

FOCUS

La Biennale di Venezia
May You Live in Interesting Times

National Participations
Argentinian Pavilion
The Name of a Country

The Aesthetic Situation

The Hyperaesthetics of Technology

Identity and Authenticity
on Social Media

The (Un)Seen in Drone Warfare

Questioning Soft Power

The Critical and Transformative
Potential of the Everyday Space

ART STYLE

Art & Culture
International
Magazine



El nombre de un país [The Name of a Country], 2019.
58th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia
Exhibition view Pavilion of Argentina

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Art Style | Art & Culture International Magazine is an online, quarterly magazine that aims to bundle cultural diversity. All values of cultures are shown in their varieties of art. Beyond the importance of the medium, form, and context in which art takes its characteristics, we also consider the significance of socio-cultural and market influence. Thus, there are different forms of visual expression and perception through the media and environment. The images relate to the cultural changes and their time-space significance—the spirit of the time. Hence, it is not only about the image itself and its description but rather its effects on culture, in which reciprocity is involved. For example, a variety of visual narratives—like movies, TV shows, videos, performances, media, digital arts, visual technologies and video game as part of the video's story, communications design, and also, drawing, painting, photography, dance, theater, literature, sculpture, architecture and design—are discussed in their visual significance as well as in synchronization with music in daily interactions. Moreover, this magazine handles images and sounds concerning the meaning in culture due to the influence of ideologies, trends, or functions for informational purposes as forms of communication beyond the significance of art and its issues related to the socio-cultural and political context. However, the significance of art and all kinds of aesthetic experiences represent a transformation for our nature as human beings. In general, questions concerning the meaning of art are frequently linked to the process of perception and imagination. This process can be understood as an aesthetic experience in art, media, and fields such as motion pictures, music, and many other creative works and events that contribute to one's knowledge, opinions, or skills. Accordingly, examining the digital technologies, motion picture, sound recording, broadcasting industries, and its social impact, Art Style Magazine focuses on the myriad meanings of art to become aware of their effects on culture as well as their communication dynamics.

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Editor's Note

Dear readers,

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to the third issue of Art Style Magazine, a peer-reviewed open-access magazine. In this edition, we have highlighted some innovative essays in which we seek to understand the process of configuring the contemporary image, addressing cultural diversity internationally. In this sense, the study of image addresses different conceptions in the context of creation, aesthetics, ethics, and media, their effects towards a global society, as well as local communities and nations. These effects are essential in the process of transformation, not only through formal results of images in a global economy, regarding the relations of production and productive forces, but also through the symbolic values giving the images a cultural significance. Therefore, given the importance of images in contemporary society, it is essential to reflect on the social participation of humankind through their traditional representations or innovations in the world of arts and communication, in search of the democratic ideal, social involvement and politicization.

In this way we highlight the 58th International Art Exhibition, the Venice Biennale (2019), titled *May You Live In Interesting Times*, with Florencia Battiti's essay about the artwork "The Name of a Country" by artist Mariana Telleria from Argentina. Subsequently, in the current state of the art systems, the essay "Towards a Theory of the Aesthetic Situation" by Professor Hans Dieter Huber of the State Academy of Fine Arts Stuttgart, Germany is essential.

Following in the face of new technologies and continuously images configurations, one possible explanation is found in the research of Lars Christian Grabbe, Professor for Theory of Perception, Communication, and Media at the MSD – Münster School of Design at the University of Applied Sciences Münster, Germany. In his essay entitled "The Hyperaesthetics of Technology," he discusses the status of contemporary imagery formed by the new principles of digital technology, simulating scenarios and environments.

Next, regarding the arts scene and the role of social media, we highlight how selfies and poses dominate the social media platforms by the so-called 'Social Photos' in the essay "Identity and Authenticity on Social Media: 'How to Take a Selfie' for Instagram with Artist Andy Kassier" by Pamela C. Scorzin, Professor of Art History and Visual Culture Studies at Dortmund University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Department of Design, Germany.

Furthermore, the image presence and works of art in contemporary societies are linked with technological development and intervene in a conception of the world with its characteristics and needs, varying by culture, society, and economy. Thus, contemporary cultures and arts present their distinct "social realities" and may have a stronger imagination than an image, and especially in the absence of images. In this sense, we highlight the essay "The Blink Between: Thinking About the (Un)Seen in Drone Warfare" by Svea Braeunert, a DAAD Visiting Associate Professor in German Studies at the University of Cincinnati. Another significant contribution is the essay titled "Questioning Soft Power: An Empirical Approach of the Reception of Turkish Soap-Operas by Greeks" by Dimitra Laurence Larochelle, from New Sorbonne University, Paris, France. Hence, a substantive essay "The Role of Modernity, Media and Communication in the Critical and Transformative Potential of the Everyday Space" discuss the framed images in the daily practice of architecture related to cinematography. This essay was written by the renowned architect and professor Katarina Andjelkovic, from the University of Oklahoma, Chair of Creative Architecture, Institute of Form Theory and History and Institute of Urbanism and Landscape in Oslo and the University of Belgrade.

So, that is the character of cultural globalization that incites the hypothesis if there would be a dominant perception of "reappropriations" and significant mediations, considering that the image settings seek above all, the statute that could lead it to the universality of understanding amid particularities of cultural difference. Finally, our editions maintain a contemporary look at visual cultures and image configuration to reflect on the world of ideas, the arts, and communication.

Enjoy your reading!

Christiane Wagner
Editor in Chief



Mariana Telleria. Against the Interpretative Vice.

Florencia Battiti

Abstract

With her project *El nombre de un país* ("The Name of a Country"), artist Mariana Telleria was elected, via an open call process, to represent Argentina at the 58th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, accompanied by curator, art historian and educator Florencia Battiti. For the first time ever, the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Worship, through the Directorate of Cultural Affairs, effected a public and open call of distinct federal nature, receiving 68 proposals of Argentine artists from different parts of the Country. *El nombre de un país* abridges each and every sediment pertaining to Mariana Telleria's conceptual and operational world. Composed of seven monumental sculptures that act up as a punk, Frankenstein-esque bestiary, this project presents itself as a support for an intuitive transformation of things; as an archive of desacralized meanings where religious iconography, rubbish, fashion, spectacle and nature share the same horizontal hierarchy.

"With these sculptures I am interested in taking off from the form itself of every object that orbits around these big structures; what I'm trying to point out is that the only natural thing's actually the chaotic coexistence between living and inert objects, between culture and nature, between order and destruction. Each thing has its own soul, its formal imprint and its material history. There is tragedy in everything but in everything there is also life", says the artist. In words of the curator, "when Telleria's artworks set up a network between things and their imaginary worlds, she's actually proposing unforeseen connections between the multiple signifiers of our culture (the sacred, the domestic, the urban, the natural), lightning up, by friction or by mere contact, new gleams of meaning".

"No es cierto que la poesía responda a los enigmas. Nada responde a los enigmas. Pero formularlos desde el poema es develarlos, revelarlos. Sólo de esta manera el preguntar poético puede volverse respuesta, si nos arriesgamos a que la respuesta sea una pregunta."

Alejandra Pizarnik¹

In times such as these, times of deep ideological and symbolic misery, the question about the possibilities for the poetic to emerge is a crucial one. The exorbitant expansion of consumerist culture, the escalation of social control technologies, the environmental devastation, the resurgence of fascism reshaped and the regulations of social bonding (even at its most intimate levels) through market procedures, are generally considered by the vast majority of people as "collateral damage" coming from a socioeconomic system that's supposedly aimed towards the greater good. Could it really be, as Fredric Jameson once put it, easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism? The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 installed both a set of prophecies about the "end of history" and the generalized assumption that there was no alternative to Capitalism, even to the point that it has become inconceivable to think of any other economic and social system designed to regulate human life. Countless literary and cinematographic dystopias describe pessimistic and distressing scenarios, where ultra-authoritarianism and capital coexist without conflict, just as concentration camps and coffee chains can perfectly coexist². These contrasting, irreconcilable and contradictory (monstrous) coexistences fly over the conditions of production of contemporary artists and, in particular, over the work of Mariana Telleria. Not explicitly or literally (Mariana does not make "political art") but insufflating their pestilent reality, their inevitable occurrence over every decision that is made, over every action that is carried out in pursuit of a poetic project. And while it's true that art is embedded on very specific—and sometimes quite powerful—market conditions, it is not less true that it continues to be a practice that has a hard time conforming to the state of affairs, as it proposes itself as a desiring intensity capable of rejecting any systemic formulation that poses as a fact.

During the last few years, the very notion of contemporary art has been challenged and examined by those artists who are not willing to take it as a categorical concept. Nowadays it is not just about roaming around different disciplines and languages as some kind of nomad but to work hand in hand with very complex systems of production, expanding the limits of what we consider contemporary art and constantly widening its coordinates of action. Thus, each new project that an artist faces is a new system that begins to organize itself; and if some discipline works as a foundation for an artwork, it does so just to be destabilized, to be used as a counterexample, as a starting point for getting lost.

Possessor of a compelling intuition (intuition understood as a kind of intelligence above reason), Mariana Telleria confronts, from this perspective, the construction of her own poetic project. I like to think of her body of work as a poetic project (some of her pieces suggest the conceptual density and concentration that only belongs in poetry), designed to escape from prefabricated truths. It wouldn't be wise to undervalue the overwhelming weight of the status quo that taints even the artistic practice, but what becomes evident when looking back to the path that Telleria has travelled is her firm disposition to shake off the ought self of contemporary art, as a wet dog shakes off the water from its fur.

When reviewing her last ten years of activity certain outstanding features arise, such as her remarkable sculptural-installational versatility, a peculiar attention to the more sensorial qualities of shape and a carefree, oscillating movement between the sketchy objectuality and the pristine manufacture. There's a will to be found on her works, a will to decompose the commonplace, to remove one's view far away from the functionality of objects and to extract the secrets from these very same objects, to make them speak an alien language. And of course, when utility becomes alien, signification turns alien as well, taking down the pre-established order and exposing the poetic (and the political) behind these artworks. How to unsee the shimmering poetic-political spark coming out from a king size bed that under the influence of a "Telleria Operation" becomes a war machine?



Figure 1: Morir no es posible [Dying is not Possible], 2013.
Fragmented Bed 125 x 210 x 170 cm
Premio Braque, Muntref, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

If inside every object resides, encrypted, its own subversive value, or to put it another way, if on each and every thing the latency of another identity is enclosed (“Every form retains life” according to Gaston Bachelard), then this faculty exponentially increases when objects are exposed to other objects. When Telleria’s installations set up a network between things and their imaginary worlds, she’s actually proposing unforeseen connections between the multiple signifiers of our culture (the sacred, the domestic, the urban, the natural), lightning up, by friction or by mere contact, new gleams of meaning. Sometimes that gleam takes place on a programmatic way within the public and/or institutional space on which the project was originally inducted, as it happened with “Dios es inmigrante”³, a piece erected on the premises where the old Immigrant Hotel operated during the early 20th century in Buenos Aires, now turned into the Museo de la Inmigración y Centro de Arte Contemporáneo of the UNTREF, or when she controversially intervened the Museo Castagnino in Rosario. The latter was a particularly unerring action (“Las noches de los días”⁴, 2014) as it achieved, with a minimal amount of resources (covering in black painting the facade of the museum), a great extent of social and political reverberation. Indeed, as part of a collective show that took place within the IX Iberoamerican Urban Planning and Architecture Biennale, Telleria temporarily covered with black painting the facade of the Juan B. Castagnino Museum, in the city of Rosario, kindling a fierce controversy around the relationship between contemporary art and the institutions that house it. As Alejo Ponce de León points out, “what Las noches de los días managed to achieve, besides revealing what was already there, was to establish—through violent disruption—the existence of “the public” as a force that actively builds up the social. When she paints the Museum black, what appears before our eyes, besides the Museum itself, is the public thing in all its contradictory complexity (...)”⁵.



Figures 2 and 3: Las noches de los días [The Night of all Days], 2014.
Intervention on the facade of the Museo Juan B. Castagnino, Rosario, Argentina.

Through her reinvention of the everyday matter, Mariana manages to pronounce a phrase of her own but lifting off from a given language; and with each new project she faces, she builds a system of signifiers, as if she felt the urge to bestow these projects with a unique way of being seen and approached to. To this end she draws upon the tension that blooms between the opacity of meaning comprised in her formal operations and the narrative inclination of the titles she chooses for her pieces. In fact, Mariana pays special attention to the conceptual complementarity between the constructive materiality of her artworks and the linguistic key that she puts into play when naming them. Thus, the titles serve as infinite lanes of meaning through which the spectator is invited to travel, with the hope that she or he does not choose any of them in particular, discarding the need to embrace a decisive meaning:

“I wish mankind would surrender before the mystery of the shapes without having to learn a thing,” writes down Mariana in her notes, “but that’s impossible: we opt for a stubborn resistance against incomprehension. Actually, incomprehension is a misunderstood treasure. I’ve always been very fond of not knowing, not understanding. I don’t try to solve every mystery. This position of not wanting to know that much is what liberates me and drives me when doing something. It’s almost as if through that attitude I could go unpunished when doing something. It is an ideological position. The original sin is wanting to understand everything”.⁶

So, what to do against the interpretative vice? In both art and life the pursuit of meaning stands as an imperative, and even this very text is expected to cast a light of some kind over the actual meaning of the work at issue. Some of Mariana's observations generate a suggestive feedback with the ideas of Susan Sontag, the radical American cultural critic for whom interpretation is the revenge of the intellect against art. Sontag said that the obligation for critics should be to show "how it is what it is, even that it is what it is", instead of pretending to reveal its "meaning", since a work of art is not just about something, it is something, it is a thing in the world and not just a comment or a text about the world.⁷ In this very same sense, Mariana's poetic display firmly defends its own will and its resistance against meaning, with this paradoxical premise being the undeniable core of her art. How to otherwise make use of the rigorous operations of Neo-Conceptualism while infusing them with the disturbing and disconcerting mystery of Surrealism?

Ten years ago, when writing about Telleria's first solo show in Buenos Aires, Claudio Iglesias isolated a few tactics that the "conceptualismo sensible"⁸ was starting to use to overhaul itself, mainly its newly found approach to emotion as a force that didn't necessarily implied self-absorption or self-referentiality, making it easier for Neo-Conceptualism to free itself in order to tackle the pressing problems of contemporaneity⁹. "El nombre de un país"¹⁰ was the title Telleria chose to name that first exhibition at the Alberto Sendrós gallery and it echoes today, unharmed, on the Argentine Pavilion at the 58th Venice Biennale. A suggestive title indeed, as it's usually the case with the way in which she brands her artworks; a title that names but does not define and that (following the trend set up by the objects on her operative world) manages to cause new fluctuations within its new context. From where is it that the name of a country is declared?

Undoubtedly not from a purported national representation or identity but rather from the richness of a formal and conceptual ambiguity which invites us to imagine multiple conditions of possibility. "The name of a country is any country, every one of them, even those that do not exist or belong to the realm of fantasy or are products of literary, mythical processes," notes Mariana. "That is why I am interested in the condition of possibility that arises from the title, there are horrible countries and this is a horrible world, but there's also a potential to do something else, to live in other ways, to organize the bodies under other territories in other ways."¹¹ Who can genuinely think that an artist, through an art project, can represent a country? And, in addition, name that very same country... In the face of such incongruity Mariana resorts to her own archive, to the genealogy of her own exhibitions, and chooses a title that bounces insolently against the implausible.



Figure 4: El nombre de un país [The Name of a Country], 2009.
Exhibition view Galería Alberto Sendrós, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

But perhaps on this occasion more than on any other, Telleria decides to revisit her own repertoire of work looking up to propose a comprehensive account of her investigations: "It's not that the unexpected arrives from the outside world, information doesn't get me off guard coming from another place: I find it within my own research and on the memories that my practice gradually produces. Those things ground somewhere, like a sediment".¹² As if using a great sieve, she gathers the main formal and conceptual operations found on her own personal artistic history and keeps just the most effective (and affective) to build her creatures. As usual with the installational practice, the organization of space becomes decisive: when lining up seven sculptural volumes longitudinally through the rectangular arena of the pavilion, she lays out her bestiary as if it were a parade, a cortege or a fashion show ("with an haute couture attitude", she says), and designs for each creature a particular attire that transfixes into a dystopian landscape of our culture. The flesh and brawn of these beasts is made up from tree trunks, scrapped auto parts, weaves of both synthetic and natural fibre, wooden bed headboards, wheels and tires, thorns, medals, cross-shaped frames... An inventory full of nods and references to her previous work but that, in this case, reflects noticeable references to the world of fashion. Signifiers from a society in which the heightened imperative of consumption no longer needs to be coercive because it's now a matter of individual conviction.



Figures 5 and 6: El nombre de un país [The Name of a Country], 2019.
Exhibition view of the Pavilion of Argentina
58th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia



Figure 7: El nombre de un país [The Name of a Country], 2019.
Exhibition view of the Pavilion of Argentina
58th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia



Figure 8: El nombre de un país [The Name of a Country], 2019.
Exhibition view Pavilion of Argentina
58th International Art Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia

The linear arrangement of the pieces serves as an alibi to reiterate and emphasize in space, but also in time, certain gestures, certain formal operations, certain decisions (such as covering with mirrors the columns and one of the walls of the pavilion), just as a couture designer would do when devising the presentation of a new collection. Thus, all her creatures look different but bear similarities to each other; each and every one is the demonstration that for Mariana there's not a single, fixed way to combine shapes, materials and spaces, but nevertheless all of the sculptures belong to the same system. A system in which each formal and / or conceptual decision necessarily implies a series of consequences.

And as "only darkness produces monsters",¹³ the general lighting of the installation is low and does not come from artefacts that are external to the sculptures but from the sculptures themselves. The baroque theatricality that Telleria's installation transpires is opposed by the vertex to the instagrammable speed of contemporary reality. Anyone who cruises through the Argentine pavilion should not only wait a few minutes for their pupils to expand and adjust to the suggestive penumbra in order to be able to see, layer after layer, through opacity, but also will have to slow down their internal speed and their eagerness for biennialist consumption to find the right spot for observation. This is what the system of significance that Telleria designed for this project calls for, as opposed to the quick selfie and the aesthetic experiences that can be googled.

"Through these sculptures I am interested in working on the basis of each object and pointing out that the only natural thing is actually the chaotic coexistence between the living and the inert, between culture and nature, between order and destruction. Everything has its soul, its formal imprint and its material history. There is tragedy in everything but in everything there is also some trace of life".¹⁴

Her crowd of modern Prometheus-like characters (or should we say her crowd of "contemporary Prometheus") cipher our cornered desires in the face of the vicious demand for optimization, success, beauty and efficiency that hangs over us, reaching even the most intimate aspects of our lives. These monsters doesn't look into the future but from a stalking future, as if they existed on a time loop.

