Illustration 1:
Film still from Enter the Void
(dir. Gaspar Noé, France/Germany/Italy 2009).
Gaspar Noé’s cinematic oeuvre shows a desire to speak to the viewer primarily on an emotional and physical level. To do this, Noé, unlike any other director, blatantly employs immersive strategies of direct involvement but also mechanisms of aggressive image confrontation. Their combination results in a sort of manipulative and incredibly hard-hitting oscillating dramaturgy, which accounts for the actual manipulative potential of his films. This essay analyzes these strategies using the example of Noé’s hallucinatory, psychedelic film *Enter the Void*.

1. Immersion as a Cultural Desire

Before *Enter the Void* (France/Germany/Italy 2009), Gaspar Noé had already worked with immersive effects evoked by the camera, sound, and special effects in two other projects – *Irreversible* (*Irréversible*, France 2002) and *We Fuck Alone* (USA/UK 2006) – that tear the viewer out of the sphere of familiar perception into an audio-visual danger zone. Noé’s cinematic language affirms, in every respect, the right to destroy the comfortableness of cinematic reception and to turn watching and listening into precarious physical acts on the dangerous edge of total vertigo. It is, therefore, no surprise that the cinematic adventurer Noé loves to swim (see ZAK/Kaghado 2011). His incredibly somatically effective films, mostly underscored by droning and industrial sounds, might initially remind one of the movements of waves on a stormy sea or of the chaotic spinning of a violent whirlwind that tosses viewers’ minds around, almost as violently as Poe’s maelstrom.

With regard to the paradigm of immersion, the metaphor of moving bodies of water is very appropriate. The basic definition of the term ‘immersion’ refers only to the submersion of an object in a liquid (cf. Curtis 2008: 89; cf. Murray 1997/1999: 89f.). The definition that established itself in the context of media studies from the very beginning, however, involves the experience of being transported...