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POST-DOMESTIC  
HABITAT  
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**PAD. Pages on Arts and Design**

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open access journal  
founded by Vanni Pasca in 2005

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**Publisher**

**Aiap Edizioni**  
via A. Ponchielli 3 – 20129 Milano – Italy  
[aiap@aiap.it](mailto:aiap@aiap.it) – [www.aiap.it](http://www.aiap.it)

PAD © ISSN 1972-7887

#25, Vol. 16, December 2023

[www.padjournal.net](http://www.padjournal.net)

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**MORE-THAN-  
HUMAN  
PERSPECTIVES**  
COHABITATION, TECHNOLOGY,  
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

# RGB Tour

## Exploring of the “YouTube Bedroom” Type

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### **Keywords**

Room Tour, Technological, Post-Domestic, YouTube, Video.

### **Abstract**

This paper is part of a research-creation project entitled *RGB tour*, which aims to contextualize the evolution and preservation of the bedroom space within the landscape of videos on the YouTube platform. Through a specific analysis of the *room tour* practice, we will explore how content creators maintain the usages traditionally associated with the bedroom space while transforming it into a technological entity evolving in parallel with emerging technologies and practices within the domestic environment.

## 1. Introduction

The *RGB tour* project (Bailleul, 2021) has been developed in the context of the PhD research and creation project titled *The Bedroom: A Space of Contained Creation* (Bailleul, 2020, ongoing). *RGB tour* is an evolving html page in which a growing number of video footage of *room tours* automatically pile up. Once activated, the program can download precise sequences from YouTube videos and turn them into animated gifs, each five to ten seconds long. Every clip is automatically categorized into an infinite grid depending on the objects or furniture that appear in the images (bed, desk, computer, door, etc.) and on the RGB light colors (Fig. 1).

By introducing this project, this paper seeks to analyze the *room tour* video format as a contemporary visual representation of what could be termed as the “YouTube bedroom” type defined by its form, furniture, and colors, which derive from



Figure 1. Nicolas Bailleul, *RGB tour*, still from the html page (beds section), 2022.

the preservation of its historical function and their evolution within the context of this platform.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the reflection developed with this project revolves around the persistence of the bedroom space as a backdrop on the web, despite its evolving usages and technological changes within it. Indeed, as visually suggested on the *RGB tour* page, the room segments collected bear less resemblance to traditional bedrooms and increasingly adopt the aesthetics of personal computers (with the famous RGB color code). Therefore, we might perceive the bedroom, as it is represented on YouTube, as a technological entity evolving in parallel with the technologies that are becoming increasingly dependent on domestic spaces.

## 2. The *Room Tour* Historic Genre

The *room tour* is a very popular video format on YouTube, which consists of a filmed guided tour of a content creator's entire bedroom. As regular viewers, we typically only see a limited frame of the room, shot from a fixed point with a camera placed on a tripod and angled towards the creators who speak to their viewers, facing directly into the lens. But over the course of a *room tour*, the YouTubers takes their camera and navigates through the relatively confined space of their bedroom or studio, commenting on every object and furniture they encounter (Fig. 2).

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1 It is important to note we analyse the *room tours* videos as they appear on the YouTube platform, despite the existence of very similar room tour videos on different platforms and social networks. While some of our ideas may be applicable to a broader definition of the “content creator’s bedroom type,” our analysis is deliberately restrictive due to the RGB tour program operating exclusively with videos found on YouTube.