Author Biography

Florencia Battiti is born in Buenos Aires on August 18, 1965. She is a curator, art critic and professor of contemporary Argentine and Latin American art. Since 2000 she serves as Chief Curator of the Parque de la Memoria, where she is responsible for the Public Art Program and the curation of the exhibition hall in which, for the first time in Argentina, shows by Bill Viola, Alfredo Jaar and Anish Kapoor took place. She is a professor on the MA in Curatorial Practices at Tres de Febrero University (UNTREF) and on the Art Department at the Torcuato Di Tella University (UTDT). Her field of study focuses on Argentine and Latin American art of the 20th and 21st centuries with a particular emphasis on the articulations between artistic practices, political practices, memories and human rights. In 2016 she won the Radio France Internationale & Radio Cultura Prize for the Promotion of the Arts in the Public Management/Institutions category for her Curatorial Program of the Parque de la Memoria. She is currently Vice President of the Argentine and International Association of Art Critics (AACCA) and a member of the curatorial committee of the BIENALSUR, International Contemporary Art Biennial of Latin America, promoted by the Tres de Febrero University. She works and lives in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Notes

1. "It is not true that poetry acts as an answer to a certain enigma. There is no answer for enigmas. But to devise them through poetry is to reveal them, to unveil them. Only then the poetical question becomes an answer: when we risk ourselves to consider the answer being in fact a question." Alejandra Pizarnik (1936-1972) was an Argentine poet who ventured into visual arts driven by the surrealist artist Juan Batlle Planas. Among her most preeminent works are *La tierra más ajena* (1955), *Árbol de Diana* (1962) and *Extracción de la piedra de locura* (1968).
2. The image belongs to Mark Fisher. See *Realismo Capitalista ¿No hay alternativa?* (Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?), Buenos Aires, Caja Negra Editora, 2016.
3. God is an Immigrant.
4. The Nights of All Days.
5. Alejo Ponce de León, "A History of Miracles" in *Cosas y El mundo no existe*. Mariana Telleria. *Trabajos [Works] 2003-2018*, Buenos Aires, 2019.
6. Mariana Telleria, Notes, e-mail sent to the author on January 20, 2019.
7. Susan Sontag, *Contra la interpretación* (Against Interpretation and other essays), Madrid, Alfaguara, 1996.
8. Translator's Note: The conceptualismo sensible or Sensitive Conceptualism is a branch of Conceptual Art that flowered in Latin America all through the 90s. It applies a range of typical conceptual mechanisms to process the "intimate and subjective experience of the artist". Its usual topics include love, music, death and loneliness. Jorge Macchi and Gabriel Orozco are preeminent examples of this tendency.
9. Claudio Iglesias, "Un país posible", Buenos Aires, *Página/12*, August 2, 2009. Reprinted in *Cosas y El mundo no existe*. Mariana Telleria. *Trabajos [Works] 2003-2018*, Buenos Aires, 2019.
10. The Name of a Country.
11. Mariana Telleria, Notes, e-mail sent to the author on January 20, 2019.
12. Mariana Telleria. www.ruthbenzacar.com/artistas/mariana-telleria. Retrieved 01/26/2019.
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Towards a Theory of the Aesthetic Situation¹

Hans Dieter Huber

Abstract

Normally, the work of art or the observer stands in the foreground of an aesthetic theory. Here, however, it is the concept of the situation. The concept of the viewer is replaced by the concept of the actor to indicate that perception is not only an activity but also an action. It is an aesthetic perceptual action. Institutions are introduced as norms that restrict and guide action and that additionally frame the situation in which objects and actors operate. A situation is understood as an assembly of actors, objects and institutions that can be distinguished spatially, temporally and socially. Situations become aesthetic situations when they are observed, designated and judged under an aesthetic attitude. The text defines what is understood by an object, an actor, an institution or an attitude. Situations contain external conditions such as scarcities, opportunities and institutional norms as well as internal, actor-based conditions such as the definition and the framing of the situation. Both fields decide how a situation is perceived, how it is evaluated and acted upon. Through regular and repeated aesthetic experiences, aesthetic habits and lifestyles are formed that increasingly determine an actor's aesthetic perceptual action. If, however, the encounter with current, contemporary art is classified as new, unfamiliar or alien, this leads to an irritation of the actor's habits. In this case, his aesthetic expectations and routines no longer serve him for an adequate understanding of the new. He must abandon his habitual aesthetic judgements and obtain new information through conscious, reflexive thinking, consider possible alternatives for action and decide on a new, aesthetic perceptual action. At this moment the actors become creative. They act in a creative way that is unpredictable in terms of their habits. It is concluded that the creative action of actors and institutions in the face of irritating or problematic situations is the prerequisite for the evolution of art.

Introduction

In most traditional aesthetics, the work of art and its interpretation are at the foreground of interest. They deal about natural beauty, artistic beauty, aesthetic experience or the question of the sublime. However, attention is rarely paid to the fact that the aesthetic experience of a work of art takes place in a specific environment, field, context or system. The concept of the aesthetic situation is proposed here for this embedding.

Aesthetic Situations

A situation is a spatial, temporary and social assembly of objects, actors and institutions. An aesthetic situation is a situation in which the actors and institutions perceive, describe, judge and act within the situation (or certain aspects of it) with an aesthetic attitude. The definition and framing of an aesthetic situation by actors form the basis for their aesthetic decisions and aesthetic actions. The participants in an aesthetic situation act on the basis of their definition of the situation and then decide how they act in the aesthetic situation.

Objects and actors are always in a situation. As soon as a situation ends, a new one begins, which in turn is replaced by a third situation. Throughout our lives we act in different, successive situations. Due to the spatial-temporal co-presence of objects and actors in a situation, it is inconceivable that we find ourselves in two different situations at the same time.

Aesthetic situations can be distinguished in spatial, temporal and social terms. These are conceptual-analytical distinctions that allow us to concentrate on a particular aspect of a situation.

Among the objects that can appear in an aesthetic situation, there is an infinite number of possibilities. What is distinguished as one object and what is distinguished as two different objects are always the result of observation, differentiation and designation by one actor. This results in the description of the concrete structure of an aesthetic situation.

Aesthetic situations have a beginning and an end. They begin and end in spatial, as well as temporal and social terms. They therefore have a boundary. The boundaries of an aesthetic situation arise by defining the situation. They are not identical for all actors. Take a theatre performance as an example. It begins much earlier for a stage technician than for an actor, the soufflé or the audience. The beginning and end of an aesthetic situation depend on the respective definition of the situation by a certain actor.

Objects

One can understand things as units, which are created by the distinctions of an actor. In their practice, actors produce these units through the operation of distinction and designation. Simultaneously with the creation of an object as a closed and delimited unit, the medium, milieu or situation in which an object exists is also created. What appears as a closed object unit and what is perceived as its aesthetic situation is solely dependent on the chosen distinction of an actor. If the actor is interested in the internal composition of an object, this unity can be described as a complex system of components and relations. If, on the other hand, the actor is interested in the interactions of the unity with other units, he can apprehend them as a closed black box whose internal composition is not interested. Whether it is a simple or a composite unit depends on the interest on which the distinctions of an actor are based.

For some years now, there has been a debate in some humanities disciplines under the heading "agency of things" as to whether objects can play an active role. Depending on the nature of the objects, they can exert a different kind of effect on the actors, the institutions and the situation in which they are assembled. Not only humans, but also animals, objects, concepts or institutions can be active actors in a situation. Things can empower, enable, offer, encourage, allow, suggest, influence, prevent, authorise or exclude.

However, most of the objects we encounter as actors in aesthetic situations are not art, but everyday objects. These include, for example, chairs, benches, lamps, doors, windows, ceilings, lighting, partitions and air conditioning. Usually, aesthetic perception focuses on the works of art and ignores the presence of objects that are not art. Nevertheless, everyday objects in an aesthetic situation influence perception, feeling and aesthetic judgment.

Actors

Actors in an aesthetic situation can be distinguished from each other in many ways. They can be distinguished in terms of age, gender, level of education, occupation, place of residence, social class or social milieu. They can also be distinguished by the social role they play in the system. A gross differentiation of actors in the art system into typical social groups can be made by distinguishing between artists, critics, curators, gallery owners, registrars, conservators, art historians, shippers, photographers, housekeepers, custodians, etc. In these differentiations, it becomes clear that a second-order scientific observer makes distinctions based on his scientific interest in the aesthetic situation he observes. The distinctions made lead to a contingent structuring of the aesthetic situation. The temporary assembly of objects, actors and institutions in an aesthetic situation can be of infinite complexity due to the quantitatively possible relations. It can only be selectively observed and described by an external observer

Institutions

Institutions are long-lasting social structures that fulfil two different functions in society. On the one hand, they limit the arbitrariness and arbitrariness of social action in aesthetic situations. On the other hand, through their normative authority for all members, they secure the reproduction of society and ensure its long-term renewal. Institutions reduce the social complexity of situations and create trust. The normative obligation of institutions can also crystallize in laws, regulations, rules or statutes. Institutionalized norms, which limit the behavior of actors, can be set permanently in the form of organizations that have a statute and act according to their own rules. Such institutionalized organizations of the art system are, for example, museums, art associations, galleries, but also off spaces, professional associations, trade unions or cooperatives.

The Definition of the Situation

The definition of a situation is a subjective interpretation, evaluation or assessment of the situation that depends on the attitudes, expectations, values and knowledge of the respective actor. Situation definitions are always relative to the actors who make the definition. They can differ radically from actor to actor. Think of the assessment of a dangerous situation. An anxious actor may quickly come to a definition that the situation he is approaching is dangerous, while his companion may think that it is completely harmless. One and the same situation can be defined by one actor as restrictive, by the other as liberating, by the one as pleasant, by the other as unpleasant, self-evident or problematic. With their definition of the situation, the actors adjust to the aesthetic situation in which they find themselves. They adopt a certain attitude or position towards it. If the situation is an aesthetic situation, they can also adopt an aesthetic attitude and differ in their attitude from that of their neighbour.

Framing the Situation

In addition to the internal conditions of an aesthetic situation such as attitudes, values or beliefs, there are also external conditions whose resources are not under the control of the actor, such as scarcities, opportunities or institutional rules. The framing of an aesthetic situation is carried out with the help of a mental model, a prototype, a schema or an image, which functions as a basis for the decision for a certain aesthetic action. Framing the situation simplifies its perception by typifying, standardizing and generalizing it. By the process of framing, a certain actor assigns the aesthetic situation in which he finds himself to a more general type of aesthetic situation.

Because of this typification, he knows what can and can not be considered as a typical or appropriate response in such a situation. The framing of a situation thus defines the scope for decision that an actor believes to have in an aesthetic situation. The internal conditions such as attitudes, expectations, beliefs or stereotypes as well as the external conditions in form of scarcities, opportunities or institutional constraints must be balanced when framing a situation. While the definition of the situation leads to a selective perception of the objects, actors and institutions present in it, the framing of the situation leads to a typifying and schematizing simplification. Both operations reduce the complexity of the actual aesthetic situation.

Attitudes

What makes a situation an aesthetic situation? It depends on the specific attitude of an actor or institution in a situation. Situations are defined and framed in everyday life with a non-aesthetic, everyday or practical attitude. But if one takes an aesthetic attitude, then this means that one perceives, differentiates and judges the objects, actors and institutions present in this situation exactly with this aesthetic attitude. You then perceive the whole situation aesthetically. It becomes an aesthetic situation.

Originally, attitudes were conceived as learned cognitions that suggested a constant, enduring way of reacting and behaving. In addition, it was pointed out that attitudes were affects or emotional attitudes towards an intentional object. However, settings also have a behavioral motivating and triggering effect. An attitude is defined as an enduring organization of perceptual, motivational, and emotional assimilation processes that are oriented towards particular objects. Attitudes cause that only certain things are perceived in an aesthetic situation and that these are selectively perceived and interpreted. They are not necessarily conscious, but have become automated and independent as long-term modes of reaction. Attitudes are mechanisms of selection from the manifold stimuli offered by an aesthetic situation, through which those aesthetic experiences are selected and interpreted that are of interest to a particular actor. The actor's aesthetic attitude to a certain aesthetic situation thus influences the aesthetic judgment he makes about the assembly of things, actors or institutions and which determines his further acting in this aesthetic situation. The definition of the situation is made on the basis of a certain attitude, which provides the framework for the interpretation of the situation and the basis for the decision of the planned action.

Aesthetic Attitudes

The word aesthetic specifies the type of attitude and defines the way in which a situation is observed, interpreted and evaluated. The term derives from the Greek *aisthesis*. Since Plato, the term has generally been used in ancient Greek to refer to sensual perception. *Aisthesis* itself is an own form of sensual knowledge. It arises through the perceptual activity of an actor. An aesthetic attitude is therefore an attitude in which an actor perceives, interprets and evaluates the situation, or parts of it, in an aesthetic way. The aesthetic attitude can be distinguished from the everyday attitude in which we encounter the manifold situations of our *Lebenswelt* and derive our usual benefit from them. When I go to the market, for example, I observe whether plums are cheaper at one market stall than at another. But it's not about which plums have the most beautiful blue tones or which taste the sweetest. Such judgments point to an aesthetic attitude in which plums are perceived and judged sensually. The aesthetic attitude is a special kind of selective attention that is focused primarily on the shape, proportions, size, colour, sound, smell, taste, softness or hardness of an object, i.e. the sensual properties of an object, and judges these properties by means of an aesthetic attitude. The aesthetic judgement then leads to a corresponding aesthetic decision and a subsequent aesthetic action by the actor.

Situated Interaction

In what kind of relation to each other are objects, actors and institutions standing in an aesthetic situation? Since aesthetic situations are determined spatially as well as temporally and socially, there is no static concept possible that only captures the spatial relationship, just as there is no concept possible that can only describe the temporal or social relationships. Since in a situation all objects and actors are gathered at the same time in the same place, one can speak of a situated interaction system in which objects, actors and institutions interact with each other. But who interacts with whom, where, when, for how long and in what way, is always the result of selective observation and description by a second-order scientific observer. In contrast to communication, interaction is a system of spatial, temporal and social co-presence.

The concept of situated interaction means that the relationships between objects and actors must be described as an active, reciprocal process. Interaction is always active, mutual and copresent. It always takes place in the present. A situated interaction system is a system that consists of units that are all at the same place at the same time and can potentially interact with each other. The decisive criterion, whether a system is a situated interaction system or not, lies in the common, spatiotemporal co-presence of the assembled units.

Of course, a situated interaction system can also be extended by a communication system by forming information into a medium, which can then be received with a time delay. Media communication systems expand the spatial, temporal and social horizon of the interaction systems fixed to the present by adding a memorable past and an anticipated future.

Aesthetic Expectations

The repetition of similar or identical aesthetic experiences gradually leads to a growing aesthetic experience in dealing with aesthetic situations and in the long run to the formation of aesthetic habits and expectations. Experienced actors usually act in familiar, aesthetic situations in a routine and habitual manner. Routinized, aesthetic action usually leads to a confirmation of the attitudes, values and beliefs of the actor.

Actors operate in aesthetic situations with expectations that they have developed from their past definitions of situations. Aesthetic expectations arise from the recognition of known aesthetic situations. They are based on past experiences in comparable situations. Expectations reduce the complexity of a social situation. Expectations of expectations create trust and reciprocal attitudes towards a shared aesthetic situation. Expectations relieve the complexity of an aesthetic situation by typifying and schematizing the definition of the situation, i.e. selectively simplifying it. Expectations can be confirmed, exceeded or disappointed in the course of an aesthetic situation. If they are confirmed or even exceeded, the experience of confirmation contributes to a further stabilization and consolidation of aesthetic attitudes and routines.

However, an aesthetic situation develops quite differently when expectations are disappointed, the viewer is irritated and comes to the conclusion that the present aesthetic situation is no longer self-evident but problematic. In this case, there are two possibilities.

The disappointment can be externalized or internalized. If one ascribes the cause of aesthetic disappointment to the aesthetic situation, one signals that one still considers one's own aesthetic expectations to be adequate. In this case, the art should change in the direction of one's own aesthetic expectations, which are perceived as correct and appropriate to the aesthetic situation. One could describe this behavior as a kind of perceptual defense against change.

In the other case, when disappointed aesthetic expectations are internalized and the irritation is attributed to oneself and to exaggerated or false aesthetic expectations, there is a chance to learn something. In this case, the aesthetic routines with which an actor usually acts are temporarily suspended, self-critically examined and transformed into new aesthetic perceptual action through reflexive thinking and further search for information.

Creative Action

How do actors behave in the face of aesthetic irritations caused by the art system? The answer is that they become creative. In problematic aesthetic situations, in which aesthetic routines no longer function or eventually lead to false aesthetic judgements, conscious, reflexive thinking begins, in which further information is sought, different alternatives for action are evaluated with regard to their possible benefits and the consequences of new, creative action are anticipated. Through creative action, irritated actors decide in favour of a new perceptual action that ensures them the greatest possible benefit or usefulness of their action. Whether a new, creative and aesthetic action is successful or fails can be seen in the follow-up reactions and actions of the system. In a successful creative action, the new aesthetic perceptual action can lead to a new aesthetic routine, a new aesthetic taste with changed aesthetic preferences and differences.

Conclusion

The Evolution of Art Through Creative Action

Creative aesthetic action becomes gradually institutionalized and thus normative for certain types of aesthetic situations. In the long term, creative aesthetic action functions as a successful confirmation of the adaptation of aesthetic expectations to a problematic aesthetic situation. It thus serves to strengthen an actor's identity and self-perception. In the long run, the permanent creative renewal of aesthetic routines leads to a change and development of art itself. The permanent creativity of aesthetic action functions as a necessary prerequisite for the evolution of the system. By increasing the range of variations of aesthetic action in problematic aesthetic situations and a subsequent positive adoption of the successful variants, the art system restabilizes itself to a new, emergent level. Art, its audience and institutions have developed into the future.

Author Biography

Hans Dieter Huber, born 1953, lives in Stuttgart. 1973-77 studied painting and graphic arts at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich, 1977-1986 studied art history, philosophy and psychology in Heidelberg. 1986 Doctorate with the work ‚System and Effect. Interpretation and meaning of contemporary art‘ (Munich 1989). 1994 habilitation with the work ‚Paolo Veronese. Art as a social system‘. From October 1997 to September 1999 Professor of Art History at the Academy of Visual Arts, Leipzig; since October 1999 Professor of Contemporary Art History, Aesthetics and Art Theory at the State Academy of Fine Arts Stuttgart. From May 2006 to October 2011 he was head of the International Master Program "Conservation of New Media and Digital Information" at the State Academy of Fine Arts Stuttgart. From March to June 2007 he was Senior Fellow at the International Research Center for Cultural Studies in Vienna. From December 2006 to November 2009 he was Associate Professor at the Research Training Group Image, Body, Medium at the HfG Karlsruhe. Since October 2007 member of the International Council of Museums (ICOM). Since March 2009 member of the Scientific Board of the Society for Interdisciplinary Image Science. Since May 2013 member of the Scientific Advisory Board of the International Institute for Subjective Experience and Research (ISER) at the MSH Medical School Hamburg. Since December 2016 Deputy Chairman of the Württembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart. Since June 2017 Member of the Board of Trustees of the Adolf Hölzel Foundation, Stuttgart.

Note 1: This text is a sum of the aesthetic theory which I am currently developing on a larger scale and which will soon be published as a book.



The Hyperaesthetics of Technology

Lars Christian Grabbe

Abstract

Analog and digital technologies are an immanent part of postmodern lifeworld's around the globe, and they are a fundament or – in some cases – driving force for mass media, telecommunication, art, and design. This omnipresence and ordinariness of technology make it very difficult to take sides: the defender determines a specific value of technology for creative processes and the opponent proclaims a general worthlessness of technology for artistic creation. This essay focusses not on different judgements, but it will analyze some important aspects of the structural dynamic of technology in the context of a creative mediatization. This means, that a work of art, a design concept or a communication medium has to be understood as a specific aesthetic artefact that enables a perceptual relation or interaction of a technological repertoire, a specific mode of representation and a sensory awareness of the recipient.

This interconnection can be understood within a phenosemiotic sign relation that allows an analytical structuring of aesthetic processes as embodied and perceptual processes. This phenosemiotic analysis gives insights in the specific interconnectedness of technological processes, sensory and perceptual dynamics and the construction of meaning in a cognitive perspective that is always embedded in the bodily processes of reception. Additionally, the phenosemiotic framework is also able to give insights into a possible redefinition or enhancement of the concept of aesthetics in general, which is highly correlated with the sensory processes of the recipient: This means, that postmodern artefacts of mediatization are more and more pushing the boundaries of perception and are simultaneously expanding the structural horizon of a classical aesthetics toward a technological-driven hyperaesthetics.

Prototype Aesthetics

To argue for the concept of a prototype aesthetics we have to consider some analytical implications that are reaching back to the so-called Stuttgart School of Semiotics in Germany and its research in the range of semiotics, information theory and cybernetics. In this perspective every aesthetics or aesthetic field has something to do with creative processes, decisions about materiality, functionality, object perception and action (cf. Bense 1971). That means, no matter if you focus on art, design or mass media, every creative practice can be described as a sign producing principle.

The goal of this sign process is a specific aesthetic perception that is triggered by the artefact and consolidates a relation of sign creation, sign manifestation and sign use (cf. Walther 1979). In this perspective, every form of aesthetics or prototype aesthetics has to deal necessarily with the specific creation of a sign in interdependency with the communication effects to make statements about the aesthetic experience: a prototype aesthetics should be able to characterize the relation of the sensation that is triggered by the material organization of an artefact and the perception of form that gives the aesthetic structure. This analytical horizon has a lot of benefits because it transforms aesthetics into a precise methodology that focusses on the specific repertoire of an artefact, describes the media materiality and highlights the perceptual and semiotic dynamics. So, prototype aesthetics is connected with a media aesthetics and the difference of an artwork or design artefact is not established by an innovative singularity but more through a functional embedding in a media ecological context. Therefore, the prototype is in itself an aesthetic object that enables an aesthetic experience through an artefact-driven perception based on functionality. Max Bense, the founding father of the semiotic inspired Stuttgart School, has argued that a design object has a lot to do with the concept of a sign: It is determined by the technologic materiality, the object form and functionality (cf. Bense 1971).

