# Design/Arts/Culture
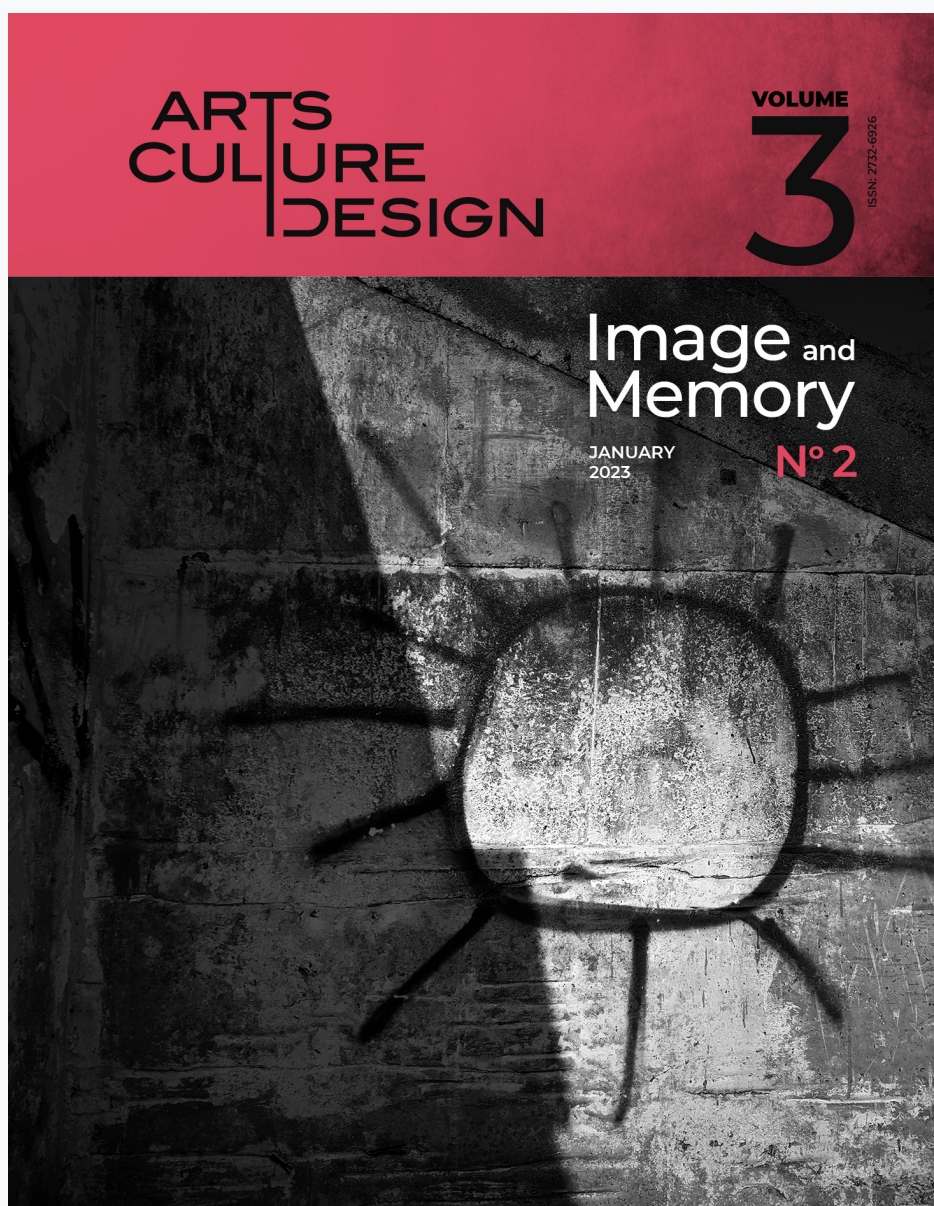
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Image and Memory



ARTS CULTURE DESIGN

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## About the Journal

The International Journal **Design | Arts | Culture** is a digital open access and peer-reviewed multi-disciplinary journal, published by "Design, Interior Architecture and Audiovisual Documentation" laboratory of the Faculty of Applied Arts and Culture of the **University of West Attica Greece** in cooperation with the **Doctoral Studies** of the **National University of Arts Bucharest Romania**, **University of Nicosia Cyprus**, **ESAD Porto Portugal**, and the **Academy of Fine Arts Gdańsk Poland**.

**DAC Journal** is biannual (regular and special issues) and publishes research articles, projects, and portfolios, as well as book reviews and student works. It aims to provide an academic forum for sharing and connecting ideas, projects, practices, and findings about design, applied arts and culture. **DAC Journal** provides immediate open access to its content on the principle that making research freely available to the public supports a greater global exchange of knowledge.
The journal does not charge submission or publication fees.

## Focus and Scope

The journal aims to be broadly inclusive and interdisciplinary, publishing research articles, projects, portfolios, student works and book reviews with a particular focus on:

Theory addressing current dialogue in conceptual design strategies and philosophical frameworks in interior architecture, product design, graphic visualization, environmental design, and art.

Practice models and new alternative perspectives in building methods, materials research, cultural studies, sustainable approaches.

Portfolio presentations of original artwork projects, installations, film, photography etc.

Education that integrates research with design and culture as well as pedagogies that explore alternative approaches to the delivery of history and theory in design research, studio projects, theoretical investigations of teaching practices.

Applied research investigating design and culture ideologies supported by the development of theoretical frameworks in design research, case studies.

## Submissions

### ARTICLES

**DAC Journal** accepts submissions of original research articles including all the topics described below, but not limited to them: Aesthetics | Semantics | History | Continuity of Cultural Heritage | Methodological Approaches | Social-Cultural Aspects of Design | Visual Studies Culture | Design and Material Culture | Identity and Heritage | Criticism | Creativity | Innovation | Arts | Audiovisual Sequences | Sustainability | Learning Strategies and Pedagogy | Expertise in Design | Visual Techniques in the Design Process | Design Tools and Experiential Approaches concerning Interior Architecture | Furniture Design | Product Design | Graphic Design | Illustration | Animation | Visual Communication Design | Photography | New Media and Digital Imaging | Technologies in Art and Design | Creative and Innovative Media Arts Concepts | Preservation of Cultural Heritage | Conservation and Restoration.

The articles should be relevant to a broad audience of researchers, teachers, and practitioners, according to the topics described above. All submissions are double-blind peer-reviewed.

## PORTFOLIO & PROJECTS

**DAC Journal** accepts submissions of artist's portfolios and project presentations primarily related but not limited to: Painting | Drawing | Sculpture | Visual Techniques in the Design Process | Design Tools and Experiential Approaches concerning Interior Architecture | Architectural Design | Technologies in Art and Design  | Furniture Design | Product Design | Graphic Design | Print making | Typography | Illustration | Animation | Visual Communication Design | Photography | New Media and Digital Imaging | Art Installations | Public Art | Graffiti | Preservation of Cultural Heritage | Conservation and Restoration.

We are mainly interested in artwork that addresses the broad concept of space, both as a cultural convention and as encapsulating the physical environment and the formative role of the art media and processes within. Submissions can be either by the artists themselves or by an art critic or curator. All submissions are double-blind peer-reviewed.

## BOOK REVIEWS

**DAC Journal** also dedicates a section of the journal's content to book reviews and criticism. Consistent to common academic practices, these book reviews will not have the form of a simple informative and/or promotional report on new publications that are relevant to the scientific, artistic and academic community. Instead, this section will attempt to become another integral part of the dialogue and reflective thinking fostered in this journal – in a sense, a parallel methodological tool for exploring aesthetic, theoretical, and ideological themes that are related to design, art and culture within a broader sense. Therefore, the featured articles will be texts of critical analysis, they will have a scientific framework and they will attempt to introduce a theoretical framework related to the current thematic of the journal.

## STUDENT WORK

**DAC Journal** accepts submissions of student works, such as essays and final projects, including portfolios related but not limited to the fields and topics covered by the journal's scope and content. All submissions are double-blind peer-reviewed.

# ARTS CULTURE DESIGN

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DAC Journal
Vol. 3

Image and
Memory

JANUARY
2023

N° 2

# CONTENT

# EDITORIAL NOTE

Ruxandra Demetrescu

Dragoș Gheorghiu

"Meaning is never found in relative independence, as in individual words or sentences; rather, it is in a constant state of flux."