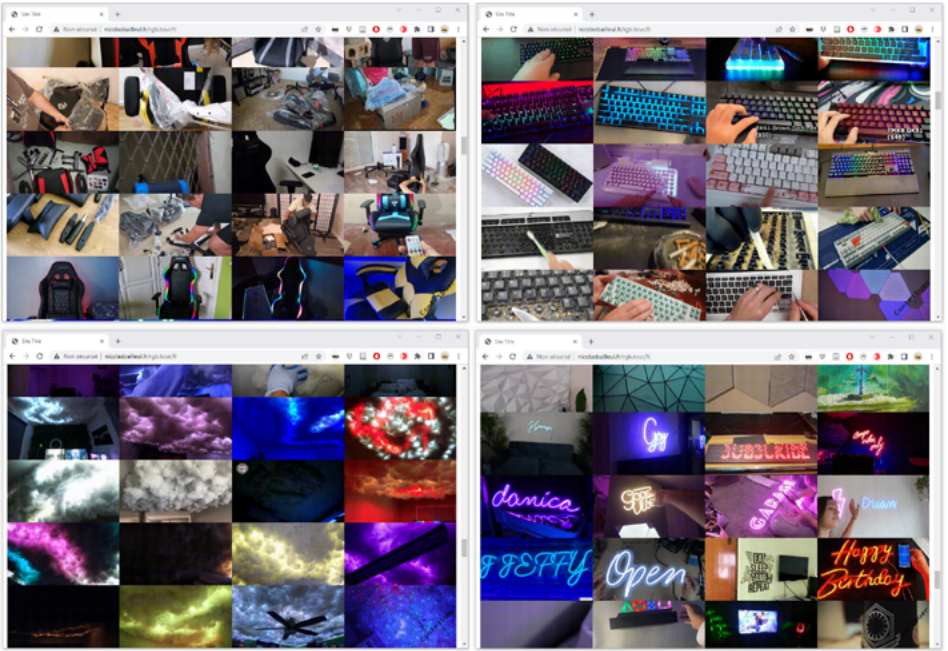


Figure 2. Nicolas Bailleul, *RGB tour*, still from the html page, 2022.

The *room tour* is an invitation to discover the backstage of the set. It allows the creators to reveal to their communities what goes on behind the scenes, and therefore to temporarily remove the mask of their persona, to expose a more vulnerable and “authentic” version of themselves. Watching a *room tour* take us back to teenagerhood, when we were invited for the first time into the bedroom of a friend who showed us his furniture, clothes, collections, toys, makeup – everything that makes up that person’s universe.

Despite its popularity and the constant upload of new *room tours* every day from various types of creators, it is difficult to trace the evolution of the *room tour* practice in the history of the YouTube platform. Unlike other passing trends that can be

defined as perfectly timed viral phenomena – for example, the Ice Bucket Challenge during the summer of 2014 –, the *room tour* format did not emerge suddenly. Indeed, the bedroom has always been in the internet landscape, as a space for self-exposure and amateur practices. Therefore, if the bedroom has an important role for the future maker of the internet, it's been a long time since this intimate space has been regarded as a place of independence, introspection and writing, as discussed in Virginia Woolf's famous essay "A room of one's own". Within this context, the *room tour* video format can be considered as another iteration of the room journey literary genre.

In his book *Autour de ma chambre. Petite histoire du voyage immobile*, Bernd Stiegler (2016) describes how the journey undertaken by Xavier de Maistre with *Voyage autour de ma chambre* in 1794 initiates a whole literary genre in which the author goes around, observes, and comments, both for himself and for the reader, on the space that is the most intimate and private to him. Stiegler shows us how this simple exercise of immobile displacement, which places the individual who inhabits this space at the center of his work, is transformed into a narrative code (literary, and today, also cinematic) that describes, during any given period it concerns, the relationships between him and his intimate and domestic spaces. In every clips that the *RGB tour* program collect, we can see that all content creators use the bedroom as a means to present themselves, to open up to others, and therefore to embark on a journey. Objects carry stories. Furnitures, posters and lights shapes the identity of the occupant. However, if the *room tour* genre is embedded in a broader history, it appears that this

video format on YouTube does not solely aim to produce a literary narrative about the individual who occupies it. Instead, the *room tour* appears to be a ritual to those who decided to dedicate their work to the web. Thus, The bedroom doesn't just represent the material extension of a unique individual, it is also presented to us as the physical counterpart of their online presence. By showing it on YouTube, the bedroom is not anymore a random teenager bedroom, it is above all, a connected space. Observing the evolution of the bedrooms and the way they are exposed on this platform might reveal the different phases of transformation from the domestic parental bedroom to the specific “YouTube bedroom” type.

### 3. Evolution of “Home Vlogging”

The film *Because We Are Visual*, directed by artist duo Gerard-Jan Claes and Olivia Rochette, released in cinemas in 2010, five years after the creation of YouTube is a collage of amateur *vlogs*<sup>2</sup> and the result of a long process of researching and collecting videos found on the early YouTube platform. Throughout the film, we encounter young men and women who open up in front of their cameras, often within what appears to be bedroom spaces. They share their desires, anxieties and doubts. Characters make regular returns, while others appear and then disappear. As the story progresses, the *vlogs* follow one another, with the sole aim of giving us a glimpse of what YouTube was like at the time, serving as a platform for amateur expression.