The prototype is a design object that offers a specific aesthetic logic of perception, which is not equate to a naïve aesthetics of pure pleasure. In fact, the aesthetic experience is grounded in a perceptual process that is structured by the deployed means – that is the selection decision of the designer. In this perspective, a prototype aesthetics (like every perceptual and phenosemiotic-driven aesthetics) is a dualistic construct that categorizes the intra-medial and extra-medial dynamic

of an object (cf. Bense 1965). The intra-medial categorization is a micro-aesthetic perspective, in which the structural levels of a design decision and selection can be analyzed and transferred to the object functionality. The extra-medial categorization is a macro-aesthetic perspective, in which the perceptual conditions of artefact perception (sensory and perceptual relation, poly-sensuality, multimodality, cross-modality etc.) can be analyzed and transferred to evaluation criteria and aesthetic judgements of the recipient (understanding style, form, context, content, figure, ground, historical developments, meaning, expression).

If we compare the micro- and macro-aesthetic features of modern media, we can clearly indicate a broad range of technological decisions based on the digital conditions of software and hardware culture. This indicates an additional shift within the aesthetic tradition, because it is not necessarily a brilliant artist, the myth of a muse or a contemplative inspiration that are consolidating the fundament of an artefact, but more the complex range of material decisions embedded within the artefact. So, the question is, how can we describe the more and more complex material decisions and effects within the micro-aesthetic perspective? Let us search for an answer within the perceptual reality of the recipient.

Body and Code

The human body is the first interface. But why? There is no uniform tradition of perceptual theories but more a great number of frameworks and different approaches in academia. The phenosemiotic approach is an aesthetic approach to analyze sensory and perceptual processes and it integrates philosophical, phenomenological and semiotic perspectives and findings of neuroaesthetics and perceptual psychology. In short: Every aesthetic experience is a sensory relation of a human body and an artefact. The human body itself is an interdependent perceptual system that integrates a relation of sensory and perceptual modalities.

The sensory system is the first interface structure and it transfers energy patterns, which were created by sensory receptors, into sensory codes for a further decoding by the perceptual system. So, the sensory system organizes a kind of bodily pre-processing of these sensory codes whereby the perceptual system activates mental concepts and generates an output that merges into higher order cognitive processing (cf. Mausfeld 2010). If we use this perceptual approach for the analysis, we can understand sensory inputs as a kind of trigger mechanism for mental conceptualization processes. Therefore, it is possible to clarify the conceptualization processing as an biological element of human nature and a necessary condition for consciousness and mental processes: "They form a texture of internal concepts which determine the 'internal semantics' of the system, i.e. the set of concepts that are important for internal processes, and therefore the vocabulary of the system in which the different subsystems communicate"¹ (Mausfeld 2010, 14).

These concepts integrate and stabilize a variety of human conditions, like bodily and mental orientation, social behaviour, and perception of emotional states of other people, food search, use of tools and tool creation, action, thinking, anticipation, memory, language and much more (cf. Mausfeld 2010). It is necessary to argue for the fact that the human body is the first interface in every sensory and perceptual condition. And therefore, in every aesthetic condition. This means, that a prototype aesthetics has to clarify first, how the artefact is triggering sensory codes based on the micro-aesthetic strategies or signals of the designer, and second, which concepts the sensory codes are triggering within the perceptual reality of the recipient. If we understand a prototype aesthetics this way, then it is a theory of the transfer of sensory and perceptual information: a tool for the classification of phenosemiotic sign relations.

With regard to the recent developments in computer and digital culture it is important to understand that the concept of aesthetics has necessarily to be extended. The reason for this assumption lies in the range of poly-sensual, multimodal or cross-modal effects of modern media technologies. Let us take three interesting examples for a further clarification:

1. HaptoMime (Tokyo University) is a technological media system based on an IR touch sensor with a screen-less frame, aerial imaging plate (AIP), liquid crystal display (LCD) and an ultrasonic phased array transducer. This technical ensemble generates an effective interaction with a floating image, which receives sensory evidence through an ultrasonic tactile feedback by deflecting acoustic radiation pressure. The result is the visual perceiving of a floating virtual screen (Figures 1 and 2) and depicted virtual objects, and the “ultrasonic phased array transducer delivers focused ultrasound onto the fingertip so that it encounters a mechanical force at a position and timing consistent with the floating image” (Yasuaki 2014, 664).

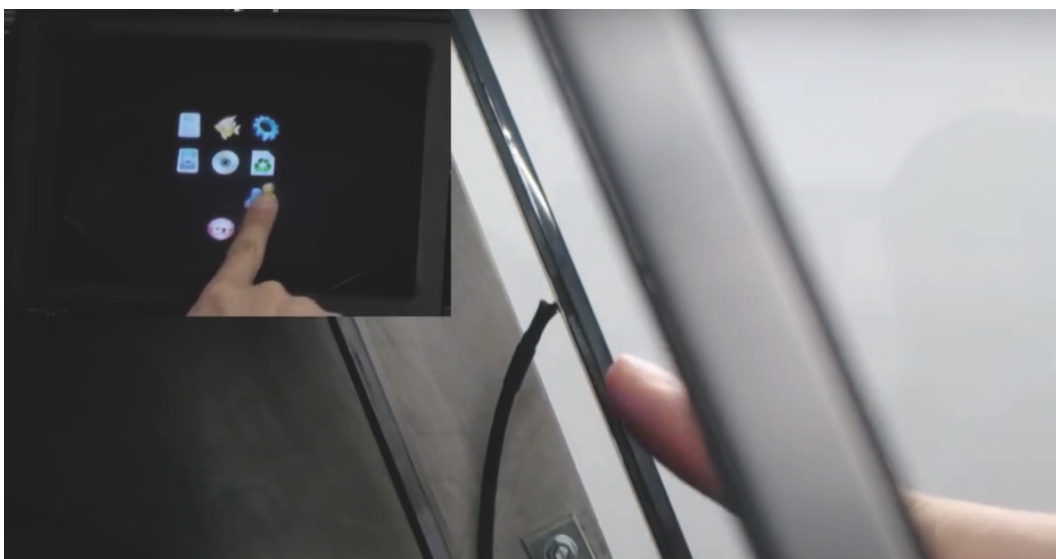


Figure 1: Haptomime. Screenshot from “HaptoMime (full version):
Mid-air haptic interaction with a floating virtual screen”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uARGRlpCWg8>

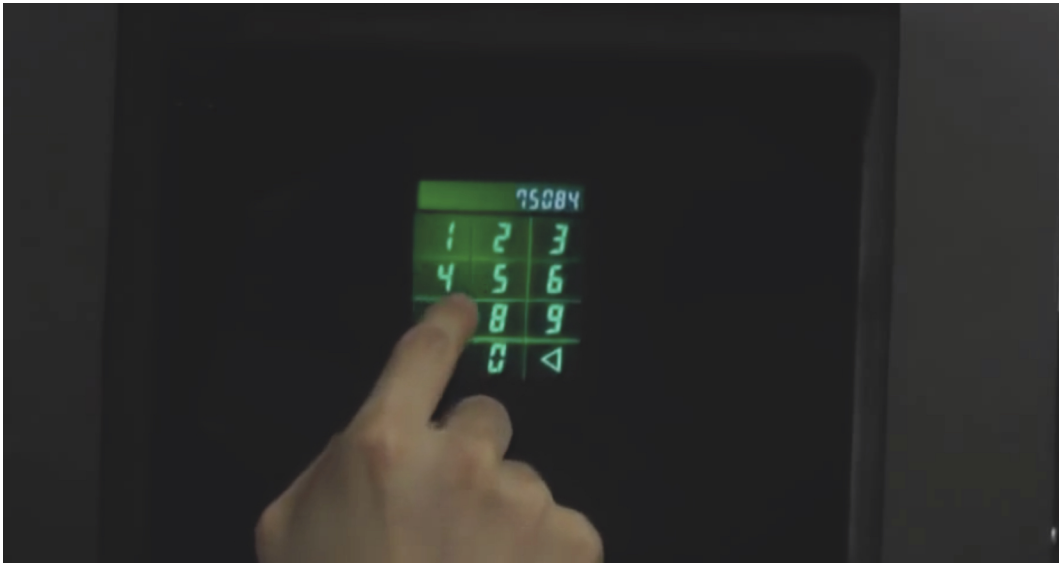


Figure 2: HaptoMime. Screenshot from “HaptoMime (full version):
Mid-air haptic interaction with a floating virtual screen”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uARGRIpCWg8>

2. The 3D tactile rendering (Disney Research) enables a complex addressing of the tactile sense modality through the use of a specific friction force based on a rendering algorithm for touch displays (Figure 3). Through the use of electro-vibrations, the user can feel three-dimensional objects that are depicted or represented on the flat display and these vibrations intensify the reception by a haptic feedback (a real difference compared to the static and anti-tactile representation of standard touch displays). What at first looks like a 2D display offers an enhanced phenosemiotic interaction: the tactile friction force interacts with the mechanoreceptors of the user’s skin and synthesizes this sensation with the sign structure of the depicted object (ridges, edges, pointed shapes etc.). The combination of the primary and secondary sense modalities within the micro-aesthetic dynamic (feeling and seeing) intensifies the aesthetic experience and triggers the mental conceptualization for the understanding of real objects.



Figure 3: 3D Tactile Rendering.
Screenshot from "Tactile Rendering of 3D Features on Touch Surfaces"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zo1n5CyCKr0>.

3. The MetaCookie+ (University of Tokyo) is a media system that primary enables a gustatory and olfactory perception. Additionally, a haptic experience is influencing the proprioceptive contact with a specific cookie by holding it in the hand. The micro- and macro-aesthetic structure of this system is able to change the perceived taste of a cookie "by overlaying visual and olfactory information onto a real cookie with a special AR marker pattern. MetaCookie+ combines AR technology and olfactory display technology" (Narumi et al. 2011, 95). The media system is based on a head mounted display, two cameras (for the detection of the cookie and the specific eating process), an olfactory display (air-pressure pumping system for the different scents) and a cookie that is tagged with a QR code by a food printer. If the recipient reaches the cookie the first camera captures it and within a specific distance between hand and mouth the second camera is involved to eliminate blind spots. The QR code triggers a specific glaze

or icing that gets applied on the cookies surface as a visual augmentation (Figure 4). Parallel to the augmentation the olfactory display sprays scented air in front of the recipients nose to enable an olfactory input synchronized with the type of the glaze applied to the cookie (e.g. chocolate scent in case of chocolate glaze). The closer the hand leads the cookie towards the recipient's mouth – as a moment of haptic perception – and during the process of eating the intensity of the scent gets increased to restructure the gustatory perception (Figure 5) by a multimodal structure of perception (cf. Narumi et al. 2011).



Figure 4: MetaCookie.

Screenshot from "Meta Cookie at Exploratorium After Dark"
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oe39HQH78x4>



Figure 5: MetaCookie. Meta Cookie at Exploratorium After Dark
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oe39HQH78x4>

These three examples are indicating a poly-sensual and multimodal structure within the micro-aesthetic selection process of the designer that directly interacts with the cross-modal effects within the macro-aesthetic evaluation: the micro-aesthetic signals of the materiality are leading directly towards an macro-aesthetic judgement of the recipient in feeling or perceiving the media effects as real and physical or tangible forms with a specific meaning.

The conditions of poly-sensuality or multimodality are definitely expanding the bodily and mental effects within the reception process. Therefore, it seems necessary to enhance the aesthetic concept for a modification of already established or old analytical tools. The phenosemiotic sign relation, which highlights the micro- and macro-aesthetic interdependency and addresses the sensory and perceptual transfer, directly contributes to a restructuring of aesthetics. In this perspective, it seems plausible to use the extended concept of hyperaesthetics that is logically connected with hyperesthesia, which was used by the anthropologist David Howes for highlighting the modern consumer culture as a lifeworld based on multisensory meaning processes with a focus on the hyperestheticization of the body (cf. Howes 2004).

Conclusion

Talking about prototype aesthetics is not a simple reference to wires, processors and transformers. Instead, a progressive prototype aesthetics is focusing on the hyperaesthetic reception dynamics in the context of modern media technologies and modern media materialities. The analytical perspective is explicitly connected to the phenosemiotic framework that characterizes the micro-aesthetic selections and its influence on the macro-aesthetic level of hyperaesthetic judgements and experiences. Accepting the hyperaesthetics of technology implies that future research has to consider a complex sphere of different phenomena: The medium is no longer in a specific distance to the recipient because it synchronizes more and more with the sensory and bodily reality of the recipient. This synchronization is sensorial, perceptual, embodied and also temporal and it requires new phenomenologic- and semiotic-driven approaches for the understanding of hyperaesthetic media systems. Also, we have to consider, that established and traditional media constellations and concepts are changing. If we can now for example touch, smell and taste the image representations we need new concepts. Is the image of a cactus still an image when I can directly perceive the sting?

If we use the concept hyperaesthetics, then we have to consider the specific structure of inter(re)activity (cf. Arsenault and Perron 2009: 120) of a medium because performance (action) and depiction (representation) are fully related to the perceptual reality effect of the recipient. We have to think of media content (like depicted images or sounds) as active excitation patterns within the sensory and perceptual transfer. And we need a progressive corporeal phenosemiotics that is able to deal with media content that get object-like attributes, a physical form, an appearance or body.

The hyperaesthetic perspective addresses new problems and possibilities in art-, design-, image- and media theory and requires the integration of the sensory and perceptual dynamics in the academic media discourse. If we understand media systems in this perspective as technological-driven excitation patterns, then, the classical or traditional view on images, visibility and perception has to change to deliver analytical tools and new concepts for coherent characterizations, analysis and descriptions. It seems to be evident that hyperaesthetics represents a technological border experience of the interdependent relation of structural media transformations, corporeality and processes of signification.

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Note

1. Original quote: „Sie bilden ein Gewebe interner Konzepte, die die ‘interne Semantik’ des Systems festlegen, d.h. die Menge an Konzepten, die für die internen Prozesse von Bedeutung sind, also das Vokabular, den Wortschatz des Systems, in dem die unterschiedlichen Teilsysteme miteinander kommunizieren“ (Mausfeld 2010, 14).

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Identity and Authenticity on Social Media: 'How to Take a Selfie' for Instagram with Artist Andy Kassier

Pamela C. Scorzin

Abstract

Selfies and posies dominate the social media platforms of the Internet as 'Social Photos.' They mean a new type of photography made ubiquitous by networked, digital sharing, that functions as a unit of social communication. Especially, Instagram imagery is social photography to the degree that its central use is more expressive than informational when the recording and documenting of reality is not its own end, but a means for communicating an idea or an experience. Since social media enables everyone to take, to publish and to distribute photographs and to receive instant feedback in the form of likes, hearts, shares, and comments as well as other kinds of visuals, a staging competition is underway today. The vast amounts of images of the self circulating on social media are not only a new visual language for current status reports and biographical storytelling but also always stand in competition with each other. Social photos are competitive images for the most effective resonances, which take their starting point in impressing, affirming, and emotionalizing. The social photo mainly functions as a strategic representation by creating effective new forms of staging.

The Berlin-based conceptual artist Andy Kassier examined them for an ongoing Instagram art project. With 'How to Take a Selfie,' he explores the pictorial world of the Instagram generation, focusing in particular on the self-portrayal and self-marketing of young men on the Internet. The desire for confirmation and recognition in social media has led to specific new role models for the Millennials and Centennials, which Andy Kassier recreates in front of the smartphone camera. In the act of performance and re-enactment, these become visible not only as image types and social categories but also lead to the question of what is real about this extensive staging culture on Instagram. The search for identity and the desire for singularity and authenticity are on the one hand a drive for the social photo, but on the other hand, there is always the suspicion that everything on Instagram is just a fake. For many today, however, the creative, self-fabricated in the image is the expression of an identity that no longer distinguishes between real and virtual, true and false. However, Andy Kassier's Instagram art project still struggles with the old question of what can be experienced as authentic in the digital representations of the Internet 2.0.

The Social Photo and the Selfie on Instagram

Today the generation of the Millennials is not only socialized with the Internet and its ubiquitous digital communication platforms but is also particularly fixated on identity and authenticity online and offline respectively. However, to be authentic only means to play another social role in life. While Erving Goffman already diagnosed for the post-war generation growing up with the mass medium of television that we all play theatre in everyday life¹, the perfect performance and creative staging of the self have long since become a creative imperative for the younger generation of the social media era. The current 'identity-performativity' of the Millennials still bases on the unquestioned general conviction that "Much of the cultural understanding and development of social media centres on creating and maintaining ourselves as fixed selves, as real-name profiles, as selves-as-brands."²

In times of fake news and deep-fake, however, the longing for radical authenticity seems abundantly romantic. Paired with an authentic appearance, the desire for singular individuality and personal perfection is omnipresent, even if this ends in fashionable conformity and optical uniformity. The much-ridiculed figure of the 'hipster' is a perfect example of this nowadays. Besides, the technologically networked generation of the globalized age has already developed its new role models. Social identity is constituted and communicated in and with images in a double sense. With the help of social photography, a new universal language has been created, as Nathan Jurgenson remarks: "The social photo is an especially prominent technological mediation of our lives, a powerful contemporary example of how reality is augmented—how connected digital cameras can articulate the self and sociality rather than inherently diminish or destroy them. To see through the logic of images, to consider how we speak with them and build the self through the audience they garner and the status they can afford is also to describe digital connection as something potentially intimate and as real as writing instead of as a venture into some virtual plane. Social photos epitomize the technological nature of conscious experience, of sight, speech, and human sociality; they exemplify the embodied and social nature of the machines that make them."³

Since social media⁴ enables everyone to take, to publish and to distribute photographs and to receive instant feedback in the form of likes, hearts, shares and comments as well as other forms of visuals (e.g., in the form of emojis, GIFs, or memes), a staging competition is underway today.

The vast amounts of images of the self circulating on social media are not only a new visual language for current status reports and biographical storytelling but also always in competition with each other. Social images are competitive images for the most effective resonances, which take their starting point in impressing, affirming, and emotionalizing. The social photo, to use Nathan Jurgenson's term⁵, serves not only communication rather than information but functions also as a strategic representation by creating effective new forms of staging. The success of selfies⁶, for example, is measured on Instagram⁷ by the quantity and quality of resonance they receive, which is metrically identified by the number of clicks, likes, shares, comments, etc. displayed on the glowing screen.

Moreover, often, it is not even the old criteria that once applied when it came to identifying a good photograph that makes up its success today. It is no longer only a particular aesthetic and formal originality of the picture that is decisive, but also who shows what, to whom, when, and for what purpose. A social image is no longer primarily a document that records what was or is but is instead directed towards the future by preparing specific resonances with its recipients. In this sense, it can also be characterized as an independently acting agent in a broader social network: A selfie can therefore also be seen as an ambassador who conducts visual identity politics and is supposed to do agile persuasive work. In the majority of cases, the selfie therefore nowadays has to represent—and not only since Kim Kardashian's selfie series⁸— the thriving, healthy, and happy individual in society.

Whoever sets himself in the scene, makes himself an image with the smartphone camera in his hand, at the same time always makes himself a self-assured image of himself. Who knows how to stage himself for the camera skillfully and creatively, can ultimately also determine the image that others receive from him. These daily creative staging performances with the smartphone are ultimately also about a constructive image production that constitutes the self out of a synthetic combination of mental and real images. The young German artist Andy Kassier (born 1989)⁹ investigates this fact with artistic and creative research as well as with a subsequent impressive meta-work.

Andy Kassier - Instagram Success

The work of the Berlin-based conceptual artist consists of self-portraits or selfies, sculptures, videos, and mixed-media installations, in which he focuses above all on current discourses of wealth, success, fame and the related self-representation of our time. A vital part of his artistic work deals with the phenomenon of the self-staging and self-marketing of young men on Instagram—with a particular focus on the cultural reception of the self in the digital sphere of the Internet.