Walter Benjamin

EDITOR

**Ruxandra Demetrescu**

Ruxandra Demetrescu (b. 1954), art historian, professor of Art History and Theory at the Department of Doctoral Studies of the National University of Arts Bucharest, Romania, where she teaches art theory, museum studies and modern Romanian art. She was the Rector of the National University of Arts in Bucharest (2006–2012) and the first Director of the Romanian Cultural Institute in Berlin, Germany (1999–2003). Her research focuses are the history of art theories in German-speaking space (Konrad Fiedler, Alois Riegl, Aby Warburg, Walter Benjamin) and Romanian interwar artistic modernity. She held the Arnheim Professur at the Humboldt University in the fall of 2012. She coordinated research projects and curated solo shows of contemporary Romanian artists. Published numerous texts in Romanian contemporary visual artists' exhibition catalogues.

EDITOR

**Dragoș Gheorghiu**

Professor Dragoș Gheorghiu (BA Architecture; BA/MA Design; PhD Archaeology/History), Director of Doctoral Studies at the National University of Arts Bucharest, Romania, is a cultural anthropologist, archaeologist-experimentalist and professional visual artist, with an extensive list of publications on prehistoric technology, semiotics of material culture and Augmented Reality art. He is a researcher at the Instituto Terra e Memória, Maçao, and at the Centro de Geociências – University of Coimbra, and Paul Mellon Fellow at CASVA, National Gallery in Washington, D.C. Gheorghiu began to produce works of art-and-archaeology as soon as 1980, a trend he continued over time with the concept of artchaeology. He works as land-artist to reveal prehistoric monuments in Wales, Portugal, Sardinia and Romania.

# EDITORIAL NOTE

Starting from some fundamental questions posed many decades ago: "What do we mean by «image»? Is it in our mind or on the screen or both? If both, what are some of the similarities and differences between the projected image and the mental image? More importantly, how fundamental and instrumental is the picture in your mind to your cognitive processes perception, memory, thought, creativity? What are the effects of imagery on memory? Can relatively abstract concepts and thoughts involve imagery?" (Fleming, 1977, p. 43); this is the question anwered by the third volume of DAC Journal (Design | Arts | Culture) dedicated to "Image and Memory".

Memory is not an instrument for exploring the past but its "theatre". The cultural, symbolic world, the world of going beyond the material, the ultimate, the transcendent, constitutes an understanding of the concept of "place of memory" in Pierre Nora. Collective memory exists due to "places of memory", as they are manifested in material, functional and symbolic forms: monuments, memorials, and images.

In this context, we should remember Theodor Adorno's critical view of Walter Benjamin's philosophical imagination (philosophische Phantasie) that makes of the singular 'image' (Bild) the very crystal 'eye' – of history. Commenting Adorno, Georges Didi-Huberman claimed "the paradoxical power and fragility of images.

On the one hand, they are unsuited to the generality of the concept, since they are always singular: local, incomplete, in short, insubstantial [...]. On the other hand, they are universally open: never entirely sealed off, never completed [...]". According to the French philosopher of art, "There is no critical theory without a critique of images. But nor is there any such theory without a critique – of discourse and image – by images themselves. [...] Images are themselves capable of becoming critical tools. They are, as Jean-Paul Sartre long ago said, acts not things, active confrontations on the battlefield of 'culture'. They do not merely illustrate ideas: they produce ideas or produce effects critical of ideas." (Didi-Huberman, 2017, p. 260).

If images are embodied in pictures, we should also acknowledge that "a picture is worth a thousand words". This commonplace quotation suggests that images contain more information than texts and that the pieces of information provided by images are more easily processed and understood by any observer. Otherwise, a picture can trigger a buried memory and recall a precise moment in time much more rapidly than words.

Quoting Walter Benjamin, "the true picture of the past flits by. The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again."
Image and memory are indelibly linked by the contemporary urges as the coagulation of the concept of "public image" due to Paul Virilio. Images are "fabricated" on different levels in different techniques mobilising the individual and the collective memory.

The connection between image and memory can be seen from the beginning of history, the images of individual or collective experience being present in material culture (Jones, 2007). These images representing a type of external memory (Donald, 1998), fixed on a material medium, allowed the remembrance process (Gibbons, 2019) to encompass an enormous area of topics, from images of the deceased to images of memorable events.

Visual artists, art historians and theoreticians, historians, and archaeologists contributed with essays (both textual and visual) thematising various aspects regarding the mnemonic, individual and collective memories.

## ARTICLES

The second issue of DAC starts with the second part of **Theodor Bart**'s research portfolio, focusing on the mnemonic utility of a conjoint protocol between image and writing, whereby shifts – of the type that affects sensorial cogency – can be specifically intercepted in a form of diary that is not only tied to the calendrical time-line, but following the trail of phase-shifts in a tracery of changes that are not merely in time but of time. The attached archive-and-index is, in the author's view, a modest attempt of an investigative non-philosophical nature.

**Margalit Berriet** aimed to journey through the world of abstract signs, symbols, and images, in an attempt to comprehend the process of constitution of memories, of (hi)stories, of dialects, and of (super)natural realities, as generated by human perceptions of things. The author stressed that imagery and metaphor connect people, continents, philosophies, beliefs, (hi)stories, because all human actions are based upon cultural, social, and ethical constructions of knowledge, interpretations, awareness, and of engagements. Arts and cultures, then, are mirrors of the journey of civilization, reflecting on the entirety of its expeditions and productions.

Quoting Walter Benjamin's famous words: "photography stakes a claim to art as soon as it appears as a commodity", **Nina Lassithiotaki** focused on the fashion representations in the work of the photographer Julia Hetta, who adopts many of the tools and practices of classical painting to capture the paradox and ambiguity of the concept of Beauty, while illustrating the current, the innovative, the radical in the field of human presence and clothing, recalling the cultural deposits of times past, but also imbuing her creations with new rules that detect a subjective and complex beauty.

**Ioanna Delfino** analysed the significance of the radical change in children's illustrated books during the early years of the Greek *metapolitefsi*. The author stressed the fact that pictures are no longer a merely decorative accompaniment to the text: they often cover the entire surface of the page and play a decisive role in the development of the story, becoming central to the experience of the book. Thus, the young illustrators of the 70s and 80s often wrote their own texts.

**Eftychia (Faye) Tzanetoulakou** researched the multi-layered and diverse presence of the Sublime in art today, as analysed through the oeuvre of Peter Doig, the contemporary British painter who belongs to the stream of the Young British Artists, which was developed in Great Britain in the 1990s.

**Iolanda Anastasiei** focused on a case study concerning Nemere Kerezsi's artistic approach presented in the exhibition *Nemere Kerezsi: Thiemann-Etüde* (Quadro Gallery, Cluj-Napoca, 13th of May – 24th of June 2022). The author analyzed the close relationship between memory and image, starting from the way the artist observes and researches the memory and narratives created around places, which he claims as the central resource for the creation of his works present in the *Thiemann-Etüde* exhibition.

## PORTFOLIOS

In this set of portfolios from the DAC 3 Issue 2 Journal international artists and PhD students from Doctoral Studies Program of the National University of Arts in Bucharest, participate in visualizing and recovering the Memory of various places, from the recent or more distant past. Although seemingly varied, their subjects complement each other harmoniously, in an organic sequence, thanks to approaches that share common, archetypal elements.

The artistic methods the authors use cover a wide range, from performance to photography and drawings, or from animated 3D images to models, used in a fluid way, whether it is to walk a ritual path from the past or to browse a picture book, to float in Second Life, or to imagine a journey through the miniature streets of a model.

All these movements of the mentioned artists take place on real, imaginary, or virtual material paths, on visible or invisible/symbolic paths, linking the Present to the memory of the Past, linking reality to the world of myth.

In an interview with **Radu Lilea**, visual artist **Mabe Bethônico** insists on the existence in her art of a geological materiality to which people are linked by an affective connection and agency, such as the relationship with stone, which produces deep and destructive traces in the Earth's anatomy. These traces left in the memory of places and people represent an anthropo-geological archive existing on a gigantic scale compared to photographic or art archives.

At the opposite pole of materiality is **Prodromos Manou**'s approach, which tries to illustrate the materiality of places in the minds of storytellers, i.e., those mythical images that the present imagination tries to materialize, extracting them from the words of stories from time immemorial, which the book, illustrated by the artist, presents as a flow of images.

Designer **Cornelia Moțaianu**'s project is also close to this very distant past, extracting signs from prehistoric and traditional material culture to create a new identity for a village that has lost its identity over time. These signs of the Past will be able to act as visualizations of the tangible and intangible heritage of the local peasant culture, which has disappeared due to modernization. The infographics produced use a visual language of ancestral signs, inspired by the decoration of ceramic vessels or costumes.

The same attitude of rescuing the values of pre-modern traditional life is also found in the project of visual artist **Emilia Bouriti** who uses the participatory experience in a traditional rural community to bring back to the present some of the lost rituality of the sacred relationship with the Earth. A contemporary individual performance with a sledge, or ritual group movements, such as walking to a sacred place, share the same fluid traces that diaphanously cover the Earth's surface.