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2 A vlog is a short form of “video blog”, consisting of recorded video content, often documenting a person’s thoughts, experiences, or activities, and typically shared online.

The film reminds us that when people's personal computers started occupying homes, the bedroom by default became the space of production for content generated by users, especially on YouTube, for the creation of *vlogs*, live streams and tutorials. The bedroom became a career driven environment, a space for sharing thoughts, a stage, a playing field. As Patrice Flichy reminds us in his book *Le Sacre de l'Amateur: Sociologie des passions ordinaires à l'ère numérique* (2010), it emerged as the most conducive space for producing web content.

*Because We Are Visual* is one in a long line of films produced using user-generated content. If we exclude the more global history of *the found footage* genre, the film is part of the practice that artist and researcher Chloé Galibert-Laîné (2021) calls “netnographic cinema”, which is rooted in a convergence of practices borrowing from virtual ethnography, net art and experimental cinema. *Net found footage* films shows us that the digital ecosystem, the distance it produces between creator, viewer and collectors, and above all the abundance of online content, is changing the filmmaker's paradigm and relationship to the material and space he explores. However, what interests us here is precisely the fact that the net found footage film seems to examine the collected videos both as documentary material and as a technological apparatus, closely linked to the domestic household space. Just as the Super 8 camera served as the documentary medium for home movies in the sixties and seventies, smartphones, webcams, and screen captures are tools that have become part of the “home” landscape since the 2000s.



**Figure 3.** Gerard-Jan Claes et Olivia Rochette, *Because We Are Visuals*, Stills from the film, KASK / School of Arts Ghent, 2010.

Unlike other *net found footage* films that use YouTube videos to address more specific topics (for example, in the *saved footage* films of the filmmaker Dominic Gagnon), *Because We Are Visual* is built around ordinary behaviors of platform users. More importantly, it highlights the domestic spaces that constituted its landscape (Fig. 3). There's an important narrative choice in the film: on one hand, there are shots of the outside world in motion, often silent and contemplative, and on the other hand, interior shots of domestic spaces, providing a backdrop for the YouTubers as they reveal themselves to the motionless cameras standing on a tripod.

We perceive that these distinctions between outside moving cameras and inside still shots are gradually bringing the *vloggers* “home”. *Because We Are Visual* makes a picture of the YouTube domestic space in its everyday use, both through the discourse of its characters and through its recording devices. Webcams and cell phones are part of the domestic landscape. The practice of *vlogging* in 2010 seems inseparable from the living rooms, bathrooms, and bedrooms in which these videos are made.

Ten years later, YouTube is no longer the same as it was in *Because We Are Visual*. In his article “The rise and fall of YouTube’s celebrity pioneers”, journalist Nicholas Tufnell described in 2013 how this initial wave of amateur YouTubers gradually fades away in favor of creators who professionalize. Certainly, YouTube has evolved into a platform that supports monetized content, which is content compatible with commercial sponsors and advertisements displayed before and during videos. The amateur aesthetic, which Hito Steyerl describes as “poor images”, has been replaced by well-lit and professionally edited videos. The YouTubers promoted by the platform are no longer uncertain teenagers and young adults seeking to confide but specialized *content creators*. The *vlog* format is now a sub-category of the platform’s many existing sections: Trends, Fashion & Beauty, Video Games, Music and Sports. In other words, the typical model of a YouTuber with thousands of subscribers, originally associated with the “video diary” format, has gradually transformed into that of a “young entrepreneur”. It’s the culmination of what researchers Jean Burgess and Joshua Green called *entrepreneurial vloggers* back in 2009.

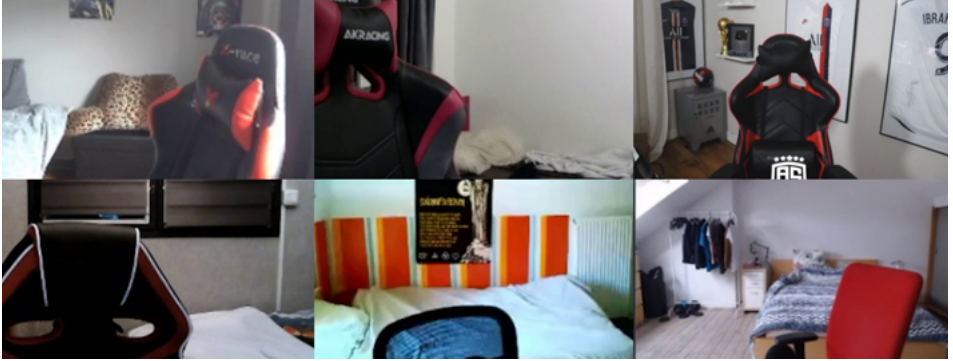
The channels in the Most Subscribed list reveal that, although the vlog form is grounded in ordinary, domestic creative practice, not all vlogs are purely amateur productions, created in bedrooms for the purposes of self-expression alone. Indeed, a number of prominent vloggers, or performers using the videoblog form, are quite clearly using YouTube in an entrepreneurial way. (Burgess & Green, 2009, p. 96)