How does our understanding of identity and authenticity change in the increasingly technologically networked world? What does it mean when the Centennials' biggest career wish is to become an influencer or YouTube star? When self-optimization and a perfect performance are seen as an investment and a fundamental basis for a successful as well as a happy life?

Andy Kassier deals in particular with the logical relationship between success, wealth, and happiness. While a few years ago Fischli & Weiss asked 'Will happiness find me?'¹⁰, Andy Kassier searches for it specifically on the various social media platforms on the Internet—according to the motto '*Fake it till you make it!*' What happiness and the associated aspects of wealth, beauty, health, sex, narcissism, good life, and permanent travel to the most beautiful locations in the world mean for a post-internet generation nowadays is what Andy Kassier is basically dealing with in his ongoing artistic Instagram project 'How to Take a Selfie'¹¹, which has been running since 2013 (Fig. 1).

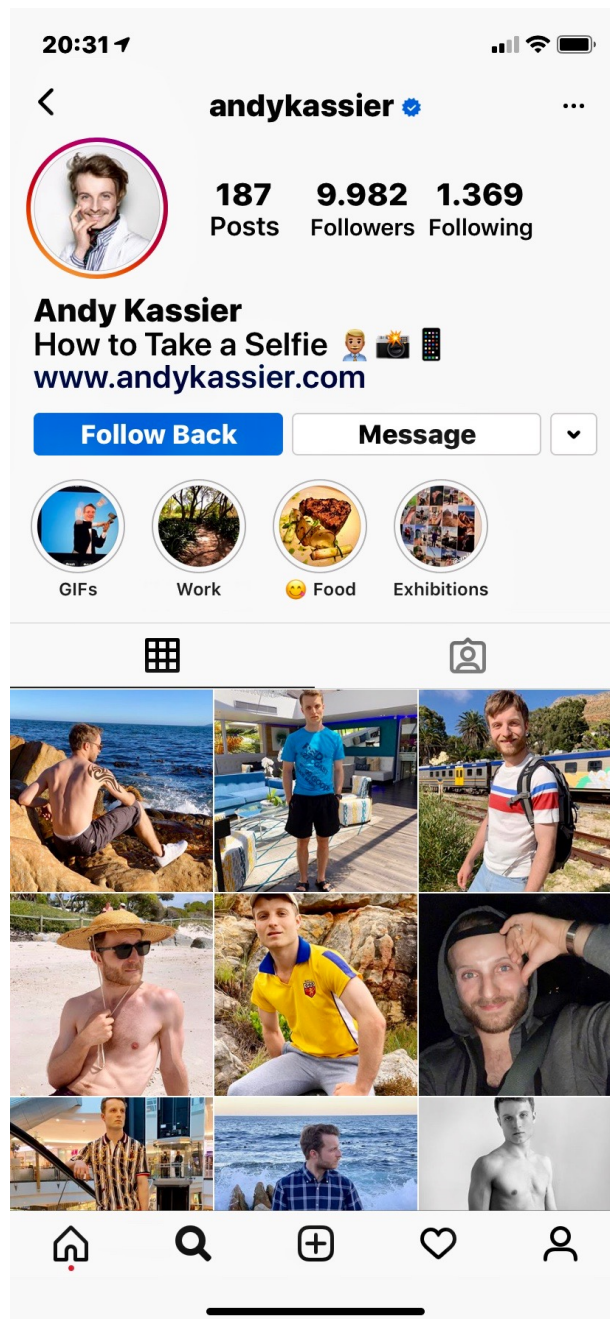


Figure 1: Andy Kassier's Artistic Instagram project 'How to Take a Selfie', since 2013. Screenshot of Pam Scorzin's iPhone.

To him as a contemporary conceptual artist the popular social media platform Instagram not only serves as a digital showcase for his works and back-stage stories but also, as for the post-internet artists Leah Schrager (born 1983) and Amalia Ulman (born 1989)¹², primarily as artistic material—both for artistic and creative research and functions as an integral work component. Like the famous photo-artist Cindy Sherman, Andy Kassier is not only an artist-photographer but also first and foremost a performer in front of and for the camera. During her time as an art student, the American artist (born 1954) created numerous photographs for the first time under the concept of transformation and masquerade, combining many elements of theater and film.¹³ For more than 35 years now, Cindy Sherman has repeatedly used facial expressions, gestures, poses, make-up and costumes as well as props and set design to visualize a multitude of stereotypical role models and female identities.

Andy Kassier, on the other hand, focuses on the new role models and gender clichés of young men on Instagram, that has so far received less attention and has not yet been discussed in gender studies at large. These new self-presentations, which have been established on various social media platforms by the Millennials and Centennials, are somehow located between the search for identity and the crisis of authenticity: What is considered male today? Which forms of masculinity, virility, and sexuality are fashionable today? So, how does one become an ego-brand today? How do digital representation and the real self come together? What is real, and what is fake in self-presentation on social media like Instagram? The old question remains, what is the relationship between appearance and being? Moreover, do we still have to think in this dialectic today?

In 2018, Andy Kassier and the US-American artist Signe Pierce (born 1988) performed '*On the internet, nobody knows you are a performance artist*' live at the NRW-Forum Düsseldorf (Germany), thus bringing the supposedly virtual back into the real—IRL—; art and life merge in this art project. Last, not least, the baseline of #Finstagram (Fake Instagram) has been used by the Millennials and Centennials for some time now. One is entirely enlightened that not everything that is shown on Instagram might be real. So, everything just like in the legendary glossy commercial 'My house, my car, my boat.'¹⁴ Andy Kassier himself worked as an assistant in advertising photography for several years during his studies (2012-2018 with Mischa Kuball and Johannes Wohnseifer at the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne, among others); and we suspect he knows all the commercial marketing tricks. Stylistically, he draws on the surreal, super-perfect advertising aesthetics of the eighties, the Golf generation with their Yuppies and Poppers—back then when everything was analog, and

Photoshop was still in its infancy, but not all the less staged and deceptive. Andy Kassier not only achieves a necessary disruption in the playful game of ironic affirmation with this nostalgic retro aesthetic, as it is so popular with the Hipster today, but also mischievously expands the discussion of what could be real, genuine and credible on social media by another dimension: For what could be fake about an iPhone photograph that shows the artist himself, posing in the midst of a real scenery with real pieces of equipment (i. e., from the worn hip fashion to the accessories or used status symbols), as a trusty document? Andy Kassier's selfies and posies are entirely self-directed, often with self-timer and with low-key or only for the moment of recording borrowed props. The focus of the camera is always on the person in the picture and the character that is to be exemplarily depicted. Andy Kassier then personifies them all like a trickster: the golfer, the poser, the grinder, the manager, the hustler, the hipster, the skater, the vegan, the emo, the nature boy, the beach boy, the fitness coach, the rich guy, and so on (Fig. 2-3).

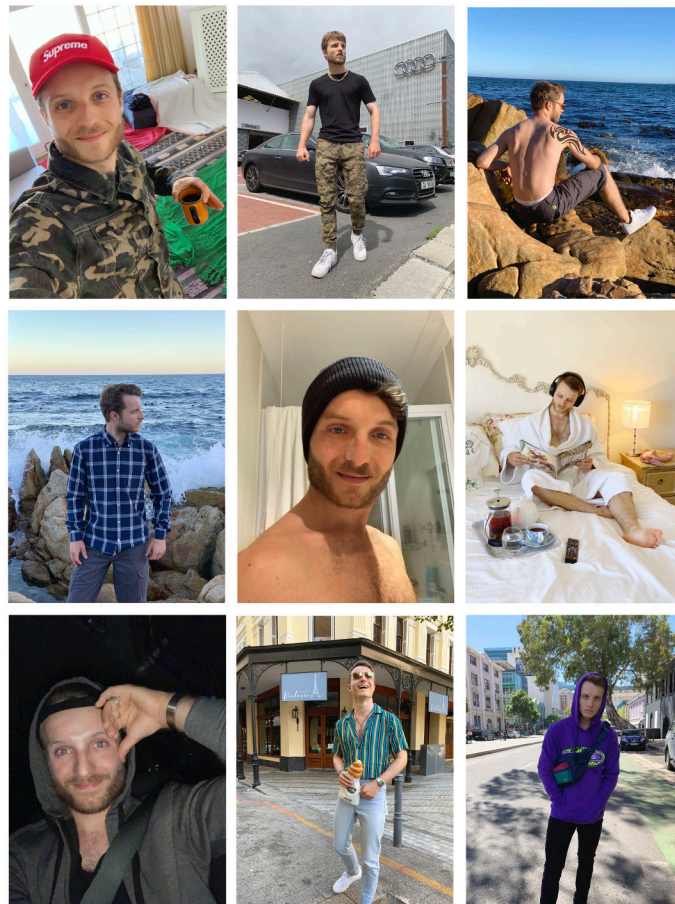


Figure 2: Andy Kassier's personifications of male role models on Instagram.
Photos: Courtesy of the Artist © Andy Kassier (Berlin).



Figure 3: Andy Kassier's personifications of male role models on Instagram.
Photos: Courtesy of the Artist © Andy Kassier (Berlin).

Andy Kassier is visible everywhere and yet disappears behind all selected and staged roles. Compared to Andy Kassier, the German artist colleague Martin Liebscher (born 1964), on the other hand, appears in his multiple self-portrayals as a pure ego-shooter.¹⁵

Almost always, there are concrete models for his Instagram postings. Appropriation and re-enactment, reconstruction and reflection, adaptation and citation serve here as proven artistic methods for Andy Kassier's growing encyclopedia of male role models of the first decades of the 21st century. In 2017, the famous fashion bloggers of Dandy Diary (Jakob Haupt and David Roth)—inspired by Hans Eijkelboom's *'People of the 21st Century'*¹⁶—compiled and mixed the notoriously repetitive Instagram images of female fashion bloggers in an amusing video entitled *'Influencers of the 21st Century'* and on an Instagram account of the same name without any further comment.

Andy Kassier's social image collection, on the other hand, thrives on the performative content of its ambiguous re-enactments. His long-time Instagram art project is, therefore, more than just an actualization of August Sander's epic photographic series. It is foremost to be interpreted as tactical re-enactment. His funny selfies and posies on Instagram are primarily to be seen as images about images, as the staging of stagings.

In addition, Andy Kassier's social photos are at the same time always images standing in a specific context that has a meaningful effect on their interpretation: Instead of work titles and year dates, they carry additional information and come along with more (made-up) data—such as Chris Drange's *'Relics'*¹⁷ or Richard Prince's notorious Instagram series¹⁸. As ephemeral social media postings, Andy Kassier's social photos are being published with additional text messages such as coaching wisdom, guru mantras, geotags, and above all trendy hashtags, all of which are intended to control the interpretation of their purely visual content (Fig. 4-6).

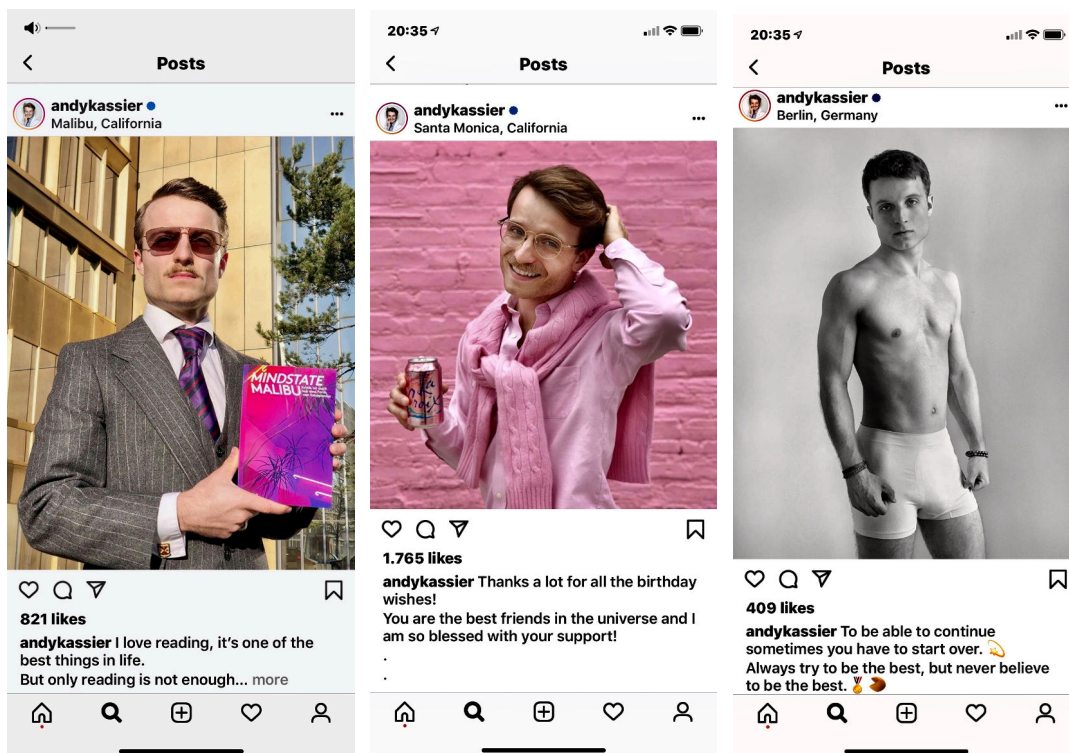


Figure 4, 5 and 6: Andy Kassier's social photos. Screenshot of Pam Scorzin's iPhone.

Only in this complex reception process do fictions emerge from facts; here, the social photograph begins to deceive and to lie to its audiences. Besides, interactions take place with the followers and the hidden algorithms of the digital platform, which ultimately have a decisive influence on when, where and how often these fleeting social images become visible to whom in the grids of the streams. Here, too, it is no longer just the aesthetics of the photographic images that determine (social) success, but rather their visual rhetoric—for example, whether they could be relevant to anyone at all.

For young artists, this can even mean that they no longer have to wait for an appreciation and confirmation from critics and theorists of the art system. They are ultimately not dependent on their voices any longer. Today, on Instagram, they can quickly gain a wider reach for further success on the global art market and even a significant fan base—as long as they meet the zeitgeist of the influential digital natives. With his funny artist GIFs, Andy Kassier now reaches at least millions people. Being networked today means everything, especially for the international artist career.

The global art scene, on the other hand, already knows its proven "Instagram artists" of the post-Internet generation; but that sounds almost like an insult. Visual art outside the established framework of museums and the art market is still considered by many to be much too pop(ular). However, this does not stop some contemporary artists from paying particular attention to the 'instagramability' or 'likeability' of their artworks today. Moreover, as with the amateurs, the aim is to demonstrate their singular (because easily recognizable) signature style. Regardless of the minimization to the Instagram format, works of art today sometimes achieve maximum range. Global Contemporary Art seeks proximity to the social media imagery of the present—amidst the same recurring motifs of luxury, lifestyle and beautiful living, tourism, fashion, fitness, and global food trends that launch celebrities and influencers. That is how brands are built today!

Success is just a smile away on Instagram

What brings everything together, in the end, is the unconditional will for total aestheticization and all-encompassing staging. Both serve fast communication and indispensable connectivity: "Edgar Gómez Cruz concisely states that 'photography has gone from being a medium for the collection of important memories to an interface for visual communication. Today, the global flow of image-speak among those who do not write in the same language allows for new possibilities in visual communication'"¹⁹. The most successful Instagram postings currently resemble those of the commercial consumer world and pop culture. They inform or inspire, emotionalize, and entertain by telling small stories visually and thus inform their followers about news in an entertaining and seemingly direct personal way.

By scrolling and swiping continuously through Instagram's feeds and grids, one can learn what is meant by hashtagged terms in the image streams. Constantly recurring image motifs and patterns, which stand for the most successful postings, quickly crystallize out. In this medium, professionals and amateurs compete side by side for the best visual stagings. Posting (hyper-)images, i.e., images linked in a variety of ways, is above all a very competitive business and an open competition for favor and attention for the artistic and creative achievements of all kinds demonstrated here (—or shouldn't we better say 'photo filters' today?). The masses will hopefully reward these with instant reactions and direct comments. At the beginning there is a 'Like' (or a little red heart); at the end in the best case a so-called 'Lovestorm'. Shitstorms, on the other hand, are the new tear. That is especially true for new internet artists around the world.

The 'Instagramification' of our everyday life is thus also an expression of a comprehensive evaluation society in which every performance today is instantly evaluated and ranked. The winners benefit significantly from this new type of multiplier marketing and social networking. Money, fame, and honor—as always—for the chosen ones or the prestigious rise to the postmodern Olympus of Celebrities (see *The Kardashians*) attract them to the utmost. Singular signature style and spectacular staging talent are here the essentials for the ultimate success status of a *Famous for being famous*, as Andy Warhol has already clairvoyantly predicted in the Pop Art era.

The other Andy, meanwhile, distributes self-designed and self-printed banknotes with his smiling face as giveaway stickers at his public appearances and continues to look forward to great fame. Andy Kassier made it; at least, such it seems when we look at his Instagram account while he assures us: "I did my research, I dedicated myself to this image and this persona and developed its existence in reality as well as in its documentation. Hard work and patience, it sounds cliché, but I truly mean it. (...) I think I created this persona that allows me to question aspects of wealth, gender, consumption, status, but also the medium itself. My work is often so exaggerated that it is obvious that it is not real. But I don't think that reality exists in social media; it's a playground."²⁰

Ultimately, Andy Kassier's Instagram art project still struggles with the old question of what can be experienced as authentic in the virtual spheres of the Internet 2.0; because it seems, again formulated with Nathan Jurgenson, "Social media have been made to capture the essence, the 'truth' of ourselves, to be a document, a record, and, as such, to stimulate life within boxes, categories, cells in a database, to make an object of subjectivity. Much of social photography bases on this anxious design. Each image is wrung through profiles that keep track of likes and followers and thus the success of every image and every person."²¹ Thus, *'Success is just a smile away'* was, by the way, the original header and former baseline for Andy Kassier's now with a blue tick verified Instagram account - so, check it out, guys!

Author Biography

Pamela C. Scorzin is an art, design and media theorist, and Professor of Art History and Visual Culture Studies at Dortmund University of Applied Sciences and Arts, Department of Design (Germany). Born 1965 in Vicenza (Italy), she studied European Art History, Philosophy, English and American Literatures, and History in Stuttgart and Heidelberg (Germany), obtaining her M.A. in 1992 and her Ph.D. in 1994. She was an assistant professor in the Department of Architecture at Darmstadt University of Technology from 1995 to 2000. After completing her habilitation in the history and theory of modern art there in 2001, she was a visiting professor in Art History, Media and Visual Culture Studies in Siegen, Stuttgart, and Frankfurt am Main. Since 2005, she is a member of the German section of AICA. She has published (in German, English, French, and Polish) on art-historical as well as cultural-historical topics from the seventeenth to the twenty-first century. She lives and works in Dortmund, Milan, and Los Angeles.