Situated midway between the materiality of the participatory actions and the fluidity of the digital world, the real-imaginary journey of designer **Răzvan Clondir** leads the reader from the arid landscape of Dobrogea to the mythical one of Odysseus' journeys. The digital application he uses mixes the author's visual experiences or memories, "stimulating the imagination to produce images of mythological lands".

The fluidity of movement of the disembodied individual, which belongs to an anthropology of immateriality and virtuality, is the subject of **David Serra Navarro**'s research. In Second Life all perceptions of things or human movement are different, as is the sense of immersion, materiality or duration. The virtual world in which the artist exists in the form of an avatar does not seem to have the capacity to retain its memory, which can disappear in an instant.

**Andrei Menţeanu** also proposes a virtual world, this time with a material existence, with the help of hyper-realistic models that show to people outside the conflict zones the dimensions of disasters and the annihilation of human creation. Sometimes the traces of destruction are so numerous and chaotic that they allow only a limited space to be traversed. The realism of these miniature reconstructions lies precisely in preserving the emotion, because, despite the reduced size of the models, the perception of the scale of the disaster and human pain remains unchanged. If the memory of a place has been reduced to fragments, it is our duty to reconstruct, from the saved traces, the image of the lost whole.

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"The power of walking... its destructive ability to destroy the way we are meant to live in cities."

Will Self

# TRACES, MEMORY, FLOW

Through its breadth and complexity, the urban environment is a space of walking, chance encounters, surprising discoveries and immersing in time, because „[...] the delight of walking lay in the accidental finding of things, letting small wonders reveal themselves shyly, at the speed of travel" (Hunt 2014, p. 45).

Every place is a palimpsest of traces, that the walker experiments and creates in a flow. Therefore, the immersion in the memory of a place is a flowing process of enactment that triggers images kept in memory and creates new ones, as Benjamin observed: „Memory, the staging of the past, turns the flow of events into tableaux." (Benjamin cited in Sontag, 1979).

Consequently, the memory of places and their traces was the basis for designing the third volume of DAC Journal, Image and Memory, Nº 2. The cover of the journal and the concept of this issue were created by Mihaela Moțăianu, PhD Candidate at the National University of Arts Bucharest, who proposes a series of her photographs inserted between the journal's sections, a kaleidoscope of moments that capture the flow of walking and the traces of Time.

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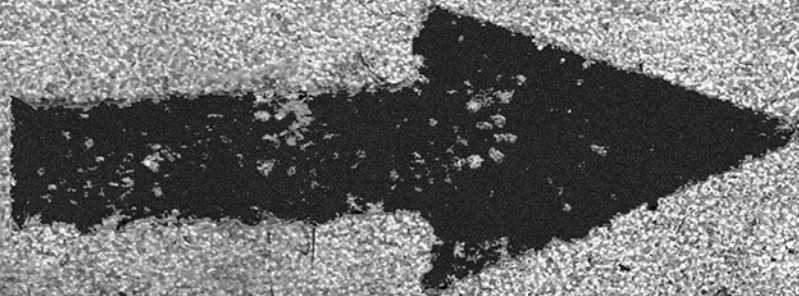
| ARTICLES

ARTICLE

# PROJECT SPINOZA: RE/MEMBERING SENSORIAL COGENCY

## PRESENTATION OF A PORTFOLIO AND PROPOSAL OF AN ANTHROPONOMIC REFRAMING OF FIELD-RECORDS

Theodor Barth

**PART TWO**

The first part of the article was published in DAC Journal Vol.3 | Image and Memory N° 1
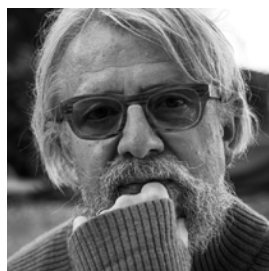
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Theodor Barth (PhD Anthropology) is currently a Professor of Theory and Writing at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts (KHiO) and a researcher with a part-time research residency at the National Library of Norway. He holds a Dr. Philos. in social anthropology. Previously he has been a research scientist at the Norwegian Foundation for Research in Science and Technology.
He did his doctoral research at the ARENA program (Advanced Research on the Europeanisation of the Nation-State), based on multi-sited fieldwork in Central/Eastern Europe, with a special focus on the cities of Zagreb and Sarajevo. His professional interest lies in humanities-driven studies of techno-environmental developments, as a lens to social dynamics from a comparative perspective. His current line of research lies with forensic approaches: e.g. photogravure as a forensic approach to photographic materials belonging to a larger corpus of documents. He seeks to explore a cartographic alternative to interpretation.

# PROJECT SPINOZA: RE/MEMBERING SENSORIAL COGENCY

## PRESENTATION OF A PORTFOLIO AND PROPOSAL OF AN ANTHROPONOMIC REFRAMING OF FIELD-RECORDS

### Abstract

The purpose of this article is to present a research portfolio – composed of an online archive and an index from 2020-22 – and perform its outcomes in a *memory-theatre*.
The *design* needed for this theatre is modelled on Baruch Spinoza's *Ethica*, in which the order of a geometrical demonstration *hosts* a philosophical investigation. The non-same rules/ heteronomy of the host and the *guest*, in Spinoza's opus magnum, is an instance of a wider phenomenon which the article seeks to explore and exploit: the *docking* of an investigation, by the means of a contraption that is foreign to it, intercepting images of what the present may have in store (whether past, present, or future). The sensorial cogency that picks up on elements it can comprehend, but never fully contain: the mnemonic slippery nature of the image. On this backdrop, the article discusses different ways of pairing up with the environment, through media that are hosted rather than belonging there: the different terms of populating the present, being together or forming a group, serve to elucidate certain aspects of memory – mnemonic devices with an environmental footprint – in fieldwork, laboratory research, digital culture or presently the electrosphere.

The article thereby seeks to develop and propose some designs to work with the problem of interception – picking up changes in the 'memory of the present' (Bergson, 2021): what it holds and what it has in store. The article seeks to establish a parity between apparatuses with such impact, in view of comparing them: whether they are as simple as **1)** a post in a hole (a datum), or more complex as **2)** a computer docked to a home-office (another *datum*).

In the presentation of the portfolio, a framework for partaking of such changes, compiling the experience prompted by them, is proposed (Benjamin, 1999). The major feature of this framework is then deepened in a situated *case-study*: here, positions coexisting and valued on different terms, in the presence of a cabin in reconstruction, shift as they are logged in a guest book.

In a section on design, the article probes a broader applicability of what has been found in the case-study, based on a wider fieldwork experience. Principle: *repair* also writes re-pair. In the conclusion, a design for a 'contemporary interception' is demonstrated *visually*.

The *anthroponomical* framework is conceived as a scholarly contribution to art, and an artistic contribution to science, through a mnemonic understanding of the technical image.

## DESIGN (CONTEXT)

Beyond our expanded lives online, the C19 lockdown's sensorial *restrictions* forced us to invent a fund of *sensorial experience* that is vital to us as social, cultural, and natural beings. It also brought us the challenge of making up for it when people – in all walks of life – did *not* manage. How to make up for a deficit of sensorial experience that is vital to living, thinking, and acting? How to make up for the sense of *being in wrong*, from failure of providing a foundation for what we think and do?

That is, for sure *not* a philosophical, scientific, or even artistic foundation but an ethical one, in a sense that Spinoza's geometrical framework in *Ethica* may help us hatch and mature. Whatever is achieved becomes the basis for what happens *next*: this is true of logic and causality, but it also applies in the realm of action: the idea that every action specifically binds or summons another, in the sense that they can *dovetail* with one another without involving coercion, force nor policing.

*Phronesis*[1] comes from experience with the kind of bootstrapping that makes ulterior action a *credible* path to yet uncharted areas of learning. The experience that by action – or doing – previously uncharted and unimagined learning will ensue. The proposition of the *Spinoza Project* is that such experience with learning from practice can be *designed*: that is, a design for education in which process, performance, and production are key to a new intra-operative *datum*.

By this term – intra-operative datum – we determine the docking of a triangle of elements (e.g., screen, frame, and intercept) that are substantially the same but heteronomous to us: e.g., **1)** the dwelling, **2)** the post-shoe and **3)** guestbook [*datum*] in the *précis* (**Part I** of the article): we cannot conflate them, yet they are *substantially* in-one. They are held by the datum. We can span the process of how they work together, how the performances of the woman in the précis are related, how the work stands.

Or, said in other terms, what makes thought and extension – the two attributes that determine humans in the Spinozist framework – *intra-operable*. Looking further into this possibility is relevant (and indeed called for) in the post-pandemic crisis of *inter-operability*: we can and need to move onwards from a *mechanic* concept of inter-operability at all levels of society, to a mnemonic idea of inter-operability of mediation where systematic – and field – knowledge are held by a set datum.

