During the 1960s, television became ubiquitous in households across the Western world. Meanwhile, digital cameras began to be manufactured and the cinema experience became increasingly widespread among the masses.

While video art started emerging as a response to these processes, artist **Stan Van Der Beek** used the expression “**Expanded Cinema**” for the first time in a manifesto entitled “The Culture: Intercom”. In his manifesto, Van Der Beek pointed out “the dangers of technology spinning out of control”, and advocated for the urgent creation of a universal language. He argued that this could only be envisioned through a universal experience, which could possibly be achieved by expanding the cinematic experience. Further introductions to interactive, alternative and radical approaches to film-viewing by artists who followed in his steps, thus led to the emergence of the “Expanded Cinema” movement. Centering around science, art and technology, these works started giving active roles to audiences by mentally or/and physically including them in the work’s conception process. Challenging visual storytelling by freeing the moving image from mainstream ways of seeing offered by television and cinema screens, these new approaches played major roles in re-structuring the cinematic experience.

“Throughout history, the experience of watching films has been shaped by the reaction of masses to experiences designed and staged for them. The transformations it has gone through have brought it closer to the illusion of real life. As it has been creating its own codes towards reaching the ultimate dream that would allow the audience to forget about its own existence, cinema has played a significant role in shaping mass perception. The most fundamental demand of the audience thus became a space of absolute surrender, promising mental and physical escape. It might be easier for us to understand that there is no turning back from the world of simulations, once we see that this pursuit is as old as hypnosis, meditation, and even dreams,” says the curator, Lara Kamhi.