Notes

1. See Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. (New York: Anchor Books, 1959), passim.
2. Nathan Jurgenson, *The Social Photo. On Photography and Social Media*. (London/ New York: Verso, 2019), 87.
3. Jurgenson 2019, 112.
4. See Jan Altehenger, *Mythos Social Media. Die Ästhetik der Täuschung*. In: Reihe Welt | Gestalten, Bd. 1, ed. by Lars C. Grabbe and Oliver Ruf (Marburg: Böhner-Verlag 2019), cover: "Soziale Netzwerke sind wie ein permanentes Klassentreffen, jeder will zeigen, dass er es zu etwas gebracht hat. Es werden Eindrücke, Momente und Urlaubsfotos gepostet und geteilt, mit dem Bestreben nach mehr Anerkennung und Aufmerksamkeit, nach mehr Klicks, Likes und Followern. Für die meisten gehört der Blick auf das Smartphone mittlerweile zum Alltag wie das Zähneputzen oder die Morgentoilette. So bauen sich völlig neue soziale Rollen und Kreise auf. Sie bilden Verbindungen und Konstrukte – codiert von Einsen und Nullen –, die neue Zugehörigkeiten und Identitäten schaffen."
5. See Jurgenson 2019, pp. 8-9 and 17: "The term 'social photo' can be limiting because all photos are social in a sense (a critique equally applicable to the term 'social media'). My interest here is with a type of photography made ubiquitous by networked, digital sharing, though many of its characteristics can be found in different degrees in pre-social media photography, especially amateur snapshots (Polaroid sharing in particular). For my purposes here, what fundamentally makes a photo a social photo is the degree to which its existence as a stand-alone media object is subordinate to its existence as a unit of communication. (...) Photography is social photography to the degree that its central use is more expressive than informational, when the recording of reality is not its own end but a means for communicating an experience."
6. Cf. Wolfgang Ullrich, *Selfies. Digitale Bildkulturen*. (Berlin: Wagenbach, 2019).
7. Cf. Katja Gunkel, *Der Instagram-Effekt. Wie ikonische Kommunikation in den Social Media unsere visuelle Kultur prägt*. (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2018), passim.
8. Cf. Kim Kardashian West, *Selfish: More Me! With New Selfies 2015-2016*. (New York: Universe, 2016).
9. Visit the website of the artist on the internet at the URL: <https://andykassier.com>. (I want to thank Andy Kassier for the inspiring talk we had in Dortmund on 26 June 2019. Dedicated to Ryan B. - my love, the All-American Guy, male model, and fashion companion).
10. See Peter Fischli and David Weiss, *Findet mich das Glück?* (Köln: Walther König, 2001).
11. See the Instagram account at the URL: <https://www.instagram.com/andykassier/>.
12. See Alicia Eler, "Amalia Ulman's Instagram performance exposed the flaws in selfie culture" on CNNStyle. (29 March 2018), available on the Internet at the URL: <https://edition.cnn.com/style/article/amalia-ulman-instagram-excellences-perfections/index.html> (Last access: July 2019).
13. Cf. Gabriel Schor, *Cindy Sherman. Das Frühwerk 1975-1977*. Catalogue Raisonné. (Stuttgart: Hatje Cantz 2012).
14. See Tim Theobald, "Warum Jung von Matt und die Sparkasse den legendären 90er-Spot neu auflegen" (11 October 2018), available on the Internet at the URL: <https://www.horizont.net/agenturen/nachrichten/mein-haus-mein-auto-mein-boot-warum-jung-von-matt-und-die-sparkasse-den-legendaeren-90er-spot-neu-auflegen-170283> (Last access: July 2019).
15. See Pamela C. Scorzin, "Martin Liebscher. Liebscher ist jeder," in: KÜNSTLER. KRITISCHES LEXIKON DER GEGENWARTSKUNST, Ausgabe 97, Heft 4, 1. Quartal 2012 (20 Seiten).
16. Watch it on <http://dandydiary.de/influencers-of-the-21st-century/> (Last access: July 2019).
17. See Anika Meier, "Starkult auf Instagram. Heiligenverehrung im 21. Jahrhundert. Chris Drange." (19 July 2017), available on the Internet at the URL: <https://www.monopol-magazin.de/instagram-chris-drange>. (Last access: July 2019).
18. See Jerry Saltz, "Richard Prince's Instagram Paintings Are Genius Trolling." (23 September 2014), available on the Internet at the URL: <https://www.vulture.com/2014/09/richard-prince-instagram-pervert-troll-genius.html>. (Last access: July 2019).
19. Jurgenson 2019, 13-14.
20. Andy Kassier cited by Sabrina Steinek, "Network is everything. Interview with Andy Kassier." (3 October 2017), available on the Internet at the URL: <https://whereaboutnow.com/journal/network-is-everything>. (Last access: July 2019).
21. Jurgenson 2019, 111.

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The Blink Between: Thinking About the (Un)Seen in Drone Warfare

Svea Braeunert

Abstract

Contemporary art and aesthetically informed activism addressing drone warfare often seek to make up for a lack in visuals. Their work is fueled by the assumption that images are needed to make people care and to build a case. Paradigmatic examples of this approach include the investigations into the clandestine US drone war in the border region of Pakistan by Forensic Architecture as well as the online campaign *#NotABugSplat* (2014). They employ the image as a witnesses, creating image testimonies geared against denial. Yet, however important such projects are to raise public attention, their belief in making visible needs to be complicated in order to account for the fact that the drone itself is a vision machine operating on images. As such, the image is complicit in dealing violence. It no longer only represents but actively takes part in conflict. Going unseen has hence become a viable counter-strategy when presented with the realities of this war.

Taking into consideration that invisibility has become a shield and refuge, I ask in the following essay why 'we' need and want images when thinking about drone warfare. I ponder this question in the context of visual ethics, touching upon the relation between words and images and their appeal to the imagination. Extrapolating on the latter, I not only draw unlikely connections between the blink in drone warfare and the metaphor of the lidless eye in Heinrich von Kleist's writing about Caspar David Friedrich's *Monk by the Sea* (1808-10), but I also argue for enacting a double vision and inhabiting a skewed point of view that marks my own position. It navigates the tension between the seen and the unseen as relational, thereby helping to build an idea of what an active aesthetics might look like in the age of drone warfare.

In Medias Res

The photo is black and white. It is an aerial shot of a courtyard; the stones on the ground form a regular grid pattern. There is a pond to the site, stairs on top. In the center, I see ten human figures. I see them twice. Once I see their heads and shoulders. They are small white dots, hardly discernable as bodies; hardly discernable as humans. And once I see their shadows, looming large, distorted, in action. It is these shadows that make the figures human. They put them into action. They let me see them. The shadows show bodies, gestures, a shadow theatre of human presence. The caption of the image reads: Signature Behavior.



Figure 1: Tomas van Houtryve: Signature Behavior.
From the Series *Blue Sky Days*. 2013. © Tomas van Houtryve.

The photo is part of the series *Blue Sky Days* that Belgium-American photographer Tomas van Houtryve published in 2013. The series shows black-and-white aerial views of American landscapes and social situations, in which people have been killed by US drone strikes abroad or in which drones are used in the US. Van Houtryve has photographed these scenes by mounting his camera onto a small drone designed for private use. His idea for the project grew out of the observation that "there is no visual narrative in the public mind's-eye to go along with this war.

... I was thinking of how I could fill in this visual gap, try to bring this war home, using photography."¹ Responding to the absence of images, he created new images: his own images. His images do not show the target regions but instead turn the gaze around and point it back at the country the drones come from. Due to their high level of abstraction, the photos are not easy to read. They are clear images with an ambiguous meaning. Van Houtryve explains:

Usually I want my photos to bring clarity. ... You believe your eyes. But I think I tried to get my mind in the imagined space of a drone pilot's point of view; if all somebody knew about my life was the infrared video feed of my life from 15,000 feet, could there be some confusion? Is that different from knowing somebody on the ground?²

Yet, how do you know someone on the ground? In van Houtryve's case, the link to the target region is maintained in the title of the series. *Blue Sky Days* refers to a statement 13-year-old Zubair Rehman made at a congressional hearing in 2013. Zubair Rehman's grandmother was killed by a drone strike in the border region of Pakistan in 2012, and he was injured by shrapnel. At a hearing in Washington DC investigating the US drone campaign, Rehman said: "I no longer love blue skies. In fact, I now prefer gray skies. The drones do not fly when the skies are grey."³

Weather plays a role in war. German military theorist Carl Clausewitz knew that when he pointed to fog as the decisive factor in battle. It is fog that clouds the enemy and yourself. It makes vision uncertain, functioning as a medium and metaphor at the same time.

'Fog functions' ... to give shape to the vague and unpredictable; it is evidently not as foggy as 'uncertainty' itself, which it is supposed to make more tangible. This fog does not obscure so much as it provides a form, albeit a hazy, shifting one, for something more abstract that is not directly accessible to the senses. ... Fog straddles the literal-figurative divide, representing intangibles, clarifying other figurative terms, and sometimes standing in as 'itself,' a meteorological phenomenon in the atmosphere.⁴

In the case of the drone, clouds and fog can be a shield. They hinder the view of the vision machine and make it impossible for it to aim. "Death is so close that it doesn't see you anymore. It mistakes you for trees, and trees for you. You pray in thanks for this strange fog, this blindness,"⁵ writes Palestinian author Atef Abu Saif in his poetic memoir *The Drone Eats With Me* (2015) that chronicles Israel's military campaign against Gaza in 2014. You can hide under a tree, under a cloud. In the eyes of the drone, you can become a tree, you can become a cloud. In his *Drone Survival Guide* (2013), Ruben Pater has listed the options and techniques how to go unseen using the natural environment. If you do, the drone might not see you, because you do not register. You are not a target any more. Your strategy should be: Don't be a signal; become noise. Avoid to be seen.



Figure 2: Front of Ruben Pater: Drone Survival Guide. 2013. Reprinted under CC Licence.



Figure 3: Back of Ruben Pater: Drone Survival Guide. 2013. Reprinted under CC Licence.

Image Testimonies

So, if invisibility is a refuge, why do we need images? Why do we want images? What do we want from them? It is a widespread assumption that we need images for people to care. Images allow people to make connections, imagine relations, and have empathy with a suffering that is not their own. This is why human rights campaigns rely heavily on individual portraits of people looking at us—who are far away. The image is meant to bridge the distance between you and me. It is meant to establish the kind of relation that comes out of looking and being looked at, giving you and me the experience of being a subject and an object at the same time. In the case of drone warfare, giving the people on the ground a face is particularly important, as only very few images exist. This non-existence, as critic and architect Eyal Weizman from Forensic Architecture has argued, is an enabling condition of drone warfare. It is the basis for negation. Weizman writes:

The ability to hide and deny a drone strike is not an insignificant side effect of this technology, but a central part of a campaign that relies to a great extent on secrecy and deniability. The violence inflicted by drone warfare is thus typically compounded by the perpetrators' negation: the violence against people and things redoubled by violence against the evidence that violence has taken place.⁶

If there were images, they could serve as evidence. They would be there to prove something. They would be witness to the fact that someone was there and that something did indeed take place. They would attest to the photographic having-been-there. The work of Forensic Architecture proves the validity of this point. The cases they have built around image testimonies, including the mental images of memory in the case of a woman who survived a drone attack and was later asked to reconstruct her house, and the material images of architecture recorded on a clandestine cellphone video are convincing.⁷

Also, the photos Pakistani journalist Noor Behram has taken under great duress and danger in the border region are no doubt important. His photos of survivors, maimed victims, and corpses are rare image testimonies of the drone war.⁸ One of them—the photo of a young girl who lost several members of her family in a drone strike—gained worldwide attention under the *#NotABugSplat* (2014). Her portrait was laid out on a field in Pakistan. It was enlarged to a size that would allow a drone operator to see her face. She would face the drone, returning its gaze. I cannot be sure if a drone operator actually saw her. What I can be sure of, however, is that we saw her. 'We,' an international audience on the internet. We saw her as if a drone would see her. *#NotABugSplat* thus put us in the position of the drone. And I wonder: How do I get out of there?



Figure 4: *#NotABugSplat*. 2014. © Ali Rez, Saks Afridi, AssamKhalid, Akash Goel, Insiya Syed, Noor Behram, Jamil Akhtar.

How do I get out of there, out of the gimble that sits underneath the robotic body that is the drone; out of the climate-controlled trailer in the Nevada desert from which the drones are flown? Maybe I can blink in order to get out of the compromising position that is the drone. Maybe I can blink to interrupt the flow of images that comes out of the drone's constant stare. As the Intercept's *Drone Papers* tell me, "a 'blink' happens when a drone has to move and there isn't another aircraft to continue watching a target. According to classified documents, this is a major challenge facing the military, which always wants to have a 'persistent stare.'"⁹ If I blink, there are no drones and there are no images, which makes me ask one more time: If invisibility is a refuge, why do we need images? Why do we want images? What do we want from them?

Evoking Imagination

The text and image collective Our Literal Speed has suggested that counter to what most people believe, visibility may actually not always be the most activating mode of expression. Looking at the American civil rights movement, as it developed between radio and television, they suggest that images can sometimes hinder political action, because they induce complacency and stand in the way of a radical imagination. Our Literal Speed write:

[The] lack of an incorporative picture is generally assumed to be a liability for social movements. It is taken as almost axiomatic that to have images of something, to have evidence of wrongs and proof of what is right, makes an undertaking more relevant and more available for having some effect in the world. This seems to be a false assumption and one growing more obviously false everyday. Most likely, non-visibility will produce the most revolutionary visibilities of all, and we will never see it coming.¹⁰

Their reasons for turning away from images have to do with the link between seeing and knowing. I see, and hence I know. I believe my eyes. I trust what I see. "There is a sense in which such images make something unfamiliar part of one's world. And this no doubt has its uses, but such a process also necessarily involves a colonizing about something Other by the eye, to the false sense that 'I already know about that situation.' That 'something is already being done.'

As a result, nothing happens."¹¹ If I don't have an image, my imagination has to fill in the blank, and fantasy can take over. Taking the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott as their case in point, *Our Literal Speed* argue that "the Boycott was fundamentally a product of fantasy, rather than evidence. Citizens had to imagine what it would be like to survive without access to the public transportation system of an American city, and they had to imagine how the Boycott would function in everyday terms without a pre-existing visual template. One might even say that this on-the-spot conceptualizing was the principal progressive achievement of the Boycott."¹² Or as George Didi-Huberman put it: "In order to know, we must imagine."¹³ And it is imagination that will ultimately propel us into action.

We must imagine what it means that "the drone keeps us company all night long. Its whirring, whirring, whirring, whirring is incessant—as if it wants to remind us it's there, it's not going anywhere. It hangs just a little above our heads."¹⁴ We must imagine what it means to keep up with technology, because "war changes very fast: the technology, the rhetoric, the justifications, the media packaging. These men were keeping up with it at every stage; they were ahead of it almost. It was a skill they had inherited as Palestinians."¹⁵ And we must listen to Atef Abu Saif whose voice I have just quoted. His wish is not to

be a number, a piece of news, a name on the tongue of a beautiful TV presenter waiting impatiently to finish reading boring news from Gaza. I do not want to be a small number in a large one, a part of the data. I do not want to be an image, among thousands of images that the activists and sympathizers share and post on their Facebook walls, or Twitter accounts, rained down on with likes and comments.¹⁶

Abu Saif does not want to become an image. In the war he is trying to survive, invisibility is a shield and images are meant for others: They are meant for an internet audience out there—in a different world, in safety, 'us'. Nevertheless, the question remains what to do. On the one hand, there is the need for images and representation. There is the need to counter the absence of images from the frontier regions of the world. As Weizman said, the lack of images enables negation. Hence, we need images to serve as evidence and to make an ethical claim. And we need images to think and to understand. On the other hand, however, images are an active agent in drone warfare. It is a war based on operative images and the promise of unrestricted vision. In it, becoming invisible and going unseen is a promising counter-strategy, since "the conceptual metaphor of surveillance is seeing. Perfect surveillance would be like having a lidless eye."¹⁷

A Lidless Eye

This definition of surveillance from the *Drone Papers* makes me halt. It makes me halt due to the phrase “having a lidless eye.” For although the reference is clearly the promise of visual mastery, of having an all-seeing, tireless eye that never blinks, the wording is also reminiscent of an unlikely and most certainly unintended subtext: German poet Heinrich von Kleist’s essay on Caspar David Friedrich’s painting *Monk by the Sea* (1808-10). It is a painting that renders vision uncertain. On it, I see washes of blue, gray, and white. The cloudy sky takes up about two thirds of the canvas. It speaks of stormy weathers, of a darkening towards the ground, some light breaking through the dark in the corner and shining on the scene. In the lower third, I see the dark sea, waves rolling, foam on top. Offshore is a greyish-white landscape of dunes and rocks, also rolling, just like the sea. And amidst all of this, barely noticeable, stands a small figure. It is the monk, whose figure blends into the ground, almost becoming part of it. Once you have seen him, though, you can’t take your eyes off him. His presence pricks you. He is there—for you to see. Indeed, he is there, as Kleist writes, for you to become him (in the act of seeing him).¹⁸ And then Kleist goes on and writes: “With its two or three enigmatic objects, the painting lies there like the apocalypse; and since, due to its monotony and excess, it has little in the foreground besides its frame, one feels upon viewing it, as if one’s eyelids had been cut off.”¹⁹



Figure 5: Caspar David Friedrich: Monk by the Sea. 1808-10.
© bpk Bildagentur / Alte Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Photo: Jörg P. Anders / Art Resource, NY.

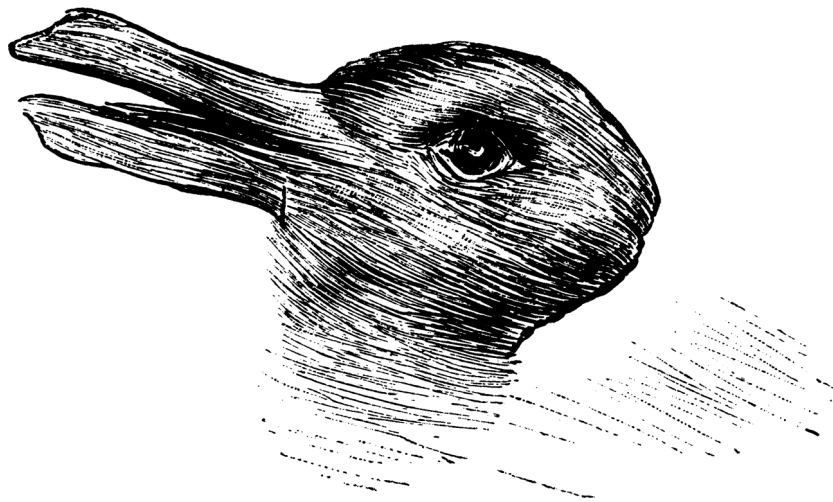
Having your eyelids cut off creates exactly the “lidless eye” that is the phantasy of surveillance. But beware of the image that this eye beholds! For Friedrich’s *Monk by the Sea* is all but certain. It is the kind of image W.J.T. Mitchell has called a meta-picture. “Metapictures are pictures that show us what pictures are, how they function, where they are located.”²⁰ Kleist’s *Monk by the Sea* makes me think because it shows me my own seeing. It shows me how vision works, because representation becomes unintelligible. Due to this quality, Friedrich’s painting from the 19th century comes surprisingly close to the works of a number of contemporary artists dealing with drone warfare, among them Trevor Paglen, Hito Steyerl, Louise Lawler, and Seth Price. Take for instance Trevor Paglen’s large-scale photographs of cloud formations in the sky that are reminiscent of abstraction and color field painting. They show colors, blurs, and the sky; and somewhere, barely noticeable, there is a speck that is the drone. Its presence is similar to Friedrich’s monk; it is there but its figure blends into the ground. Or think of Seth Price’s extreme close-ups of people’s skin in his photo series entailing, among others, *Danny, Mila, Hannah, Ariana, Bob, Brad* (2015). Using different imaging techniques, including satellite imaging, Price turned body parts into landscapes, thus confusing the relationship between figure and ground similar to how Friedrich did it in *Monk by the Sea*.

Co-Presence and Double Vision

It is a confusion that weaves like a red thread through the visual cultures of drone warfare.²¹ It is present in the way the drone is used as a weapon, and it repeats itself with even more force in the art tackling its visual politics. This is true of most of the conceptual pairs that I find when dealing with the topic. Most notably, they are figure and ground, body and landscape, realism and abstraction. In the age of drone warfare, their mutually exclusive relationship is re-negotiated as a co-presence. It is a co-presence that prompts me to stop and return to the question of whether or not we need and want images in a new and different way. It allows me to get out of the binary thinking that needs to decide between images or no images, seeing or not seeing, visibility or invisibility. Instead, I can address the visual culture of drone warfare as if I was looking at a tilted image—something the German language knows as a *Kippbild*.

In a tilted image, two images are present in one picture, yet I can only see one at a time. Canonical examples include the picture of a duck and a rabbit, a young and an old woman, a vase and two faces in profile. You have to adjust and re-adjust your eyes and switch back and forth between duck and rabbit, duck and rabbit, duck and rabbit. What I want to suggest is not to try the impossible and see both at the same time. Instead, I want to dwell in the moment of blinking when neither is visible and when a double kind of vision is used in service of a switching and twitching and transitioning. It is the moment of moving from one image to another that allows for a thinking of a different kind of vision. It asks us to see with more than two eyes. No gorgon stare though but a blink. It is the realm in which image and imagination come together to suggest an active aesthetics that changes the ways in which we know and see and sense.²²

Welche Thiere gleichen ein- ander am meisten?



Kaninchen und Ente.

Figure 6: Kaninchen und Ente. In: Fliegende Blätter, October 23, 1892.
Work in the Public Domain.