A *datum* is an elementary artefact whose presence/absence determines whether a situation comes out as a cogent whole, to someone who also (thereby) becomes an active element of it. The tasks & occasions leading up to this sensorial encounter are the ones hatching of the kind of *intra-operable* compound, determining the present meaning of memory. With the computer-screen as our datum, we are no longer spectators to cyberspace as a world in itself, and unto itself.

*Project Spinoza* is an invitation to consider the proposition that Baruch Spinoza – by *docking* his philosophical query in *Ethica* to the format of a *geometric* survey – provided a *theoretical* framework for the discussion of *scaling* of sensorial cogency, as designs of operative starting-points applicable to research, whether field-based or in laboratories, also applicable to the contemporary and ubiquitous culture of *screening*, *intercepting*, and *framing* with digital devices (Agamben, 2009).

The Spinoza Project is devoted to the exploration of the situational repertoires that emerge when we make the computer-screen our *datum*: that is, integrated in the electrosphere and physical environment in which we live. And involved in investigation relying on field-surveys: anthropology, archaeology, art, architecture – to limit ourselves to Tim Ingold's 4As (Ingold, 2013) – as transdisciplinary form of field-knowledge, based on life-world investigation and the interceptive affordance of *making*.

The computer here becomes more of a witness than a master-media, with the basic contract of being with *other* – older or newer – *media*, without being as other media.

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1.   "Phronesis" (Gr.) is a Greek term which means 'practical wisdom' that has been derived from learning and evidence of practical things. Phronesis leads to breakthrough thinking and creativity and enables the individual to discern and make good judgements about what is the right thing to do in a situation (https://oxford-review.com/oxford-review-encyclopaedia-terms/phronesis-definition-meaning/).

Thereby featuring the mode of *wit(h)nessing* (a neologism coined by painter, psychoanalyst and philosopher Bracha Ettinger, 2015): not as a subjective trope, but as the basic mode of the datum... the line connecting the houses, in our previous example (PART I), is *with* the drawing of the houses but *not* as them[2].

*Être ensemble* in French, determines both *being together* (as members, or elements, determined by belonging) and *forming a group* (subject to inclusion/exclusion). It is a quality of togetherness featuring the moving line *between* being together and forming a group. The C19 pandemic posed this challenge in dystopian terms, but nevertheless experimental ones with; the twilight potential of a utopian turn – a potential zone of how we relate to the planet, the past, contemporary, future.

The scope of the Spinoza Project is accordingly *anthroponomic* in the sense that observing humanity in a broader and more complex sense is called for by the *anthropocene* (with its compound geological and human scale). The adjoined portfolio features an archive of topics of this scope. And seeks to develop an intraoperable field-record that corresponds exactly with the period of the pandemic. To it is adjoined an index seeking to constitute the archive as an *ensemble*. *Not* as styling, but deeply into the discrete layers that make up the inner *timescape* of an archive, according to Laurraine Daston (2017): **1)** *first nature*: record of complex phenomena as they happen in the field; **2)** *second nature*: the systematic and selective investigation of such materials; **3)** *third nature*: the incorporation of such investigation into the archives of science, to which is added here; **4)** *fourth nature*: the history of sensorial screening of the preceding levels[3].

This *non-anthropocentric* approach to the natural history of the mind – as linked to an ethnography of active observation – can be re-booted by a targeted elaboration on Spinoza's *Ethica*, in a way that may not be intuitive at first, but eventually will reveal a simplifying impact, when brought down to the specifics of our present concern with Spinoza, and the analysis at a case level of the subject matter given to a broad thematization here. A hatching ground for the creative/caring reader (Bellacasa, 2017).

In *narrative* terms, the enterprise of the *index* and *archive* presented in the previous section, of course, has some points in common with the picaresque novel: an overarching story (index) which, like a chest of drawers, contains a collection of 49 *smaller tales*. In the context of the pandemic and the lockdown, the parallel that springs to mind is Boccaccio's Decameron, a mediaeval narrative set in a villa outside Florence, while the Black Death rages in the city.

What is less obvious is what we can learn from the *exceptional* in a situation where normalcy is set adrift in a succession of *new normals*. The implications of what it means to live with crisis integrated into our contemporary ontology, we have previously addressed (Barth, 2019). For reasons argued in the following sections, the follow-up has brought up a shift from the ontological to an ethical framework. That is, a reflection on systematic and practical knowledge (*phronesis*).

## RE-PAIR & REPAIR (PRINCIPLE)

**PART I** of this written piece is devoted to the development of the topic – *phronesis* – at an embryonic level. The first part picks up the thread of Darvill's embryonic gesture in Spinoza's *magnum opus Ethica*. The foreignness and marginality of the geometrical order to the philosophical query. The yield of the wide geometric order selected for the purposes of thematization of ethics in the expanded field, is manifested *inter alia* in the organisation of the book into parts:

**PART I** – God: definitions;

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**2.**   This insight appears also to be captured by Felix Klein in his inaugural lecture (the Erlangen programme) held in 1872: "If one replaces the principal group by a more extended group, only part of the geometric properties will be preserved. The other geometrical properties no longer appear as intrinsic properties of the geometrical entities, but as properties of a system obtained by adding to them a special entity. This entity, inasmuch as it is, generally, determined, is defined by the condition that, supposing that it is fixed, only the transformations, among those of the given group, that still apply to the space, are those of the principal group."

**3.**   Here, 'sensorial' is used in the sense that there are more than human eyes, with a hit and impact of what can be found with a forensic approach in an investigation (Fuller and Weizman, 2021). Joined to the eyes is an array of other sensors. Which can be digital/not.

**PART II** – On the nature and origin of the mind;

**PART III** – On the nature and origin of emotions;

**PART IV** – On human bondage or the strength of emotions;

**PART V** – On the power of understanding, or of human freedom.

In the second part of this presentation, we moved on to the *exemplification* of the embryonic level, conveyed by a *précis*, and the opportunity for learning generated from a case (cf, **Part I**): notably by the generative dynamics of the *être ensemble* engaging *conjointly* a social and technical process. Along with the different phases/modes of a project (proposing an instance of *investigative aesthetics*). From here we will see how embryonic learning can be capped by systemic learning.

It should be understood that we are thereby responding to a *human* need (cf. **Presentation** in **Part I**), rather than a need for a system. Our concern is instead with how *memory*, under certain circumstances, can be *part* of the equation: rather than left in the wake, as an energy leakage (or, entropy). What are the factors of developing *sensorial cogency*: at the embryonic level, the case level, and the level with which we will engage with here: the idea of *wanting* togetherness in different ways. Here, *wanting* is in need for a different apparatus – screening, framing and intercepting – than simple offer and demand. In Bruno Latour's understanding, the 6 km altitude strip where both living and inanimate things combine to form what we call life, is considered an *artefact* (Latour, 2018). As matters of fact and matters of care, a parliament. In terms of *être ensemble*, being together, forming groups and holding this artefact could be reframed as citizenship, in terms of *want*.

That is, Dominique Schnapper's (2000) bid on the subject – in the mid-nineties – when forms of citizenship, beyond the wardenship of the nation-state, was on the agenda of the political discussions in Europe. The topic has an even deeper *lineage* in the interest and study of political processes is [acephalous societies](#): that is, without institutional integration at the top. Finally, the combination of these two provenances in our own [fieldwork in Sarajevo](#) (1996/97).

The latter features a study of the *être ensemble* of a local humanitarian organisation that was seen as *urban* and perceived as *not* being party to the ethnic struggles over territories, by the parties in conflict: it was engaged in the logistic of distribution from international aid and ran a soup kitchen, home and health-care, pharmaceutical distribution and a radio connection with the outside world. The organisation fought for the right to partake of the life in the city, as 1 of 10 places where the citizens would go to smoke, drink coffee and play chess before the war.

Citizenship, here, means 'good citizenship': a level of ethics transposing the life of a citizen unto a playground of political awareness and ideas (under conditions where the state was *de facto* out of play). Within the framework of this organisation, the people employed by it had to work in isolation – for security reasons – trusting that their colleagues would do their bit, making up for the crisis of inter-operability that comes with a war: taking care of the complex human needs under siege (the intra-action of which we call 'modern life', here bereft of its basic *utilities*).

In a situation like this, more than human eyes come to testify on what is going on. The logistics of life – under conditions of duress – is likely to define a socio-technical process, that also includes ritual, in a certain sense: in that human behaviours acquire a *communicative* affordance[4] when set in the terms of logistics, where the predicates of delivery is at the same time *social*, *technical* and *environmental*. The whole gamut of artefacts become agents of the want that is at cause.