Thus, as predicted by Green and Burgess, the dynamics of the YouTube platform are encouraging successful *content creators* to gradually leave their family homes, professionalize their approach, and shoot their videos in more suitable spaces such as studios or with green screens, sometimes even with a technical team. In pursuit of a new economic model that directly competes with television content, YouTube introduced YouTube Spaces in 2015 – dedicated audio-visual creation facilities for *content creators* who want to produce videos in an “optimal” setting, which means “not at home”.

#### 4. Performance and Maintenance of the Bedroom

Despite the evolution of practices, technological and logistical tools, and the benefits they offer, the bedroom remains a temporal marker that withstands the passage of time and the transformations of the platform. The YouTube landscape, both in 2010 and in 2020, is primarily composed of bedrooms. The background space visible behind YouTubers maintains the domestic space as a standard backdrop, often referencing teenage bedrooms in their overall aesthetic (or at least what one might imagine as a typical teenage bedroom), as evidenced by the almost systematic presence of figurines on shelves, posters that cover

the walls and even in some, a bed in the corner of the room. And this remains consistent regardless of the content type or the age of the content creator in question. Just as recurring visual cues, behaviors, a particular style of lighting, and shared audiovisual equipment are present, the teenage bedroom appears to be a persistent element in the platform's scenery (Fig. 4).



**Figure 4.** Stills from Twitch, images of empty content creator's bedroom.

In the article “Livestreaming from the Bedroom: Performing Intimacy through Domestic Space on Twitch”, the researchers Bonnie “BO” Ruberg and David Lark (2021) conduct a study on the bedroom space, using a sample of one hundred channels from the Twitch platform, in which streamers either reveal or hide the bedroom space in the background. The aim of this research is to document the apparent transformations of streamers’ bedrooms based on the types of content they provide. What the researchers argue is that “the erotics of the bedroom are central to placemaking on Twitch, where the bedroom is both a physical location that streamers broadcast from and a conceptual space that structures the practices, aesthetics, and place-related norms of livestreaming on Twitch”.





**Figure 5.** Still from YouTube, the background of the french YouTuber squeezeie is a 3D representation of a room projected on a green screen.

Therefore, if the article demonstrates that the bedroom is being performed, it suggests that it can be activated, just like a technological device. It's quite common to notice that on Twitch and YouTube channels, when the creator's bedroom is not visible in the background, it is often replaced by a green screen. This green screen is sometimes used by the creator to display a logo or an illustration, but it can also reveal a three-dimensional set representing the ideal replica of a teenager's bedroom (Fig. 5).

Thus, the bedroom as decor would then be more of a staging device than a habitable space. Whether it's actually located in an apartment, within an open workspace, or as a 3D representation, the bedroom has now become part of the folklore of *content creators*. Even though many of them have left their teenage years, have become self-employed entrepreneurs and have started families, the bedroom appears frozen in both space and time.

This is why the *room tour* format is presented as a reactivation of the bedroom space. Stepping out of this two-dimensional framework and exploring this environment removes its purely decorative role. This journey to the heart of the room restores its domestic functionality. The bedroom no longer remains a simple video-making studio, but becomes an authentic operational bedroom. Moreover, underneath this intimate gesture of showing one's room, lies also a sign of social achievement. For *content creators* who decide to do a *room tour*, it is a way to give credibility to their activity, operational by proving that the domestic space is dedicated in part for the creation of videos. For successful channels, the *room tour* is a ritual (usually an annual one) for self-promotion, a way to show the success of the channel in the midst of high popularity.

The most successful YouTubers rename their *room tour* as *apartment tour* or *mansion tour*. Thus, each new *room tour* on the same channel shows the evolution of what used to be an amateur space (or the authentic teenager bedroom), into a creator studio perfected through a more polished design. We not only discover the creator's personal universe, but also the investment in physical objects of what makes up the central location of their professional activity. The objects that form the bedroom, whether they serve in function or are just a decor, are proof of financial investment. The *content creators* never miss an opportunity to inform us of the price of these objects, especially if they are expensive.