The type of vision I have in mind is close to what Donna Haraway has spelled out as a feminist view of partial and embodied perspective that is based on “the sciences and politics of interpretation, translation, stuttering, and the partly understood. Feminism is about the sciences of the multiple subject with (at least) double vision.”²³ It is this kind of double vision that I imagine when I think about the fissure in the tilted image between duck and rabbit that is equally the fissure between figure and ground, body and landscape, realism and abstraction. It is the fissure in the moment of blinking when one thing goes over into another. The blink interrupts the drone’s persistent stare. In warfare, “a ‘blink’ happens when a drone has to move and there isn’t another aircraft to continue watching a target.”²⁴

In art, a blink happens when I look at Friedrich’s *Monk by the Sea* and I think of Kleist’s image of the lidless eye. The metaphor may be all about vision, but it is the kind of excessive vision that draws you into the picture. Once inside, you become the figure that blends into the ground and you speak from that point of view. Simultaneously inside and outside, your voice has to shuffle back and forth.

Your voice has to take on the task of looking askew. It has to look awry as if it too is about double vision. Translating images into words may be one way to do this. When I originally presented these ideas at the Night of Philosophy and Ideas in New York, I had to do it out of necessity, because there was no way for me to show the audience any images.²⁵ Instead, I had to paint them with words. I had to call on their imagination. I had to rely on their imagination. It was a good exercise in ekphrasis, because it made me reconsider the status of images in drone warfare and ask: If invisibility is a refuge, why do we need images? Why do we want images? What do we want from them? I believe there is a great deal we want from images, and they want from us. However, in order to see that desire and do justice to the ethical claim that the image as witness holds, we have to look at it from ever shifting points of view, give it over to translation, mutation, and a looking askew. We have to say I, and mark the position we speak from. I have to translate images into words that can enter the imagination. And these words and images speak to each other, changing each other, explicating and unsettling each other. They remind me that a relational way of looking changes you and me. I hence want to be careful not to take up your room, but look at you and consider the fact that you are looking at me just the same.

Author Biography

Svea Braeunert is DAAD Visiting Associate Professor in German Studies at the University of Cincinnati. Her research interests include twentieth- and twenty-first-century art, literature, and film, media theory and visual culture, concepts of memory, trauma, and deferred action, and gender studies. She is the author of *Gespenstergeschichten: Der linke Terrorismus der RAF und die Künste* (Kadmos, 2015), and co-author and co-curator of *To See Without Being Seen: Contemporary Art and Drone Warfare* (University of Chicago Press, 2016) and *Method: Sasha Kurmaz* (Kehrer, 2016). She is currently working on a book project tentatively titled *Urgency and Uncertainty: Media Cultures of Drone Warfare*.

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18. Kleist writes: "So I became myself the Capuchin." The original German reads: "So ward ich selbst der Kapuziner." (Translation Svea Braeunert) Heinrich von Kleist, "Empfindungen vor Friedrichs Seelenlandschaft," in Heinrich von Kleist, *Anekdoten, Kleine Schriften, dtv Gesamtausgabe Band 5* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag, 1964), 61.
19. The original German reads: "Das Bild liegt, mit seinen zwei oder drei geheimnisvollen Gegenständen, wie die Apokalypse da, als ob es Joungs Nachtgedanken hätte, und da es, in seiner Einförmigkeit und Uferlosigkeit, nichts, als den Rahmen zum Vordergrund hat, so ist es, wenn man es betrachtet, als ob einem die Augenlider weggeschnitten wären." (Kleist, "Empfindungen vor Friedrichs Seelenlandschaft," 61.)
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Questioning Soft Power

An Empirical Approach of the Reception of Turkish Soap-Operas by Greeks

Dimitra Laurence Larochelle

Abstract

Since the introduction of soft power theory by Joseph Nye, many political and media scientists as well as elite journalists have used this concept in order to analyze the impact of transnational media texts and their effects on local audiences. Despite its popularity, the soft power theory raises several questions that should be taken under consideration. First, it presupposes a direct link between a product's attractiveness and the ability to influence other nations on a diplomatic level. Second, it underestimates the complexity of the reception process of media texts by the audiences and third, it does not take under consideration the complexity of the relationship between two countries which may be defined by historic and strategic elements and in which soft power may play only a limited role.

Through this article we present the results of our empirical research concerning the reception of Turkish soap-operas by the audience in Greece. Undeniably, Turkish soap-operas attract Greek audiences for several reasons such as cultural proximity, identity negotiation, alternative storylines etc. and which may conduct activities in relation to these particular soap-operas (i.e. soap-opera induced tourism) or to Turkish civilization in general (i.e. learning Turkish language). However, this attraction should not be confounded with the desire to overcome long-enduring rivalries and negative feelings that are due to tangible as well as on emotional elements in order to follow Turkish government's interests as soft power theory suggests. Therefore, the attraction of local audiences by transnational texts such as Turkish soap-operas, should not be considered as a de facto success of Turkey's soft power. Consequently, soft power should rather be used as a communicational intentionality.

Keywords: soft power, transnational soap-operas, cultural proximity, cultural studies, reception, audiences.

Introduction

Since 1990, when Joseph Nye introduced soft power theory, political and media scientists as well as elite journalists have used this concept in order to analyze the impact of transnational media texts and their effects on local audiences. However, despite its popularity, the theory in question raises several questions that should be taken under consideration. During the last decades, several researchers have worked on the impact of Turkish soap-operas on the audiences of the different countries in which they have been diffused. More precisely, since 2000, the production of Turkish soap-operas is in constant development. These soap-operas have indisputably a great success at a local level and are also exported abroad. More precisely, they were first diffused in countries that were in the sphere of cultural influence of the ancient Ottoman Empire (which means the Balkans and the Middle East). Later they were also exported even far, in Latin America, in China, in Pakistan, in India, in Bangladesh etc.

Among these countries, Greece has become a great consumer of Turkish soap-operas. This consumption has considerably augmented since the economic crisis. During this period, not only the local production has been practically diminished but also according to the European Bank, Greek households were forced to adopt a certain number of strategies in order to affront the new financial situation. These strategies included reducing the consumption of specific goods, discontinuing subscriptions to services (such as phone and internet), postponing payments, obtaining an additional job or increasing the number of working hours etc.¹ Consequently, the consumption of "non-necessities" (theatre, cinema, museums etc.) was dramatically reduced since the economic crisis in Greece. Therefore, Turkish soap operas had an ideal context of diffusion, in this country in a state of lack. The current article proposes an empirical research on the effects of Turkish soap-operas on Greek audience and proposes to examine empirically the limitations as far as the use of the term soft power is concerned.

Methodology

Our study concerns the representations projected by Turkish television soap operas and their reception by fans – particularly by women (as there is a gendered perspective in our research) - in Greece. In order to study the consumption of these soap operas, we have conducted an empirical research based both on qualitative and quantitative methods.

First, we have realized, in 2016 and 2018, a qualitative study based on 50 in depth interviews with individuals having different socio-economic backgrounds, different ages and residing in different geographical areas in Greece. During both research periods, the recruitment of people who participated in our research was realized with convenience sampling and snowball method.

Furthermore, we have realized an online survey from September 2018 to October 2018. This online survey concerned several aspects that had been discussed during interviews but needed to be measured in a larger scale in order to have a more representative image of fan communities.

Considering the fact that the study of the reception of media products must be accompanied by the study of the conditions in which these creations have been produced in order to seize the logic of the communicational intentionality (Scannell & Gamberini, 1994) behind them, we have realized a field study in Istanbul in May 2017 in order to better understand the production process of Turkish soap operas. Within this context, we have realized interviews with producers, actors and personnel that are implicated in the production process of these soap operas.

Soft Power, Turkish Soap-Operas and Greek Television

The concept of soft power is intrinsically related to the uncertainty that occurred right after the Cold War period. In 1990, Joseph Nye, introduced the concept of soft power in his book entitled *Bound to Lead: The changing Nature of American Power* (Nye, 1990). By developing this notion, Nye, aimed to show that America was not a declining power as many claimed at that time and that this country would continue to be a leader on an international level through its soft power and thus its ability to attract and co-opt rather than coerce. More precisely, he distinguished hard power from soft power. Hard power refers to the use of military and economic means to influence the behavior or interests of other nations, while soft power refers to the ability to shape the preferences of others through appeal and attraction. The first is based on coercion and it is often aggressive whereas the second is non-coercive and is based on the attraction through culture, political values, and foreign policies (Nye, 2004).

For Nye, soft power is equally important to hard power because as he explains if “a State can make its power seem legitimate in the eyes of others, it will encounter less resistance to its wishes. If its culture and ideology are attractive, others will more willingly follow” (Nye, 1990: 167). Thus, according to him, soft power can prevent the exercise of hard power. Later Nye introduced the term smart power in order to underly the complementarity between soft power and hard power (Nye, 2008). For him, in order to achieve a leading role in international affairs, smart power (the combination of soft power and hard power) is necessary.

Although the concept of soft power has been primarily developed for the case of the United States, during the last decades, it has also been adopted by various countries. Nations’ capacity to make themselves attractive in a digitally connected and globalized media and communication environment has become an important aspect of contemporary international relations. Therefore, soft power is a notion that is being commonly used not only from academics but also from journalists around the globe (Thussu, 2014). Consequently, during the last decades, apart from the U.S global media flows in the entertainment (Disney, Hollywood, MTV, etc.), news and current affairs (CNN, Discovery, etc.) and social media (Google, Facebook, YouTube etc.) sectors, we observe the proliferation of new media flows coming from other countries not only as far as the information sector is concerned

(i.e. U.K., France, Russia, Qatar, India, China, etc.) but also in the entertainment sector with Brazilian telenovelas, Bollywood movies, Korean series, Japanese manga etc. (ibid., 2014). Within this context, the rise of the Turkish serial industry and the worldwide diffusion of Turkish soap-operas have been explained by political and media scientists as well as by journalists as an attempt to enhance Turkey's soft power particularly in countries that were provinces of the ancient Ottoman Empire.

Turkish Dramas and Neo-Ottomanism: A Turkish Conception of Soft Power

According to Hülya Ugur Tanrıöver (2011), since the beginning of the first television channel in Turkey, soap-operas had a privileged position among other media products. This happens, because as she explains, Turkish audience had already a cinematographic tradition which was established in the "golden age" of Turkish cinema (1960 – 1970). Thus, Turkish audience always had a particular interest for fiction. The crisis in the cinema industry (that occurred during the 1980s) as well as Turkey's financial situation during the same period are some of the reasons that stimulated Turks to massively adopt the entertainment offered by television at home. In the early years of television, when the number of local productions were still very limited, TRT bought series from abroad that were highly appreciated by the public. Their success was so considerable that in social history, certain periods were named in reference to the series in question, such as the "Love Boat Years" or the "Dallas Years". This is one of the reasons why TRT insisted on producing local soap operas. During the nineties, private channels appeared in Turkish television and this caused augmented competitiveness in the sector. Hence, audience abandoned foreign series in the favor of local products. Today, local soap-operas are the most popular television genre in Turkey. The themes of these soap-operas are not original. They remind the practically standardized themes of the classic products of the genre or of the "telenovelas" of the Spanish speaking world of the period 1990 – 2000. The most frequent subjects concern the sentimental relations and the stories of forbidden love between two persons with different social status or between lovers that are in an ambiguous situation because of a third person that is implicated in the relation.

These soap-operas present several stories characterized by the rich lifestyle of the protagonists. Protagonists have a lifestyle that is symbolized by goods, such as expensive clothes, jewelry, furniture or even cultural goods such as frequent trips etc. So, this lifestyle invites the public to a journey towards fantasy, dream and evasion. The narrative schemes that are diffused by these soap operas are identical to those that we find in most of the television products anywhere in the world (life lasting love, optimism, fight between good and bad etc.). It is about presenting problems that preoccupy every person in everyday life (love problems, survival problems etc.) but always by accompanying these problems by intrigues, passions and rivalries in order to attract the public. As mentioned in our introduction, Turkish soap-operas are also (particularly since 2000) exported abroad. This phenomenon coincides with a change of paradigm as far as Turkey's foreign policy is concerned. More precisely, since 2002, the year that Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi/AKP) took the power in Turkey, a new vision concerning the exercise of Turkey's foreign policy has been adopted. This policy is based on the notion of "strategic depth" developed by Ahmet Davutoglu². According to Davutoglu, the emphasis accorded to the relation of Turkey with Western countries since the creation of the Turkish Republic has conducted to the neglect of Turkey's interests into other countries that belonged to the ancient Ottoman Empire and particularly with the countries of the North Africa and the Middle East (Taspinar, 2008).

According to Davutoglu, in the post-Cold war era, for a country to be a leading actor in international affairs, it must have "strategic depth". This "strategic depth" is consisted of a "geographical depth", which means an exceptional geopolitical location, and of a "historical depth", which means a rich cultural and historical background (Jabbour, 2015). For Davutoglu, Turkey, has both an exceptional geographical position, as it is geographically situated between the East and the West, and a rich cultural and historical legacy as heir to the Ottoman Empire (ibid.).

In consequence, Turkey, must be able to increase its influence to the territories that belonged to the Ottoman Empire in order to rise to the status of regional power. This conception of Turkey's foreign policy has also been qualified as neo-ottomanism. Therefore, for many specialists on the subject, Turkish soap-operas seem to be considered by the Turkish government as a tool in order to enhance a positive and attractive image for Turkey (particularly to the regions that belonged to the ancient Ottoman empire) and thus, augment its soft power.

Nilgün Tatal-Cheviron and Aydin Çam (2017), explain that many strategies of the Turkish government have been established in order to assist the production of Turkish soap operas. The public press agency (Anadolu Ajansi) and the financial

aid that is provided to private television channels and to production companies for the creation of soap operas are two of the instruments of this policy. Consequently, the diffusion of Turkish soap-operas outside Turkey's borders seems to contribute to the effort of turning Turkey into a "model country". Thereby, the representatives of Turkish government have several times stated in public the importance of Turkish soap operas for the government. For instance, Egemen Bagis, while he was the minister of the European Union Affairs (2009 – 2013) had declared: "Turkish series are a perfect tool for us to reflect Turkey's image and Turkish lifestyle. This, not only for our economic but also for our diplomatic and sociological interests. Turkish series have become one of the most effective means of our soft power" (Tutal-Cheviron and Çam, 2017: 133). The proliferation of soap-operas reviving Turkey's ottoman past (Muhteşem Yüzyıl, Muhteşem Yüzyıl: Kösem, Diriliş: Ertuğrul, Filinta etc.) as well as the emphasis accorded to Muslim principles and values (Paris, 2017), are two elements that point out the neo-ottomanist approach of Turkey's contemporary popular culture in general and of Turkish soap-operas in particular. Furthermore, the forced politicization of the celebrities starring in these soap-operas is another element that testifies the importance accorded to this sector by the Turkish government (Vitrinel, 2019).

Turkish soap-operas are now exported in more than 140 countries. One of the most popular soap operas is Muhteşem Yüzyıl (Magnificent century) that has been watched by almost 400 millions of viewers worldwide. The soap operas in question seem to have even overcome in popularity telenovelas in Latin America that since recently were "dominant" in this particular geographical area.

Turkish Dramas in Greek Television

As mentioned in our introduction, among the countries that consume Turkish soap-operas, Greece keeps a high position. This consumption has particularly augmented since the economic crisis. Nonetheless, Turkish soap-operas had tempted long before the financial crisis to conquer the Greek media market. The first attempt was with the soap-opera entitled *Yabancı Damat* back in 2005³. This particular soap-opera narrates the love story between a Greek man and a Turkish woman. The soap-opera in question was well received by the Greek audience as it marked particularly satisfying audience rates⁴. At this point, it is worth mentioning, that the success of this first Turkish soap-opera in Greece, is based basically upon two major factors. First, this cultural product was diffused during a summertime. More often, during this period Greek channels suffer from a severe lack of fictions having as a result to diffuse again and again episodes from cult series such as *The*

Penthouse⁵, Those and the others⁶ etc. Thus, this soap-opera was one of the few “new” products in the Greek market during that summer. Moreover, the storyline of this soap-opera seemed to interest particularly the Greek audience as, as mentioned above, it treats the “forbidden” love between a Greek man and a Turkish woman. Images of both Athens and Istanbul, funny stereotypes for both populations (especially their oldest generations representatives’ attitudes), common cultural traits and of course the archetype of Romeo and Juliet were some of the elements that drew the attention of the audience.

Despite the huge success of this first Turkish soap-opera in Greece, the Greek market seemed to be more resistant in adopting cultural products from the neighboring country. It is worth mentioning that at the same year (2005) another Turkish soap-opera made its appearance on the Greek screen, this time through the antenna of Alpha TV. This soap-opera was entitled *Asmali Konak*⁷ and did not stimulate the interest of the Greek audience having as a result its interruption few months after its first diffusion.

It was five years later, in 2010, that the Greek market began to import systematically soap-operas from the neighboring country. More precisely, in June 2010, the soap-opera *Binbir Gece*⁸ was the first big success that established the leading role of Turkish soap-operas in Greece. The serial in question that was diffused by Ant1 TV, marked very high audience rates and thus was the top program in the prime-time zone during several weeks competing other Greek products of the same genre that were particularly successful until this moment such as *The life of another*⁹ or *Edem’s secrets*¹⁰. After this first successful attempt, the same channel also diffused in 2010 the soap-operas *Dudaktan Kalbe*¹¹ and *Gümüş*¹². The following year, the two other leading Greek channels (Alpha TV and MEGA Channel) followed the example of Ant1 TV and began to diffuse systematically Turkish soap-operas. *Ezel* (Ant1 TV)¹³, *Ask-i memnu* (Ant1 TV)¹⁴, *Sila* (MEGA channel)¹⁵, *Asi* (Ant1 TV)¹⁶, *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (Ant1 TV)¹⁷, *Fatmagül’ün Suçu Ne?* (MEGA channel)¹⁸, *Karadayi* (Ant1 TV)¹⁹, *Anne* (Ant1 TV)²⁰, *Kadin* (Ant1 TV)²¹ etc. are some of the soap-operas diffused between 2011 and 2019 in Greece. At this point, we have to point out, that Greek fans of Turkish soap-operas do not only watch the products that are diffused in Greek channels but also many others through Internet (through live streaming directly from Turkish channels, through non legal sites etc.) and through DVDs. For all these reasons, it is particularly difficult to have the exact number of Turkish series that have been watched by the Greek audience. However, people who participated in our research have watched in total more than 50 Turkish soap-operas. Additionally, it is worth mentioning, that according to the AGB Nielsen Media Research²², for certain periods²³ Turkish soap operas figure on the list with the “top 5” of foreign programs in terms of audience rates.

Questioning the Concept of Soft Power: An Empirical Approach

Nye's theory relies on a mechanical chain of action according to which, when a country adopts soft power tools it increases its attractiveness towards other countries and thus can automatically influence the second (Angey-Sentuc & Molho, 2015). Consequently, culture, is here perceived as a simple commodity and not as connected to human processes (Flew, 2016).

Therefore, it can be understood that soft power theory relies on the idea that audiences are passive and that they accept the messages encoded according to a certain ideology without questioning them and without negotiating the meanings they receive. Thus, soft power theory ignores the fundamental principle of Cultural Studies: the fact that media messages are decoded and that this process depends on various factors such as ideology (Hall, 1973) or other sociodemographic and cultural elements (Morley, 1980 ; Katz & Liebes, 1993). More precisely, as Rawnsley (2015) mentions "there is no guarantee that the audience for international programming will decode the meaning of messages in a way the source would prefer, since interpretation occurs according to the prevailing cultural, social and political beliefs, attitudes and norms among individual audience members" (as cited in Flew, 2016: 286).

In other terms, the ideological context in which a drama takes place does not imply the passivity of the audiences and thus their subordination to content producers. To be more accurate, dominant messages may be successfully encoded according to the ideology of those who produce them, but it is the audience that will decode these messages and thus has interpretative power over them (Flew, 2016).