**Figure 1.** Soup Kitchen in Sarajevo (1992-95)

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4. "Ritual' is a term which anthropology uses in diverse senses. My own view is that while we only run into a paradox if we try to apply this term to some distinct class of behaviours, we can very usefully think of 'ritual' as an aspect of all behaviour, namely the communicative aspect." (Leach, 1964: XIV).

At the time, the experiences within the humanitarian organisation were *isolated*: both from the outside world and internally. At this point, however, we now have been through an experience with the C-19 lockdown – at a terrestrial scale – with some points in common: the organisation of *inter-operability* under the conditions of a state of exception, and isolation. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly to some, the crisis of inter-operability in logistics/utilities came after the pandemic.

Which could provide us with the occasion to visit citizenship – as the political idea of wanting to live together – anew. In our reading, this is what Bruno Latour has been attempting in the two books mentioned above. Clearly, the return to 'normal' (likely a new normal) comes with a learning challenge: i.e., the relevance of *crisis* to *normal*. That is, in the present scope, how the turn to some sort of normality can be capped with the experience from crisis, for *learning* purposes.

The crisis of citizenship was not during the lockdown – on the contrary – it comes with the crisis of inter-operability: logistics, utilities, communications, media, education. Areas that under the liberalist framework of services were already fragmenting.

During the lockdown establishing *sensorial cogency* was a child of social dearth and material need. After the lockdown we have observed that people expected that their former lives – at work and at leisure – would be returned to them. As by the turn of an electrical switch. Only to discover the changes during the pandemic that gave people a socio-material and environmental equivalent of a jet-lag. It is under these conditions that the hatching and development of *sensorial cogency* – needed as a basis to *partake of life in the city* – constitutes a new and somewhat *uncharted* learning-challenge (Figure 2. Swirl I).

Which is why we may want to focus on the single multimodal platform which was continuous during/after C19.

Thus, the *networked computer*. The lockdown brought about a series of *singular* an *excrescent* (Badiou, 2006) uses of digital media:

**1)** *singular* in exploring new ways of combining live and online fora [in ways that are unlikely to re-emerge, unless they are picked up and cultivated];

**2)** *excrescent* in the amount of time spent on shopping on the web and edu/entertainment. The ways that people rewired their need for sensorial cogency – to be themselves and contribute – unfolded on this backdrop.

The lockdown forced people to pair up with their computers – and domestic workshops – in a new way, on a global scale. In its wake came a series of crises: the logistic problems, the war on Ukraine, the energy crisis, the climate. There was no normal life to return to. Everything had to be invented anew, in this sense re-membered/re-paired. Making designs ubiquitous, inasmuch as the triangulation between the social, technical and environmental defines our emerging horizon.

During the Covid 19 lockdown we formulated and explored the following question: what if a large-scale *collective* project – formulated at a societal level – was dedicated to investigating new and ambitious uses of IT&C, on the premise that we should determine and develop uses of digital technology that does *not* emulate, substitute nor erase other media. What would that bring us? What kind of science, philosophical and artistic query would follow in the wake of this question?

The working-title for this project is *Project Spinoza*: it was imagined as a sequel to the Project Gutenberg that asked "What if we put all the books of the world and made them available *digitised* on the web?" The selection of Baruch de Spinoza's query as a framework for this enterprise, by spanning 'things intelligent' in the form of a cartographic survey: the *geometry* of a non-anthropocentric life-world of causes, in which we – as human beings – are implicated/entangled.
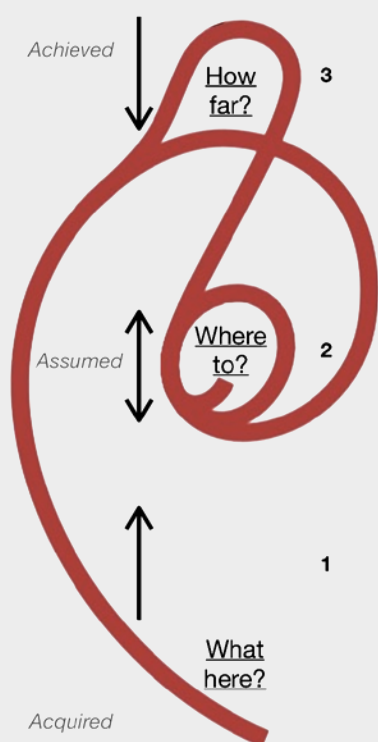


*Achieved*

How far? 3

*Assumed*

Where to? 2

1

What here?

*Acquired*

**Figure 2.** Swirl I

## CONCLUSION

Though Ethica formally follows a protocol of geometric proof – in the mathematical sense – the proofs follow from what is indicated rather than from rote deduction. For this reason the sense of geometry as a cartographic survey is comprehended, but never contained. In the same sense, Project Spinoza proposes a usage that docks computers into the array of mediations, in which it is a specific player (in patterns that shift when it is used to process, perform and produce).

This *makeshift usage* of computing is what makes it specific – in a given context – can be made as *precise* as needed/desired, at two levels: **1)** with regard to how it is docked [rigged or integrated]; **2)** the mediations that it *moderates* [relays and inhabits]. As a *thinking thing*, in Spinoza's terminology, the computer is not generic: it is specific in the dialectics of *precisation*. That is, subject to clarification of how a problem is set: e.g., as an *investigation*, and as part of what is investigated.

An investigation is directed to a type of *problem* that does not immediately invite a *solution*. In fact, the problem that invites an investigation is one that *endures* – also when "solved" – because it is also *riddled*. It invites such lines of questioning: *what have we here? where is it going? how far has it come in terms of what has already been achieved?* And in the wake of such questioning comes a *pattern*. The pattern can be regular or lopsided and broken, and evolve till it hatches (Alexander, 1977 & 1979).

In the latter case, one might conjecture that it is interpretation. *Interpretation* is but a weak form in a much wider repertoire relying on the *triangulation* with ensuing developments that make the investigation progress: abduction. Abduction is here an inference in which *not all* the premises are known. Interpretation is a weak form of abduction. Strong forms of abduction take place as the process of triangulation with the course of events, eventually hits *bull's eye* – and re/members.

As interpretation is often socially categorised as *subjective* – dismissing the subject as an illusion – its involvement and evolution with *contingencies* is not taken into account: the point onwards from which begins the chase (holding the centre while pursuing the game) is missed, since the subject here clearly is not illusory but *fictional*: that is, it *tangles* and *tangoes* with reality, and this is precisely what causes the sense of adventure. The fictional can be *marked* by reality.

Here, fiction is fundamentally interested in *reality* and *docked* to it. The human ability to shift *from* illusion to fiction – with the scope of catching up with reality – is identical to the techno-logical aspect of mediation, in general, and computing in particular. In the case of the computer, we are talking about a *screen* docked to *responsive* device with which it *combines* through an interface that can be read by humans, from here they can lock in a chase to *catch up* with reality[5].

*Project Spinoza* therefore seeks to define and develop a problem of a certain form. In Spinoza's philosophy, a 'thinking thing' with *infinite* attributes is reflected through two attributes only: *thought* and *extension*. Consequently, the geometry drawn up by Spinoza – from the human end – is *two-dimensional* (though reality is infinitely more complex). For this reason, the premises of this philosophy contains a description applicable to screens and interfaces.

Thereby moving the Cartesian query of the body-mind connect away from the "pineal gland" – or, the equivalents of it, to consider the human unity at the perimeter of an ongoing, evolving and phased link *between* fact and fiction. Of which humans are not merely accessory but are *implicated* in a real yet limited sense: that is, by the two attributes defining the human scope – thought and extension – and by the human witness that is immersed *in* and *with* the real.

Adding to thought and extension, there is therefore the human entity, which – according to Spinoza – defines in more/less *active* terms. The human unit can be active or dormant. Not active in itself, but as a potential in the broader scope of nature (or, alternatively, potentially passive and *not* an asset). *Ethica* thereby aims to cover the modes of knowing that fall short of/exceeds epistemological and ontological frameworks: i.e., a systemic-experiential intuitive cognate.

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5.    Cf., the entries on metalepsis in the flyer-archive, and in Genette (2006).

Embodiment is *prompted*. That is, *things* – in the extended sense considered here – are intercepted *before* they are embodied: which means that there is an activity of screening which precedes embodiment and is ongoing in different *modi*. The modes of screening taken into account here are: process, performance, and production. These are different *interceptive modes.* By which the non-duality of epistemology/ontology nevertheless do not entail in differentiation.

In *Ethica* the questions *how do I know that I know?* (epistemology) and h*ow to make do of being?* (ontology) cannot be separated, yet the resulting field of knowing – in which we are immersed – does not lack differentiation: the differences are rather of a unilateral kind (rather than asymptotic) and makeshift in a manner that affords triangulation. That is, truly *geometric* in the sense of **(a)** a deductive system; **(b)** a field-survey; **(c)** intercepted insights **X** that are specifically intuitive.