In her article "A parlour of one's own? The Youtube room tour genre", the researcher Gala Rebane (2019) parallels the

phenomenon of the *room tour* as the new *parlour* in the Victorian era. The *parlour*, that was curated by housewives, served as a room to welcome guests in the public space of the household. It was an occasion to proudly show off the home's identity and thus to display the social status of its inhabitants. Gala Rebane draws a connection between the phenomenon of the *room tour* to the composition of the *parlour* and to the show MTV Cribs, where celebrities give the audience a glimpse into their absurdly luxurious villas as a display of social triumph.

In this practice of the *room tour*, we find this same form of exuberance, both in the overly enthusiastic description, which renders itself to be a promotional narrative for each element in the room, and in the set-up of the decor which sometimes seems as though it does not belong to any lived-in environment, private or public, but to a make-believe bedroom that one might find in a design magazine. In her article, Gala Rebane insists on the opportunity that the *parlour* gave women a way to express and assert their individuality but that this came with limitations. *Decorums* of the time controlled individual expression, eventually making all *parlours* quite uniform from one household to the next. Thus, despite people's desire to appear unique in their taste, the bedrooms of YouTubers consist of the same objects, the same furniture, even the same lighting. We might begin to wonder if the typical YouTuber bedroom wasn't just bound to fully deindividualize, to become an autonomous space, homogenous and communal. The result of generic pop culture.



Figure 6. Nicolas Bailleul, RGB tour, still from the html page, 2022.

## 5. From Personal Space to Personal Computer

While the successive presentation of furniture and objects in the room allow to organize the evolution of a *room tour*, it is the omnipresence of RGB LED lights that caught our attention the most in the *RGB tour* project (Fig. 6). RGB LED stands for the three primary colors (red, green, blue) which can enable multiple color combinations. Through led or neon, RGB lights dress these rooms in a futuristic manner. This type of mood lighting originated from the aesthetics of the gaming community, which proudly claims saturated color all around gaming and electronic hardware. This detail is not trivial, because, after several hours of watching *room tours* videos, we can see that the central element of the typical creator's bedroom isn't the bed nor the desk, but what we call the computer setup. The computer case, the hardware, the monitors, the keyboard, the mouse, the cameras and microphone are shown, commented and described as if the setup reveal would be the most important part of a *room tour*. The computer setup is thus at the epicenter of the You-tuber's activity. The propagation of the RGB colors on the desk, the gaming chair, the bed, the walls and ceiling suggests that the computer is no longer a random object in the bedroom. On the contrary, it seems that the whole room would actually be an extension of the computer hardware, a livable computer system unit. The reverse is also true. The computer setup as furniture can be considered as a scaled-down model of the room in which it is located. Filip Kostic's "Personal Computers" edition, which includes a series of photographs featuring extensively customized computers, presents them in a way which implies they function as reflections of their owners' personal environments, similarly to how cars often do (Fig. 7).



Figure 7. Filip Kostik, *Personnal Computers*, still from the edition, 2022.

In such manner and similarly to Gala Rebane writing about the show MTV Cribs in her article, the *room tour* phenomenon reminds us of another show produced on the channel MTV: Pimp My Ride, where cars in bad conditions are revamped and customized in the utmost extravagant colors and shapes, and whose features of comfort and entertainment are multiplied through the integration of screens, powerful speakers, game consoles and even DJ sets, pool tables and punching-bags. Pimp My Ride essentially transformed these cars into a teenager's bedroom. Perhaps what we are seeing happen on YouTube is the metamorphose of teenage bedrooms into ultra powerful race cars, customized with RGB lights, open for the entire world to admire this immobile spaceship.

Therefore, it seems that the evolution of the bedroom landscape on YouTube actually reflects its high modularity, linked to the extensive presence of technology within it, which places it at the epicenter of numerous online phenomena. Can we thus assume that the initial purpose of bedrooms has lost its primary role? Due to their close proximity to web technologies, has the bedroom succeeded in erasing all boundaries between the inside and outside, mobility and immobility, rest and work? As Jonathan Crary reminds us in his book *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep* (2013), contemporary capitalism infiltrates all spaces dedicated to actual rest, aiming to induce a standby mode in the laboring bodies.