Therefore, the use of the term soft power should not be used in order to indicate a process that conducts de facto to the attraction and thus the influence and the control of the audiences but rather as a communicational intentionality on behalf the content producers. More precisely, "the culture and values of a country may appeal to other nations but without them accepting the political leadership of this country and or aligning with its political and diplomatic positions" (Jabbour, 2015: 17). Pleasure from the viewing of these soap-operas may be due to the cultural proximity between the cultural context in which these series are produced and the cultural context in which they are received, to the particular context of economic crisis which is marked by a series of cultural reclassifications (Constantopoulou & Larochele, 2013), to the storylines, to the "eye candy" effect²⁴ (Marcucci, 2012) etc. However, this pleasure does not necessarily signify the abolition of historical and emotional differences between the neighboring populations nor Greeks' willing WILL to support of the actions of the Turkish government. Certainly, this attraction can have some direct effects as far as certain practices are concerned such as tourism and Turkish language learning or even the reconsideration of some

negative stereotypes Greeks may had for Turks but yet these elements do not necessarily imply the will of Greeks to follow the interests of the Turkish government as soft power theory suggests.

Furthermore, one particularity that turns the use of the term soft power less operational is the methodological difficulty to measure the consequences of the viewing of these soap-operas. Measuring the direct effects like practices such as tourism and language learning activities is relatively easy but measuring the eventual social or psychological effects (i.e. willingness to support the actions of the Turkish government, acceptance of Turkey's interests in some regions, complete abolition of certain negative representations that are due to historical or emotional elements etc.) is harder to measure.

As a result, the in-depth empirical study of the reception of such cultural goods is necessary in order to be able to examine the relation (if exists) between attraction and influence.

Findings

Audience's predisposition

Despite the fact that Turkish soap-operas marked significantly important audience rates in Greece, their introduction to the Greek market was also accompanied by numerous negative reactions from religious and political authorities, citizens as well as from the intelligentsia of the country. These reactions are due to the particular historical relations between the two countries. The Greek-Turkish antagonism is one of the few oldest enduring conflicts between neighbors worldwide and it is not only based on tangible and objective conflicts (minority issues, the Cyprus problem, interests over Aegean etc.) but also on emotional elements (Heraclides, 2011).

Historically, the encounters between the two neighboring countries could be classified in three different periods. The origin of this rivalry can be found in the Middle Ages, at the battle of Manzikert in 1071, between Byzantine "Greeks" and Seljuk "Turks". This first phase of encounters ends with the conquest of Constantinople by Mehmed II the Conqueror (1453). The second period is from 1453 to 1821, which is portrayed by the Greeks as 400 years of "Turkish occupation" while the same period is considered by the Turks as a model of tolerance and multiculturalism, in which the Greeks flourished as no other non-Muslim community. Finally, the third phase of confrontation is the period from 1821 (the start of the Greek War of Independence) until today (ibid, 2011).

Consequently, when Turkish soap-operas started to “dominate” the Greek market several reactions occurred. More precisely, Mikis Theodorakis, one of the most important figures of the Greek cultural and political scene declared in 2012 that Turkish soap-operas are elements of anti-Greek propaganda and of cultural intrusion of the “enemy” in the country²⁵. What seems to be worth of noticing is that the reaction of Mikis Theodorakis who is situated in left political spectrum was similar to the reaction of more conservative social groups. For instance, Bishop of Thessaloniki Anthimos, known for his conservative political beliefs, had also declared that Turkish soap-operas project an alienated and alienating version of history and of Turkish civilization and thus are dangerous²⁶.

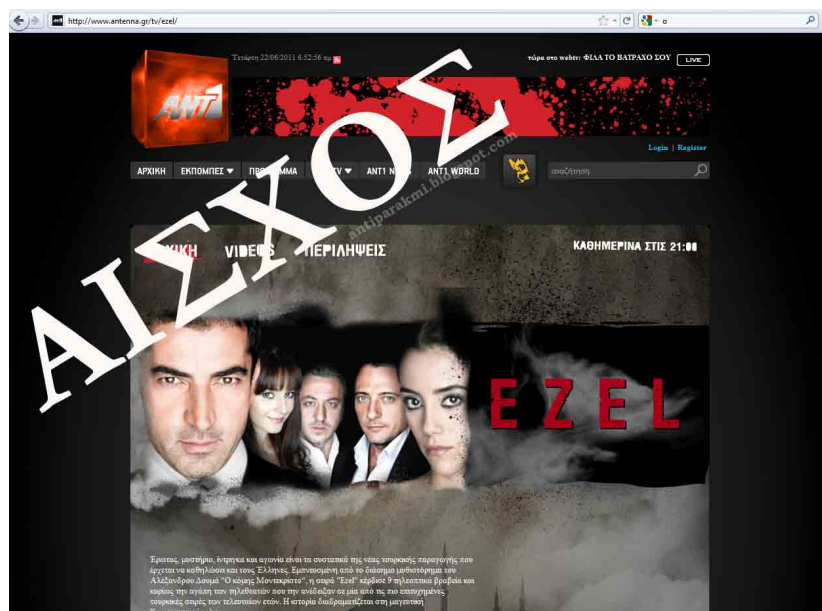


Figure 1: Image accompanying article that was inviting citizens to gather in front of the channel Ant1 TV in order to protest against the projection of the soap-opera Ezel. It is a picture of the channel's website referring to the new soap-opera (Ezel) and on top of it the word “disgrace” was marked with capital letters in Greek²⁷.

Moreover, on June 22nd, 2011 many citizens were gathered in front of the channel Ant1 in order to protest against the projection of the soap-opera Ezel which contained several scenes of the occupied part of Cyprus (Figures 1 and 2). The diffusion of such content was considered to be an act of national betrayal from a part of Greek and Cypriot citizens. Additionally, members of the Greek - Cypriot community, applied a charge in the court against the channel in question in order to stop the diffusion of this particular soap-opera²⁸.



Figure 2: Picture of members of the Greek-Cypriot community protesting in front of the main building of Ant1 TV on June 22nd, 2011. They are holding a banner with the following inscription: "Greek-Turkish friendship is not possible as long as the occupation persists in Cyprus"²⁹.

Thus, it can be understood that apart from the important audience rates, several negative reactions occurred not only when Turkish soap-operas began to be systematically projected on Greek television but also until recently. These reactions are due to the particular historical and emotional differences that characterize the relations between the two countries and cannot seem to be overcome despite the availability of Turkish cultural products on the Greek market. Consequently, the soft power theory is first of all limited by the predisposition of the audiences towards a particular country's cultural productions. Our empirical research revealed that the fans of the particular cultural products are very sensitive on nationalist propaganda. More precisely, 46 out of 50 individuals recognized in these soap-operas an intention to promote Turkey's image and thus enhance a positive image of the country abroad. Furthermore, in some cases (12 out of 50) they even recognized as a kind of anti-Greek propaganda which conducted them to the immediate reject of certain soap-operas with historical content (i.e. *Muhteşem Yüzyıl*, *Vatanım Sensin* etc.). However, in some cases the viewing of Turkish soap-operas conducted individuals to reconsider certain negative stereotypes that they may had for Turks. More precisely, through Turkish soap-operas are portrayed values, habits and elements that are common to the two countries and that do not characterize westernized cultural products (i.e. the respect of the institution of the family, common foods, common prejudices etc.).

Thus, Greeks seem to identify their everyday life habits more easily to the narratives of Turkish series. This identification of individuals to the characters, to the situations and to the social environments represented in Turkish soaps enhance their emotional attachment to the storylines. Furthermore, Turkish soap-operas do not surprise them as they are capable of understanding the interpretations, the intentions, the attitudes, the roles and the social and cultural situations they watch and that they consider as being part of their own lives. This identification with the audiovisual contents dedicated to everyday life and culture creates a sense of proximity to the audiences which not only intensifies their interest for the program but also their emotional implication to them.

Thus, through the consumption of these soap-operas Greek audiences have the possibility to re-examine the representation they have for the Turks and are invited to discover not only the cultural differences but also the common traits between the two populations.

“They are not that much different after all... They have the same habits, the same values... I like that, I believe it’s closer to us than Americans”

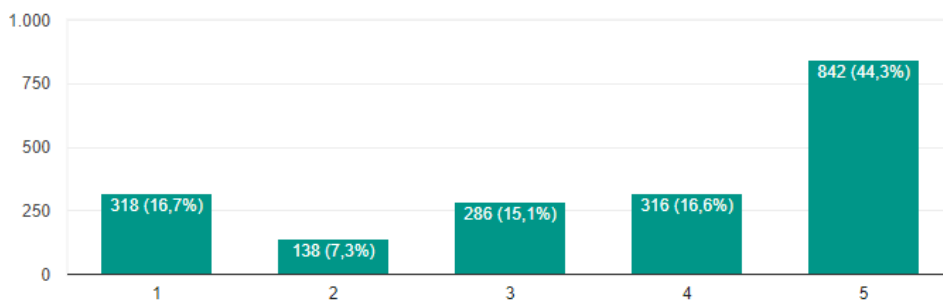
(Eirini, 36 years old)

Despite these alternative representations offered to the Greek audience through Turkish soap-operas, we cannot argue that this attraction due to the cultural proximity between the two countries can be translated to a certain willingness of Greeks to support Turkey’s interests, to overcome long-enduring rivalries or to even follow the Turkish government’s decisions if necessary as soft power theory suggests. Moreover, the majority of the interviewees are aware of the political and social context in which these soap-operas are produced. Thus, they are very critical towards the representations projected through these products and the image of Turkey that they tempt to project. Thus, they are very cautious as far as the content of the series they chose is concerned. Consequently, they often reject products that contradict their own knowledge of history or of social reality. Within this context it is obvious that the viewing of a country’s cultural goods may not necessarily be translated to diplomatic outcomes.

Fan's Practices as Proves of Soft Power?

The viewing of Turkish soap-operas seems to conduct to certain “tangible” effects such as tourism activities and Turkish language learning practices. More precisely, among the 1900 individuals (majorly women) who replied to our online survey the 38,2% (726 individuals) have visited at least once Istanbul. Among 1176 persons who haven't yet visited Istanbul, the 97% (1139 individuals) want to visit the town while only 3% (37 individuals) don't have the intention to do so.

We've asked from subjects who participated in our research to evaluate from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much) to which level Turkish soap operas stimulated them to visit Istanbul or to desire to visit Istanbul.



Question: From 5 (very much) to 1 (not at all) to which extent Turkish soap operas stimulated you to visit (or to intent to visit) Istanbul?

As it can be observed from the graphic above, an important part of individuals replied that their will to visit the town of Istanbul was influenced to an important extent by Turkish soap operas.

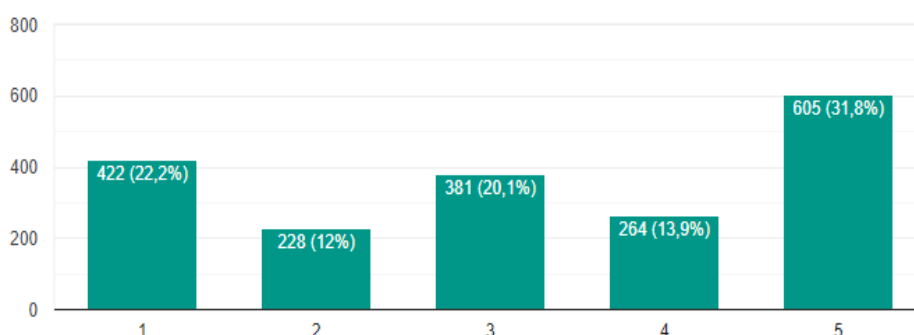
On this point, we have to highlight that among the people who have already visited Istanbul, the 25% of them (182 individuals) had combined their visit to an activity strictly related to Turkish soap operas (i.e. meeting with a protagonist, visit locations or villas that have been used as scenery for the filming of soap operas, assist to the shootings, visit studios or even neighborhoods that are portrayed in their favorite series etc.).

Many researchers have worked on the relation between media products and tourism activities. Sue Beeton (2005) analyzed the relation between tourism and films. As she explained, travelling in order to visit the places that were used as sites for the making of a film or of a TV program or conducting other types of activities that are directly related to the making of a media product (e.g. tours to production studios, theme parks etc.) is what she qualified as “film-induced tourism”.

Of course, we have to point out that visiting Istanbul is easy for Greeks as it is near and thus, transportation costs are relatively affordable. Additionally, accommodation costs are not expensive. Thus, conducting tourism activities in relation with Turkish soap operas is not as hard as it could be for telenovelas for example where travelling to Argentina or Mexico could be more complicated. We consider that this is a factor that should be also taken under consideration.

Yet again, soap-opera induced tourism is relevant to the attraction of the audience by these particular cultural goods but cannot be translated to diplomatic outcomes. One characteristic example of this is that when in 2018 a diplomatic difference between Greece and Turkey occurred, several social groups in Greece invited citizens to boycott Turkish soap-operas³⁰ and tourism activities in Turkey³¹ which resulted indeed to the decrease to Greek tourists in Turkey³². Thus, it can be understood that the attraction by certain cultural goods or even the tourist activities in the locations portrayed through them cannot be translated to diplomatic outcomes. Audience's predisposition or current diplomatic relations and collective memory seem to play a more important role. In other terms, soft power theory, does not take under consideration the complexity of relationship between two countries which may be shaped by different historical, geopolitical and strategic elements in which soft power may play only a limited role (Fan, 2008).

Furthermore, among the 1900 persons that participated in our research the 21,6% (411 persons) declared speaking Turkish. When we've asked them to evaluate from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much) to which level Turkish soap operas stimulated them to learn Turkish or to desire to learn Turkish in the future an important percentage declared that they were highly stimulated by their viewing experience.



Question: From 5 (very much) to 1 (not at all) to which extent Turkish soap operas stimulated you to learn Turkish (or to intent to do so)?

As you can see from the above graphic an important percentage of the interviewees are interested in Turkish language because of their viewing experience. However, an important aspect that has to be taken under consideration is that among the 1900 persons who participated in our research 34,9 % (664 persons) are originated from areas that now belong to Turkey. Consequently, Turkish words or idioms are part of the dialect of their ancestors. During our interviews an important percentage of our interviewees (19 out of 50) declared that they enjoy watching Turkish soap-operas as they like hearing common words or words that their ancestors were using. Thus, Turkish soap-operas may be a stimulus concerning their will to learn Turkish language but yet their motivations may be related to their family background.

“I like hearing Turkish language. My father was originated from Asia Minor. He was speaking the Turkish language and I really like to hear this language now. It reminds me him”.

(Argyro, 51 years old)

Consequently, neither the learning of Turkish language could be considered as a direct influence of Turkish soap-operas on the Greek audiences. However, Turkish soap-operas could be considered as stimuli for the rediscovery of Turkish civilization by the Greeks. Nonetheless, we still cannot argue that this rediscovery conducts to diplomatic outcomes or to the abolition of negative feelings towards Turks. Greek-Turkish relations are long-enduring, troubled and very fragile as they are due not only on tangible but also on emotional elements. Thus, it would be naïf to conclude that as Greeks are attracted by Turkish soap-operas, they would be more willing to overcome historical and geopolitical differences and negative feelings and follow / support Turkish government's interests as soft power theory suggests.

Conclusion

Since the introduction of soft power theory by Joseph Nye, many political and media scientists as well as elite journalists have used this concept in order to analyze the impact of transnational media texts and their effects on local audiences. Despite its popularity, the theory in question raises several questions that should be taken under consideration. First, it presupposes a direct link between attractiveness and the ability to influence other nations in a diplomatic level. Second, it underestimates the complexity of the reception process of media texts by the audiences. More precisely, there no guarantee that transnational audiences will decode the meaning of messages in a way the source would prefer because interpretation occurs according to the different cultural, social, political beliefs and attitudes that are dominant in each society. Finally, it does not take under consideration the complexity of the relationship between two countries which may be defined by historic and strategic elements and in which soft power may play only a limited role.

Undeniably, Turkish soap-operas attract Greek audiences for several reasons such as cultural proximity, identity negotiation, alternative storylines etc. and which may conduct activities in relation to these particular soap-operas (i.e. soap-opera induced tourism) or to Turkish civilization in general (i.e. learning Turkish language). However, this attraction should not be confounded with the desire to overcome long-enduring rivalries and negative feelings in order to follow Turkish government's interests. Therefore, the attraction of local audiences by transnational texts such as Turkish soap-operas, should not be considered as a de facto success of Turkey's soft power. Soft power should be used as a communicational intentionality rather than an effect.

Author Biography

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Notes

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1. See more: <http://litsonline-ebrd.com/the-crisis-impact-in-greece/>
 2. Former academic and diplomat. Minister of Turkey's Foreign Affairs (2009 – 2014) and Turkey's Prime-Minister (2014 – 2016).
 3. This soap-opera was running in Turkey from 2004 to 2007. In Greece, it was projected by MEGA Channel.
 4. From the first to the last episode this soap-opera marked more than 30% of the television rate while the episode projected on the 25th of August 2005 marked a rate of 58,4%. Source: AGB Hellas (www.arianna.gr).
 5. 1990 – 1992 (MEGA channel)
 6. 1993 – 1996 (Ant1 TV)
 7. 2002 – 2003 (in Turkey).
 8. 2006 – 2009 (in Turkey).
 9. 2009 – 2012 (MEGA channel).
 10. 2008 – 2011 (MEGA channel).
 11. 2007 – 2009 (in Turkey) / 2010 – 2011 (in Greece).
 12. 2005 – 2007 (in Turkey) / 2010 – 2011 (in Greece).
 13. 2009 – 2011 (in Turkey) / 2011 – 2012 (in Greece).
 14. Ask-i-memnu, 2008 – 2010 (in Turkey) / 2011 – 2012 (in Greece).
 15. 2006 – 2008 (in Turkey) / 2012 – 2013 (in Greece).
 16. 2007 – 2009 (in Turkey) / 2012 – 2013 (in Greece).
 17. Muhtesem Yuzyil, 2011 – 2014 (in Turkey) / 2012 – 2013.
 18. Fatmagul'un sucu ne?, 2010 – 2012 (in Turkey) / 2012 – 2014.
 19. 2012 – 2015 (in Turkey), 2013 – 2014.
 20. 2016 – 2017 (in Turkey) / 2017 – 2018 (in Greece).
 21. 2017 – 2019 (in Turkey) / 2018 – 2019 (in Greece).
 22. Audience measurement company which is active in Greece since 1988.
 23. Particularly between 2011 and 2013.
 24. The beauty of the protagonists
 25. Newpost, "Mikis against Turkish serials: The enemy is in front of the gates if not already in" Published on September 7th, 2012. Consulted on August 9th, 2019. (<http://newpost.gr/parapolitika/152119/mikis-kata-toyrkikon-sirial-o-exthros-einai-pro-ton-ylon-anden-mpike-idi-mesa>)
 26. Euro2day, "Anthimos on Turkish soap-operas". Published on September 19th, 2012. Consulted on August 9th, 2019 (<https://www.euro2day.gr/news/highlights/article-news/726566/o-anthimos-gia-ta-toyrkika-sirial.html>).
 27. Source: Olympia.gr. "The new Turkish serial of Ant1 is taking place on the bleeding soils of the occupied Cyprus". Published on June 22nd, 2011. Consulted on August 9th, 2019. (<https://olympia.gr/2011/06/22/%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%BC%CE%B1%CF%84%CF%89%CE%BC%CE%B5%CE%BD%CE%B1%CF%87%CF%89%CE%BC%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%83%CE%BA%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B5%CF%87%CE%BF%CE%BC%CE%B5%CE%BD%CE%B7%CF%83-%CE%BA/>)
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The Role of Modernity, Media and Communication in the Critical and Transformative Potential of the Everyday Space

Katarina Andjelkovic

Abstract

It is impossible to consider that architecture relies solely on its own systems of representation because space always comes through images. The history of architectural representation testifies that modern media of photography, film and TV are a relevant component of its historical evolution. It means that we trust camera as a model of a faithful reproduction of a reality and the possibility to represent this reality in our collective cinematic imagination. Likewise, presenting recorded spaces on screen means that film becomes a vast intellectual archive of the daily practice of urban space, the changing society and material culture. In this way, film presents evolving conceptions of architecture and urban spaces. Curiously, what happens in reverse is that the screenic environment has redesigned architecture, at least the way we think of architecture. Therefore, to talk about architecture is to talk about the screen as space-framing device in the media environment. This post-Cartesian space of mediated vision remains within the delimited bounds of a frame, on a screen. Starting from Beatriz Colomina's discussion of 'the history of the modern window as a history of communication', the understanding of space will be problematized through the theoretical transfiguration of 'window' into the 'screen'. I will deal the synthesis of the opposite modern subjectivities in the transition between inside and outside space. I act from the belief that these modes of communication will dissolve the sharp line of inhabited, practised and lived space, earlier elaborated by Lefebvre and Soja.