That is, a vector with **(a)** thought and **(b)** extension as *coordinates* and **(c)** an **X**-factor that can be represented by what can be investigated as the *matrix of interception*. This matrix is determined as a *holding pattern* between the coordinates – thought and extension—which is kept floating and in lateral drift, till the **X**-factor emerges and is intercepted. At which point the human entity is activated. That is passed from a dormant, to a more active potential. Education is awakening.
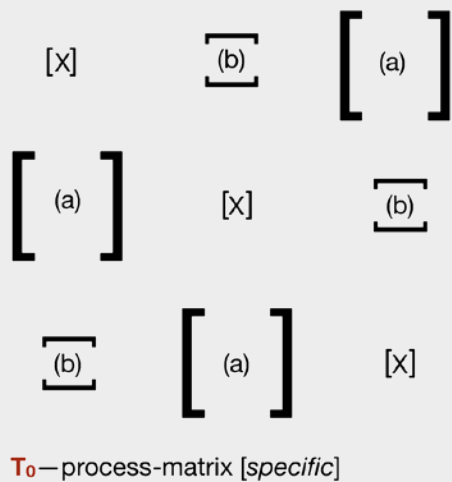


$T_0$—process-matrix [*specific*]

**Figure 3.** Gate Matrix I

As seen the matrix (below) is of a form where all the elements add up horizontally and vertically to the same, with the exception of the diagonal where the **X**-factor lines up. Which means that whenever the interlocking joinery of **(a)** and **(b)** can be held and sustained, the alignment of the incidence of 3 yields an emergent **X**-factor, subject to *interception*. The matrix is generated by a rule-based permutation. An area that has been inquired by artists, mathematicians, and gamers alike.

The rule of this permutation is: **1.** we have a sequence of 3 – **(a)**, **(b)**, and **X**; **2.** to obtain the next sequence, the first term **(a)** is moved to the end; **3.** this procedure is repeated – the term **(b)** is moved to the end; **4.** when the same rule applies again – this time moving **X** – we are back to where we started. *The matrix reads from right to left.* And also reads vertically and *horizontally*. But it does not stop here. The rules at the elementary level, also apply at the group level.

Notice how the elements **(a)** and **(b)** interlock *around* the diagonal at the centre, as the intercepted *holding* element. They look asymmetric as long as it is screened by a horizontal and vertical grid. But their symmetry appears once we are attentive to how they organise and interlock *around* the diagonal, in a form of *joinery*. If organised according to how the screen – now understood as a surface – is organised for readability *against the grain* of the reading direction (in countries reading from left to right).

Hence, we can intuit the function of the screen – in the present *expanded* reception – to *intercept* aspects of the real that are normally *outside* of our reach; and then include what is intercepted as organising elements *within* our reach: *thought* and *extension*, *reason* and *perception*, *mind* and *body* in a train of transposable correspondences that will *also* include index and archive. That is, a candidate active model of how we *tangle* and *tango* with reality, even with our narrow scope.

The matrix can then be "sliced up" horizontally and vertically: in *rows* and *columns*. These "slices" can be moved according to the same rule – from right to left, or top-down – to obtain two new matrixes. When the procedure is repeated on the ultimate/third matrix, we are back to the one we started with a*bove.* Such that, whether operating either at the elementary level or the sub-group level (rows and columns) the set of rules of permutations applies to the elements and the group. The function of the two matrixes below [$T_1$ and $T_2$] in building up a groundwork of *memory* – re-framing the notion of *foundation* studies – is to clarify two *different* aspects of how the problem set in the first matrix $T_0$ (which is *intuitively* specific)[6]: one relating to the *reception* [$T_1$], the other relating to *production* [$T_2$].

**Figure 4.** Gate Matrix II          **Figure 5.** Gate Matrix III

While the *process* matrix is *descriptive*, the two triangulating matrixes are *analytic* [**T₁** and **T₂**]. Moving from the *intuitively* specific to the *specifically* intuitive is *synthesis*.

Notice how the matrix moves from the interception of **X** in **T₀** to the investigation of **(a)** in **T₁** in the light of the first interception, and then moves unto **(b)** in **T₂** as it defines the *interlocked diagonal*.

Therefore, we can clearly *not* receive them on an equal footing: the diagonal of **(a)** in **T₁** follows from the interception of **X** in **T₀**; and the diagonal of **(b)** in **T₂** follows from the investigation of **(a)** in **T₁**.

So, we are not talking about a repetition of the same thing, but a cycle of investigation based on *unilateral duality* (Laruelle, 2013). What is dual from process to *performance*, is 'in-one' in *production*.
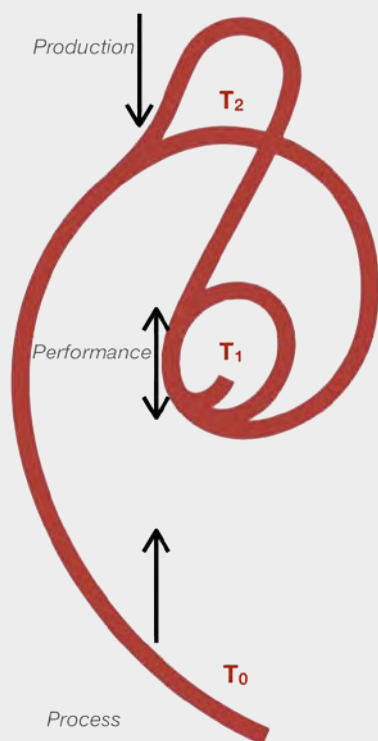


**Figure 6.** Swirl II

Clearly, the unilateral duality – what *holds* and *marks* the dual is itself *in-one* – is what affords the operable intra-connectivity drawn into the *swirl* figure to the left.
Featuring inter-operability. But also articulating memory as an infinite counterpart to the *finite* elements gathered in the swirl: *process*, *performance* and *production*.
In the wake of interception **X** in **T₀** the elements **(a)** and **(b)** are re-paired around the **X**-diagonal. Then the same protocol is iterated in **T₁** and **T₂**.
Hence the triangulation to the left.

What is *re-paired* in the finite (process, performance, production) can yield *repair* in the infinite (memory): that is memory, as partner to creation as exemplified in the *précis*. If memory is defined as having infinite states, or attributes, it poses a problem as to where it begins and stops. Still, as has been shown, memory can partner up with finite state *modi* – as process, performance, and production – to complete memory. Which will always be on relative terms with what counts and what is infinite *progress*.

Hence the *anthroponomic* scope of the present query comes in the wake of the shifting terms of sensorial cogency that happens under *crisis*: where crisis is understood as a *phase-shift* rather than a 'state of exception'.

*Not* a change in time, but a change *of time* (Wallerstein, 1991): or, if you will, shifts in the tectonics of our timescape. Where the triangulation in holding patterns, defined and analysed above, succeeds at docking itself into a memory that can be marked by the real.

**ANNEX**

In Albrecht Dürer's print (cf. Panofski, 1955) (*Melencolia* I, left) the magic square (detail) is docked to his pictorial composition of non-same elements in which the *call of the bell* – at any time – can set off a communicative chain-reaction amongst the remainder.

Yet, as much as it may be *expected* and anticipated, the call of the bell appears to be *postponed* indeterminately. Despite appearances, the situation may not have changed very much, even with the advent in our time of the computer.

As a *foreign* element in the ensemble the magic square *belongs* to the composition *without* being part of the group. The math in the square computes: the sum is 34 in all directions – horizontal, vertical and diagonal.

Yet, despite the striking coincidence within the square and the constellation of alignments between the elements, in the optics of perspective, *nothing* happens between them: they appear mutually indifferent. The angelic creature on the watch is bored. If docked to the present piece, the print works pretty accurately as a mnemonic device for the whole array of topics raised in the sections above. But what the image has in store – its potential to hold its own reality – will not hatch unless it conjures the *triangle* between the social, technical and the environmental (as explored in the précis, PART I). In the train of Albrecht Dürer's cunning, craft and correspondence (Dürer, 2000) they could have. Just as they did in Spinoza's work as a *lens-grinder*.

Detail

**Figure 7.** Albrecht Dürer, Melencolia I. (1514). Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1943. The MET. Dimensions: 24 × 18.5 cm

The picture in itself would never do the trick. Even as it today seeks an ever greater approximation of the tipping point: as *recording* and *replaying* in real time (video conferencing), as learning algorithms that approximate human behaviour (AI), as the more shifty attempts to erase the difference between human and machine. What appears to be at stake here is the odd encounter between mathematical rigour and the artistic *trompe l'œil*. But why this fascination? It is as though the protocols of emulation, substitution and erasure will only create a demand for more. It is essentially an amnesiac process. Screening, framing and intercepting proceeds in the opposite direction. The economy of the image is here not to conjure a substitute reality, but to claim for the image a reality of its own, that will contrast performatively and productively in the process of clarifying the terms in which a problem is set: here, a makeshift sensorial cogency.