One seemingly inconsequential but prevalent linguistic figure is the machine-based designation of “sleep mode.” The notion of an apparatus in a state of low-power readiness remakes the larger sense of sleep into simply a deferred or diminished condition of operationality and access. It supersedes an off/on logic, so that nothing is ever fundamentally “off” and there is never an actual state of rest. (Crary, 2013, p. 13)

Crary suggests that spaces within capitalism, such as the “YouTube bedroom”, operate like the machines within them, in a state of constant vigilance and functionality. If Crary describes the effects of 24/7 capitalism in the contemporary world, we might find the origin of the multi-purpose domestic place in the book *Pornotopia, an Essay on Playboy’s Architecture & Biopolitics* by author Paul B. Preciado (2014). The author explores how socio-cultural, technological, and political developments have transformed our relationship with domestic space, sur-

passing the boundaries of the home traditionally associated with gender roles and specific activities. Preciado describes the model of the “Post-Domestic habitat”, specifically analyzing the iconic bedroom of Hugh Hefner, the head of Playboy, where his entire empire was managed using unprecedented technological tools. From his rounded-shaped bed, facing a multitude of screens and highly sophisticated communication logistics, Hugh Hefner transformed his bedroom into a workplace for managing and monitoring his employees without ever needing to leave it. We can suggest that Hugh Hefner’s bedroom, as described by Preciado, embodies the archetype toward which the contemporary bedroom in the online landscape is moving closer: a space where comfort and fantasy which has also become a space for creation, labor, and surveillance.

## 6. Conclusion: The YouTube’s Bedroom as an Activatable Device

If the concept of the *room tour* is not new in itself, as it fits into a long tradition of essays, novels, and films that take the reader or the viewer on a journey inside the intimacy of a home, the importance of the *room tour* format on YouTube seems to reveal the significant mutations that the bedroom has undergone in the context of the web.

As we specifically saw with the film *Because We Are Visual*, which takes us on a somewhat nostalgic tour of what YouTube was like in 2010, showing us “raw” and less connected domestic spaces, the very lucrative evolution of web practices has significantly reshaped the bedroom. While the teenage bedroom has defined itself as one of the default space for



amateurs in the early context of participatory web culture, it maintains itself in time as a common place for *content creators*, producing a more intimate bond between the viewers and the YouTubers. But as Gala Rebane (2019) highlights, in this process of professionalization of private spaces, the “YouTube bedroom” often loses the individuality of its owner, transforming into a uniformed space over time.

Moreover, we may ask ourselves if the term “bedroom” is still relevant, considering that this (Post-Domestic) space has increasingly distanced itself from its initial form. Here, we argue that the omnipresence of technology inside the YouTube bedroom, ranging from futuristic decoration to massive computer setups (which sometimes replace the bed or the closet), may redefine the bedroom from a confined architectural space into a technological device that can be activated at different levels. On YouTube, the “room tour” video title is sometime replaced by “setup tour”, which specifically focuses on the computer setup, even if the video presents the exact same tour (door, bed, chair, computer, etc.). Intertwined with the computer, the YouTube Bedroom has become a part of the setup.

In the end of this research, the *RGB tour* project will eventually become a unique and recomposed *room tour* movie, procedurally edited with the hundreds of videos that the program gathered. Through this endless collage of *room tour* perspectives, the aim of this project is to visually represent the typical YouTube bedroom as a generic standardize place, a futuristic virtual bedroom with no identity nor sign of personal affect, or, in reference to Marc Augé’s work, a *Non-place*.

Since the YouTube bedroom now holds a significant place in the cultural landscape of the web, we could further pursue this research by focusing on how artists, filmmakers, writers, and researchers document, occupy, and repurpose this transformed space until it once again reflects individual practices and stories in its material form. Could the “YouTube bedroom” type eventually evolve into the “YouTube bedroom of one’s own”? (Fig. 8).



**Figure 8.** Filip Kostik, *Bed PC*, still from the installation, 2022

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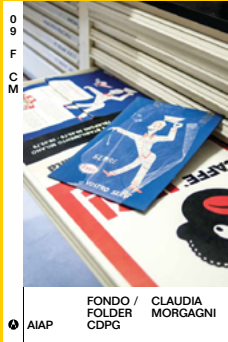
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**PAD. Pages on Arts and Design**

International, peer-reviewed,  
open access journal  
ISSN 1972-7887

#25, Vol. 16, December 2023

[www.padjournal.net](http://www.padjournal.net)



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