Introduction

For the purpose of placing my argument in the context of modern media conditions, I will use the dialectic role of the 'window' as indicator of our experience of the everyday space and as a critical device for transforming the spatial tropes of everydayness, its values and system of visibility. A 'window', as a basic architectural element, functions not only for letting light, ventilation and views in and out of the building, or to search profound meaning in architecture as in Jeffrey Kipnis' ventures, but rather as a device of communication. The trope of the window has been established early in the renaissance as a trust to the geometrics of vision of the "perspectival window" that decoupled the figure of transparent glass from the metaphor of the window as a "frame of vision".¹ As the metaphor, window has functioned to situate the artist and the viewer in relation to the flat plane of representation.² In other words, if window is for the eyes, then "framing" views is common function of camera, film and architecture; equally then, the architectural elements are classified into the category of communication devices. For example, Le Corbusier demonstrates how architecture of his Bestegui apartment windows (figure 1) can be a commentary on the new conditions attained by the media, although its basic function is to frame a view. Likewise, the critical and transformative potential of the everyday space achieves trustful systems of representation with 'screens in the media environments.' The aim of this discussion is to demonstrate how the screen environment changes the way we think of architecture through the dimension of communication nowadays, which mediates the overall image of the world as a permanently changing mosaic.

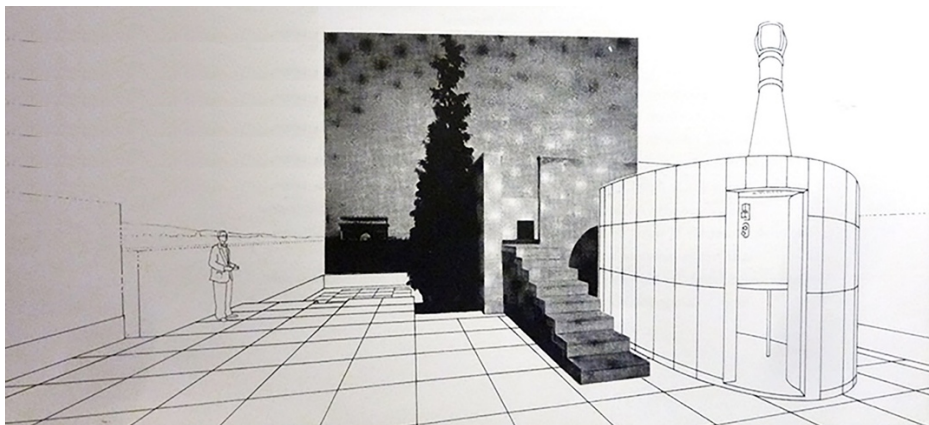


Figure 1: Le Corbusier, Charles de Bestegui apartment, exterior view of the roof garden and the room with periscope, Paris, France, 1929-32 @ Licensed under CC BY 2.0

Act of Transformation

What we once had as a singular seemingly all-encompassing view of the “whole earth” - a “Blue marble” photograph of our planet taken on December 7, 1972, through the window of the Apollo 17, has been displaced today by live feeds from the International Space Station orbiting the planet at 17,000 miles an hour ..., as exemplified by the real-time images made, distributed and watched on billions of cellphones.³ Accordingly, embodying architecture’s *non-finito* in Heraklitian terms of the ever-present change being in the essence of the universe, re-adjusts the order of imagination in architecture to maintain our perceived reality. Accordingly, the primary function of the frame is: act of transformation. Observed through window as shown in the Planet Earth photograph case, the image of the world is a permanently changing kaleidoscopic instant appearance instead of an all-encompassing unchangeable picture of the world. Laced into this commentary is the idea that communication allows us to see the very possibility of change, more clearly and in detail, when experiencing the moment. For example, in his film *Un homme qui dort*, French novelist and filmmaker Georges Perec portrays the everyday life of a young Parisian man (figure 2).

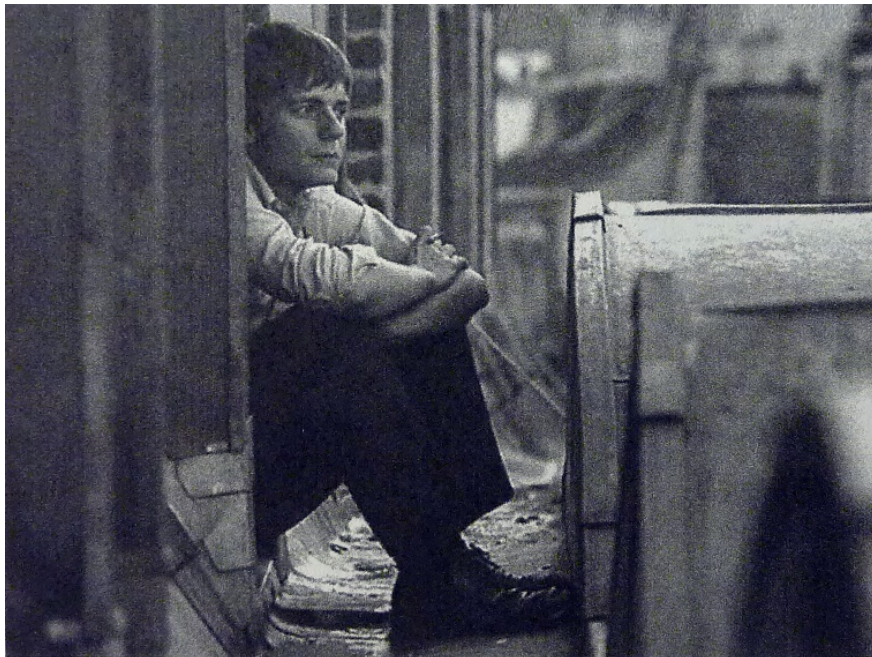


Figure 2. Bernard Queysanne and Georges Perec, *Un homme qui dort*, 1974.

@ Film Still. Licensed under CC BY 2.0

He uses a small attic bedroom with a window that turns quickly into the main motif of the film frames. By extending one's field of vision through the window, he pulls the main protagonist to the outdoor space. His intention is to shoot the constant transformation of the scene: the clouds and shadows over roofs, traffic and people, constantly moving and changing the overall picture of the world captured in the window frame. However small an aperture, this possibility to step outside the window frame, as shown in the film shots, becomes an opportunity for a change of the inner world of the young man searching freedom, liberty and exploration. Although the modes of practicing the window are in relation to the everyday activities (sleeping, eating, smoking, observation), in Percec's films the window becomes a framing device embodied through communication. Nonetheless, it is exactly this communication with the world outside the house that provides contemplation over the image of the ever-changing world.

Act of Display

The second function of the frame is: act of display. Practicing architects use the notion of a display to challenge different ideas about what it means to design for display. Architecture theorists problematize the notion of an urban display as a window to other realities. What started with Benjamin's recognition that "distraction" occurs in film through the "shock effect" of its image sequences,⁴ originates from the urban environment where the collective seeks to be distracted. This can be recognized in some of its most radical versions constructed by film, where it becomes a means to escape everyday reality. That is to say, it is possible to continue the modernistic aspiration for alienation from our reality, trapped in a high degree of insecurity asking what time and place they actually belong to. As shown in a science-fiction 10-episode TV series *Philip K. Dick: Electric Dreams* (Ronald D. Moore and Michael Dinner, 2017), the main motif is *communication* to other unknown realities of human memory. The film narrative unfolds as the passage between mental states, with an idea to disclose memories of a person. The mental state of the protagonist functions as a metaphoric window through which he seeks to uncover reality. Remembering an everyday life situation is presented as follows: each protagonist's presumably primary reality is the other's vacation. What we get at the end is mirroring alternate realities.

Consequently, the mental state of the protagonist seems to be the device for challenging reality, asking: which is the real one of the two alternate realities? Yet another dilemma: how do our needs transform that reality in order to maintain it through the productive tension with illusion? In order to maintain the dynamic continuity of permanently unfolding events (which is in the etymology of the word display), while searching to keep up the spectator's attention or work in the Baudrillardian *simulacrum*⁵, the film-maker would respond by establishing anew the continuity of tension through the protagonist of the film action.

Act of Communication

The third function of the frame is: act of communication. We know that some architects, like Philip Johnson with his *Glass House* (1949, figure 3), referred to the glass barriers as a device of communication between inside and outside of the house. They underlined the core values of modernity by flattening picture of the everyday life to the film and TV screens. Moreover, accelerated circulation of the photograph's reproduction of space, across magazines and advertisements, with implications of camera optics, have announced the play of dualisms: the conscious vs. the unconscious, presence vs. absence, the visible vs. the invisible. As does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses in Freud's ventures, these venues challenged the concept of fixed frontier that separates interior from exterior and thus undermined its status. Freud tried to clarify this in his psycho-analytic research. He made the provocation of the "fixed limit" clear and made it understandable by placing a framed mirror against the window of his studio, right next to his work table. As Marie-Odile Briot notes: "The mirror (the psyche) is in the same plane as the window. The reflection is also a self-portrait projected onto the outside world."⁶ This way, Freud's mirror, placed in the frontier that separates interior from exterior, has architectural consequences: it breaks, excludes and dissociates this limit. Communication developed this way points to the end of conventional criticism which portrays modern architecture as a high artistic practice and categorize it within the systems of communication and mass media.

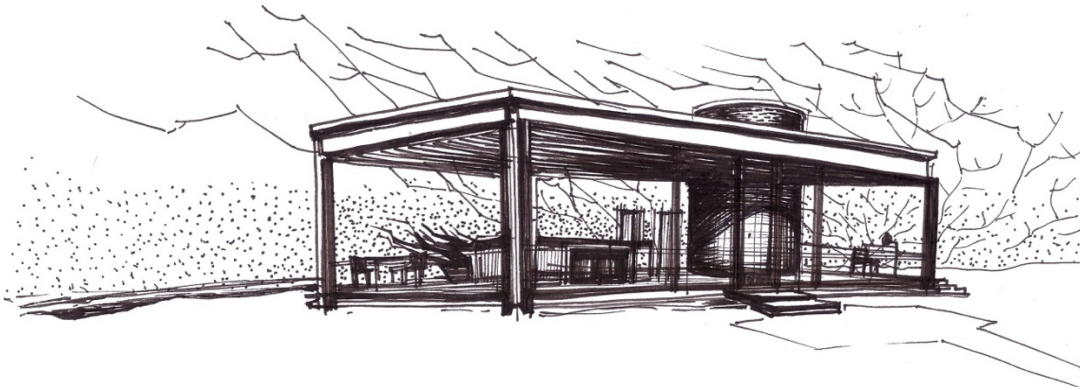


Figure 3: Philip Johnson, The Glass House. 1949 @ Delineated by author.

The Birth and Raise of a New Subject: A Modern Tale

Marit Pasche claims: "cinema offers a completely new kind of subject."⁷ This assertion gives us an opportunity to examine a peculiar type of subjectivity at the very heart of modernism. In a dramatic passage in *The Order of Things*, Foucault describes the epistemological shift from eighteenth-century empiricism to the invention of a transcendental concept of "man" as "the threshold of modernity".⁸ The panopticon prison⁹ was thought of as a spatial reformatory that could change and "correct" subjectivity by architectural means.¹⁰ Reordering of power, knowledge and the visible¹¹ (*voir, pouvoir et savoir*), as Foucault claimed, and placing the panoptic model in a pivotal position of this transition, marks "the birth of a modern subject." Later, modernity manifested mediations of the "virtual" gaze through panorama, diorama, and other optical devices. This way, our modern subject began gradually migrating from the exclusively physical to media environment: modern architecture projected on film screen. This trend emerges from a desire to establish visual mastery over the constraints of space and time. Regardless, the filmmaker lacks a means of communication with the architect to accomplish this.

In difference to panopticon subjective effect - the 'seer' with the sense of omnipotent voyeurism and the 'seen' with the sense of disciplined surveillance - modernity started to embody foremost an image of 'shock' as a barometer of the psychological state of mankind's 'alienation'. As such, the problem of alienation mediates the evolution of the modernist model of thinking: a progressive crisis of the experience of space and time accompanied by the foundation of modern physics, the invention of radio, TV and film, the beginning of mass production, the automobile and aviation industry of the early 20th century (John Berger, 1969; David Harvey, 1990).¹² It is precisely in this disparate environment of film and architectural practices that has acquired the definition for the role of *communication*. Namely, on the occasion of critical examination of the everyday space in the same period, the collaboration between architects and filmmakers began to channel abstract thought models. In this regard, architects begin exploring film as a critical source of spatial concepts applicable in architecture by recognizing the intention of the director to *communicate* the desired values of the architect.

Projecting Everyday Spaces on Screen

Unlike enveloping the viewer in the illusion of narrative fiction, early films relied heavily on attractions and thus depended (solely) on conventions of display. To describe the concept of alienation, they posited windows to unreal events – astonishing sights right in front of our eyes. Basically, what modern architecture intended by celebrating white empty surfaces deprived of any sensitivities for the senses, on the contrary TV screens with filmic content tried to re-compensate. More precisely, by exposing sensational subjects like a train crash (as the Lumières' train approached the station at La Ciotat), or electrocution of an elephant¹³, these films enhanced the multisensory, multidimensional experience, stimulated the senses to correspond to the dynamic conditions of modern metropolis. In his "An Aesthetic of Astonishment" (1989), film historian Tom Gunning challenges readings of this "primal" train scene as a reaction to the realism of screened images, or a misrecognition of the imaginary as real: "Rather than mistaking the image for reality, the spectator is astonished by its transformation through the new illusion of projected motion

...The astonishment derived from a magical metamorphosis rather than a seamless reproduction of reality."¹⁴ Apart from the fact that early filmmakers were aware of the tension between stasis and movement as a possible dramatic component of their films and favored the increasing drama to make the scene more real than reality itself, some other components of the screen were equally important for the final effect of desired reality. Namely, although viewing these scenes through the screen implies a separation of the physical surface (as in the case of window), it doesn't reduce the final effect of immersion. In other words, in the simple act of reduction, even the painterly convention of perspective centers everything on the eye of the beholder and call this appearance "reality"¹⁵, which is, in truth, just a faithful "reproduction" of a reality outside itself. It seems that Victor Burgin stands for the appropriate analogy with an object and its appearance (that is, reality and illusion) when he claims that "separation of knowledge from belief characteristic of representation the photograph stands to the viewer as does the fetishized object ... we know we see a two-dimensional surface, we believe we look through it into three-dimensional space, we cannot do both at the same time – there is a 'coming and going' between knowledge and belief."¹⁶ It is so because the conception of the world that accompanies camera disassociates itself from a classical humanist episteme. In conclusion, framing views as an act of display differs substantially from the ancient discontinuous and heterogeneous spaces based on the multiplicity points of view. Indeed, the transition to the screenic environment is the centered space of a motionless and continuous whole, a virtual image¹⁷ - a "faithful" simulation of reality.

Conclusion

So, who is our modern subject born in such media environment? ...de-temporalized ... de-territorialized and re-territorialized: through the cinematic re-constellation of images imploded perpetually in urban space? Is he in reality or ...absent, alienated ... immersed, distracted, and again fully immersed in film as in latest technology: in an increasingly derealized sense of 'presence'¹⁸ (Friedberg, 1994)?

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre claims that "image "kills" and cannot account for the richness of the lived experience."¹⁹ Architects, in Lefebvre's eyes are complicit within the whole alienating nature of contemporary existence.²⁰ This would be true if we talk exclusively about physical reality, but not about the media reality. Do we even think of the real world and what is real today? The filmmaker may quote Veclavik, Baudrillard's predecessor, "The biggest mistake is that there is only one reality. What really exists is a very large number of different realities. Some of them are contradictory, but they are all generated by communication, and none of them is the reflection of objective truth." All the more so, this progressively changing reality was triggered by removing the boundaries between subject and technology, as correctly observed by Virilio. He claims that the world today needs no architecture anymore in order to keep the utopian relationship between technology, media and contemporary life.²¹ Such role of the subject becomes the backbone of architectural representation to date when we face reality as progressively mediated by mobile screens. How do we re-ensure the value of our everyday space if we constantly re-territorialize ourselves between the screen and real physical space?

Then, it turned out that our modern subject belongs to no other regime of reality to his own. It is so because today we see our subject as autonomous and detached from history and temporality into a more fluid form of subjectivity. We see him constantly transported virtually between past, present and future times, in diverse image regimes. We all perceive the world around us in images and these images are mediations between us and the virtual environment. Baudrillard reminds us, through the concept of simulacra, that images bear no relation to any reality whatever.²² And what we get in the end is perceived reality through the screen transgressing the limits of our imagery, revealing to each and every one of us the potential agency of moving and creating images of our own realities. It is complicit with Heraklitian terms of the ever-changing world, which is in the essence of the universe. It also seems to be the most appropriate embodiment of the modern subject that has been prepared for our permanently changing world of today, asking what will the future of architecture have to offer?

Author Biography

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Notes

1. Anne Friedberg, "Introduction: The Virtual Window," in *The Virtual Window: from Alberti to Microsoft* (London: The MIT Press, 2009), 1-24.
2. Anne Friedberg, "The Window: Lens I: Descartes's Window," in *Virtual Window* (London: The MIT Press, 2009), 28-30.
3. Beatriz Colomina & Mark Wigley, *Are We Human? Notes on an archaeology of design* (Zürich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2016), 16.
4. Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, trans. J. A. Underwood (London: Penguin Books, 2008 [1936]).
5. Baudrillard is arguing that the everydayness of the terrestrial habitat hypostatized in space marks the end of metaphysics, and signals the beginning of the era of hyper-reality: that which was previously mentally projected, which was lived as a metaphor in the terrestrial habitat is from now on projected, entirely without metaphor, into the absolute space of simulation. Especially important in this context is his notion of 'the satellization of the real itself'. Read more in: Jean Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy of Communication*, trans. Bernard Schütze and Caroline Schütze (South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e), 2012).

6. Marie-Odile Briot, "L'Esprit nouveau; son regard sur les sciences," in *Léger at l'esprit moderne*, exhibition catalogue (Paris: Musée d'Art moderne de la ville de Paris, 1982), 38.
7. Marit Paasche, "The New Protagonist: On the Films of Hito Steyerl," in *Urban Images. Unruly Desires in Film and Architecture*, eds. Synne Bull, Marit Paasche (Sternberg Press, 2011), 24.
8. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*, translated from *Les Mots et Les Choses* (New York: Random House, 1970), 319. Also see Martin Jay, "In the Empire of the Gaze: Foucault and the Denigration of Vision in 20th Century French Thought," in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Couzens Hoy (London: Basil Blackwell, 1986).
9. Jeremy Bentham's panoptic device (1791) provided the model for Foucault's characterization of panoptic power and the "disciplines" of imagined scrutiny. The panopticon was an apparatus- a "machine of the visible," to use Comolli's phrase- which controlled the seer-seen relation. In the panopticon, an unseen seer surveys a confined and controlled subject. The panopticon produces a subjective effect: the seer with the sense of omnipotent voyeurism and the seen with the sense of disciplined surveillance.
10. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978) (*Surveiller et Punir* [Paris, 1975]), 201-207.
11. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, translated from *Les Mots et Les Choses* (New York: Random House, 1970), 319.
12. John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin Books, 2008); David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1991[1990]).
13. Tom Gunning, "An Aesthetic of Astonishment: Early Film and the (In)Credulous Spectator," and Miriam Hansen, "Early Cinema, Late Cinema: Transformations of the Public Sphere," in Linda Williams, ed. *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 114-133: 134-152.
14. Tom Gunning cit.in: Anne Friedberg, *The Virtual Window*, 155.
15. Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity*, 283.
16. Victor Burgin, *The End of Art Theory: Criticism and Postmodernity* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press International, 1986), 44; Victor Burgin cit. in: Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity*, 91.
17. Anne Friedberg, *Virtual Window*, 101-140.
18. Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and The Postmodern* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 2.
19. Henri Lefebvre, "The Production of Space" (Extracts), in Neil Leach, *Rethinking Architecture; A Reader in Cultural Theory* (Routledge: Oxon, England, 1997), 139.
20. Ibid, 139.
21. Paul Virilio, *The Lost Dimension*, translated by Daniel Moshenberg (New York: SEMIOTEXT(E), 1991).
22. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations*, translated by Paul Foss, Paul Patton and Philip Beitchman (Semiotext[e], 1983).

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