An image, in this sense, can be docked to a text and marked by the real. It has a similar place as the post-in-the-hole, but in a text. Similarly, writing can be docked to a field – which it is if it fills a field-diary. Accordingly, there is a mnemonic swirl between image and writ that will hold interception and be marked by it. Here, interception is an irruption into the matrix of memory, it will change the timescape. A similar relation as between thought and extension exists between image and writ. It defines a coordinate – or, vectorial – compound with the affordance of intercepting mediations beyond image and writing conjoint: an **X**-factor which will hold and mark their conjunction: it will clarify the problem set as they are conjoined. This sort of clarification is not philosophical.

It is *anthroponomic* in the sense of connecting society, technology and environment from within. Reality is not outside us: we go into the real. It is on that condition that we can intercept intention. It is beautifully caught in a passage by Fredrik Barth (1966), in two-dimensional definition of how behaviour can be explained.

Action **(a)** in *thought*, and action in **(b)** *extension*: clearly, in an *ethnographic* format, *thought* and *extension* will readily be transposed to *writing* and *image*.
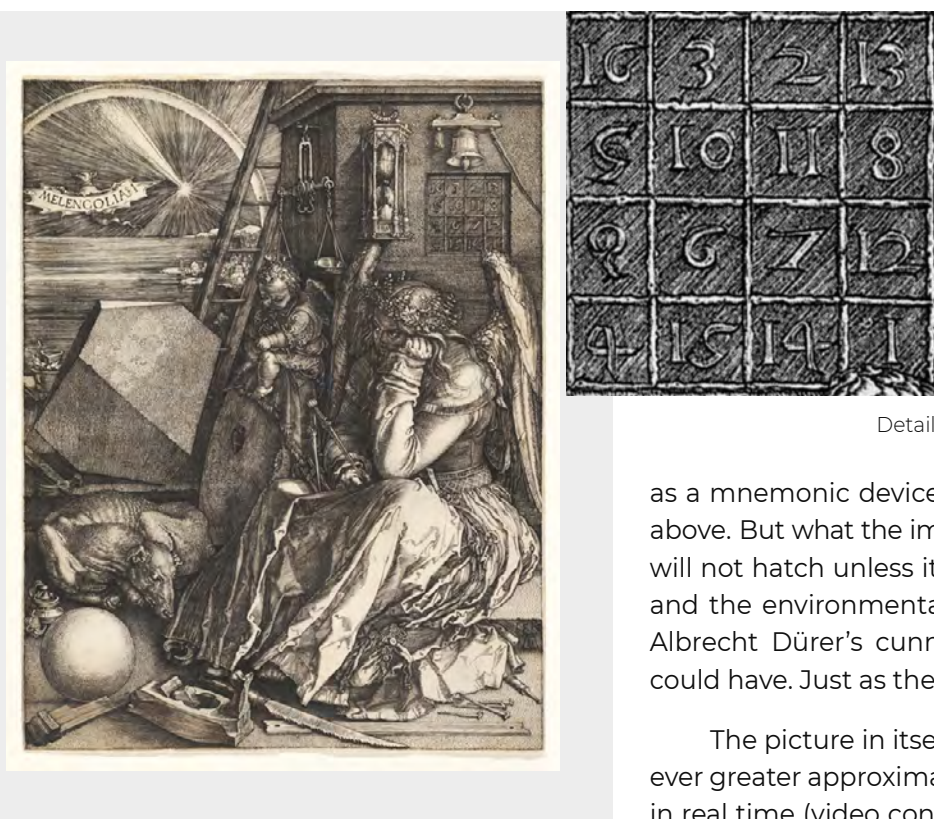
The turns of how a field-diary will move from these coordinates to ones that will theorise what has been observed in more explanatory terms, but the relation remains essentially the same.

> Human behaviour is 'explained' if we show **(a)** the utility of its consequences in terms of values held by the actor, and **(b)** the awareness on the part of the actor of the connection between an act and its specific results (Fredrik Barth, Nuffield Lecture, 1966, p. 15).

That is to say, a *mnemonic* utility can be by a conjoint protocol between image and writing, whereby shifts – of the type that affects sensorial cogency – can be specifically intercepted in a form of diary that is not only tied to the calendrical time-line, but following the trail of phase-shifts in a tracery of changes that are not merely in time but *of time*. The attached archive and index constitutes a modest attempt in this direction. If of an investigative non-philosophical nature.

The National Library of Norway,
Oslo, August 22th, 2022

## NOTE

Spinoza's diatribe with Descartes has not been discussed here. The choice has been between going into a technical detail required to go properly into the detail of the critique, or avoid placing Spinoza's work in a predetermined philosophical context (say, Gilles Deleuze (1990) or Arne Næss (1993) on one hand, or Bertrand Russell (1910) or Ludwig Wittgenstein (1922) on the other hand). We have opted for neither since our method nor errand has been non-philosophical: instead to home in on artistic, scientific, and philosophical borderlands of applicability. Hence, we present a *possibility-*argument.

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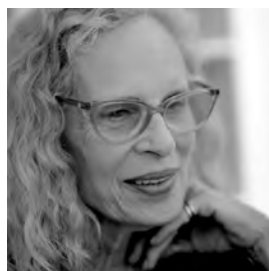
ARTICLE

# (HI)STORIES

## RECOLLECTIONS: ALLEGORIES OF TIME

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Research artist, curator, and founding Director of MdA-HAS with a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) from New York University Tisch School of the Arts. Since 1984 she exhibited internationally in group and solo shows and has set multiple transdisciplinary arts events: symposiums, workshops, and exhibitions, promoting a better knowledge of cultural diversities and pluralism and fostering intercultural dialogue. She is the author (with Patricia Creveaux) of the book *From Drawing to Symbol: A Grammar for Humanity*, Alternative 2010, and other various papers. She collaborated with UNESCO and various cultural institutions (the Musée du Quai Branly, Centre George Pompidou, Musée de Louvre, Musée d'Art et d'Histoire du Judaisme, L'Institut du Monde Arabe, Musée de l'Homme), and with personalities like Emmanuel Anati, Luiz Oosterbeek, Claude Gilbert, Jean-Pierre Mohen, George Rosevègue, as with private and public intuitions like La Préfecture of Paris, Academy of Paris, the City hall of Paris, of Jerusalem, the National Agency Against Racism (LICRA), La Foundation for la Memoire de la Shoah etc.

Inspired by personalities involved in reflection and transdisciplinary work, engaged on crucial topics towards inclusive and sustainable development. A cross/transcultural comparative studies lead (20 years ago), to the founding of Memoire de l'Avenir (MDA); in 2016, together with UNESCO—MOST (Dr. John Crowley) and The International Council for Philosophy and Human Sciences–CIPSH (Prof. Luiz Oosterbeek) I have initiated the Humanities, Arts & Society, the HAS Project's assignment: the arts contribute to new schemes anchored in research and creativity; the arts, allied with sciences, are part of the process of enhancing creativity as a tool of manufacturing and producing, imagining new futures, seeking to connect ethics with aesthetics within emerging local and global solutions; the arts, throughout (hi)stories have been venues of sharing knowledge, leading to a deepening of our understanding of selves and of the world.

# (HI)STORIES

## RECOLLECTIONS: ALLEGORIES OF TIME

### Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to journey through the world of abstract signs, symbols, and images, in an attempt to comprehend the process of constitution of memories, of (hi)stories, of dialects, and of (super)natural realities, as generated by human perceptions of things.

Sensitivity and intuition in the process of recording impressions of spaces and places, of nature and of objects, are integral parts of the process of generating and storing memories, shaping associations, and fashioning the storylines that compose our (hi)stories.

These are also the sources for comprehending the process by which the mind produces images and other means of communication inventing signs and symbols, composing messages, languages, technologies, and arts. The need to leave a trace is instinctive. Human beings are defined by their capacities to observe, propose ideas, defend hypotheses, and prove objectives. Artistic images and creations, from pre-history to today, convey thoughts, facts, and memories, making the incredible diversity of the human spirit visible.

All human actions are based upon cultural, social, and ethical constructions of knowledge, interpretations, awareness, and of engagements. Arts and cultures, then, are mirrors of the journey of civilization, reflecting on the entirety of its expeditions and productions.

Imagery and metaphor connect people, continents, philosophies, beliefs, (hi)stories. Languages and arts transcend locations and personal differences, illustrating and enhancing the understanding of realities, ethics, and aesthetics. Nowhere on earth do people exist without language, art, or culture.

### Keywords

(hi)stories
metaphors
symbols
images
arts
perception
ethics
aesthetics

## (HI)STORIES – ALLEGORIES OF TIME

The neuroscientist Luc Foubert (2021) has noted, regarding the process between observation and the conceptualization of cognitive messages, that most of the studies in neuroscience stand on the background acceptance that the development of our neo-cortex, which is responsible for perception, consciousness and cultural assimilation, is based on the repeated presentation of 'shapes' that our mind has been imprinted with, and trained during early life through the ontogenetic processes of learning and plasticity, leading to a multi-sensory mapping of a world we re-create.

The humanities tell cultural stories about the past, oriented by the traditions, habits and beliefs of our ancestors, creating heroes and gods that correspond to those beliefs, building the patrimonies of the humanities and recording the (hi)stories of societies. These truths are culturally authentic by the very fact of their continued replication over time. (Hi)story then becomes the accumulated meanings attributed to events, memories and ways of thinking about one's past. The creation of these narratives is an innate human activity, and the narratives reflect the intuitive ways in which we observe, comprehend and attribute order to our existence.

Recollected (hi)stories serve to create cultural or national identities, producing adapted (hi) story lines by which people identify with personal or collective memories. Historians have also realized that interpretations of the past and the documentations attached to these comprehensions change over time, building (hi)stories upon ever-growing data.

## IT IS FUNDAMENTAL TO EXPLORE HOW THE VARIOUS FIELDS OF THE HUMANITIES MODEL AND CONDUCT THE CONSTRUCTION OF THEIR ACCUMULATED DATA.

(Hi)story, then, developed as a form of storytelling, related to interpretations that remain always alive, moving and rooted in a long, evolving and transformative process. Stories, references and images are often seized by individuals or cultures, to which they then attribute various meanings. In any group, a unity of identity is needed to overcome the natural diversities and pluralism of the peoples, their beliefs, dialects, comprehensions and philosophies. Groups are always forming cultural and national identities. As Stefan Berger puts it, "Nation-builders everywhere agreed that a nation must have a history with a long and proud story" (Tamm, 2016).

Collective and national (hi)stories are therefore primary agents of historical analysis impacting social behaviours and opinions. Although the writing of history is based on the critical examination of sources, there is always a process of selection with respect to the details, so the synthesis of those details should always be tested by a critical, academic, or societal examination (Vann, 2022). Histories spring from stories told or events documented, as well as non-traditional sources like personal documents or objects, which offer new levels of recollection, and in which the emotions and thoughts of people have been accounted for.

Ethnologists, archaeologists, palaeontologists and historians cannot refute suggested narratives when documented material has been collected. However, the information collected is selective, and much of it is created through interviews, photographs and objects. With these elements, professionals try to put order into making (hi)stories just and (relatively) accurate. Yet humans also transmit recollections via verbal communication, and oral history is still important in many parts of the world. It is only recently that (hi)story has been recorded with the help of writing and technology.

Images transmit and propose a sense to life. They mirror the journey of civilizations. In his research, Emmanuel Anati has shown that the most ancient artistic expressions, throughout the entire world, illustrate a similar typology, choice of themes and types of associations. Even their styles are fundamentally inscribed in the same sequences and limited in variation. It, therefore, seems to be justified to speak about a unique visual language, springing from the same source, from the same associations of ideas and from universal symbolisms that compose the human essence, and which are engraved on rocks and walls in the places around the world where populations lived in early civilizations, before the birth of written language (Anati, 1999).

These pictorial languages, illustrating and enhancing the understanding of human realities, limits, and references, transcend location and difference. They are not merely echoing existing perceptions, nor re-productions of existing realities, but rather they contribute to new schemes, anchored in the limitations of human beings. They may also lead to a deeper understanding of ourselves, and perhaps of the world and its inter-relations.

The capacity of human beings to communicate may be our greatest gift. The ability to create images – abstract or figurative, not limited by language – witness, justify, and enlighten our incomplete perceptions. In The Role of Art, Abstract Thinking and Social Relations in the Human Evolution (2016), on Art and social development, in the Homo genus evolution, Mihaela and Gabriel C. Corneanu argue that Images found may go back as far as 700,000 years (or more), and the immaterial become transmittable (Corneanu & Corneanu, 2016, p. 197).

This is the birth of myth and of culture. These expressions reflect the ways human beings have of observing the phenomena of life, while expressing their inner selves and their questions about their existence in a vast variety of interpretive forms. Among them there are factual tells and expressions of spiritual ideas and myths – all of them research tools for the observation of human and natural events.

Nowhere on earth do people exist without language, culture, memories and art. All cultures have accumulated records, and these are the (hi)stories of humanity. They also carry an ambition to remember to comprehend the expedition of humanity and understand the world. The need to communicate is innate and offers a critical glimpse into the origins and development of human expression. Humans are defined by their capacities to observe, propose ideas, defend hypotheses and prove objectives. Artistic images and creations, from pre-history to today, convey thoughts, facts and memories, making the incredible diversity of the human spirit visible.

The arts, therefore, offer outstanding support to the unfolding of (hi)stories. Images and objects are fundamental components of world knowledge, from singular to collective experience, reflecting the innate processes that exist between creativity and human cognitive faculties which have produced human civilization.

When arts are used as tools and means for dialogue, they echo the interdependence between chronologies and the imageries that have produced them, making them accessible and visible. These are sensitive approaches to information, making knowledge transdisciplinary and reachable for all. Observing trans-cultural knowledge will prevent misunderstandings, conflicts and the creation of stereotypes.

## WHY ARE WE INTERESTED IN THE JOURNEY OF PICTOGRAMS, ICHNOGRAMS AND SYMBOLS?

Civilizations transmit their values through rituals, traditional objects and art. In his 2021 publication, "Les formes du visible: une anthropologie de la figuration," Philippe Descola, continuing the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss, Alfred Métraux and Michel Leiris, demonstrates that our separation from nature is accomplished by the forms of presentation we have created.
Descola renewed the approach of the relations between man and his environment by distinguishing four ontologies: totemism, analogism, animism and naturalism. By doing so, he questions the great diversity of figurations that compose our 'knowledge' – some considered works of art, others evidence, information, or transmission of knowledge.

His investigation "aims to show how the objects and relations that iconic images depict, the pictorial forms in which they are presented and the types of agencies they exercise are interdependent and express in broad strokes the properties of one or other" of these four ontologies of the world (Descola, 2012, p. 26).

The artist, then, can copy, illustrate, translate, imitate or interpret the world. He or she can propose ideas, offer attitudes, provide descriptions or bear witness to events. As languages developed, spread and became more complex, they became simplified into abstract symbols. According to Roberts' Dictionary of Industrial Relations, a symbol is that which represents something else by virtue of an analogical correspondence.

Yet, "History decays into images, not into stories" insists Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) in the *Arcades Project*, in chapter N, On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress (Benjamin, 1999, p. 476).

Arts may spring from the obsession of 'simulacra' mixed with the attributions and comprehensions of the mind. Hypothetically, only humans possess an interiority which must be attached to the rest of the (bio)organism by its own substantial virtue of being. The result is a dissociation of humans and of their cultures from nature, though they belong to it by their physical constitution.

In his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Ludwig Wittgenstein tries to bring the reader to understand the procedure of the circulation of knowledge, by offering logic and order to senses and thoughts:

"1 The world is all that is the case.

6.373 The world is independent of my will.

6.4 All propositions are of equal value.

6.41 The sense of the world must be outside the world.

6.51 Doubt can exist only when there is a question; a question can exist only when there is an answer". (Wittgenstein, 2001, p. 27)

"Universality", then, is not a form of standardization, but on the contrary, takes shape within the circulations that belong to the world, eventually becoming collective. For no less an author than Noam Chomsky, language is associated with an inner presence of a neuronal module, which is based on a universal grammar. Given this function, all human languages are part of human cognitive aptitudes (Picq and Roche, 2006, p. 32).

The forces of nature are the resources generating the tools of communication, evoking associations and memories. Mountains, deserts, dark and light, faunae, flora, colours, all transcend the human condition and evoke dreams as the ultimate sources of imagination, creation and, eventually, memories. While gods and goddesses mirrored miracles and wonders, they also incarnated our limitations. Accumulated, prototypical forms and symbols serve as cultural references in the cultivation of complex historical patrimonies, the representation of dynamic inner worlds, establishing narratives via the combination and re-combination of accumulated impressions.

Jean Louis Dessalles emphasizes two main functions of human communication, illustrating a universality of communication apparent in all human societies. The first he titles "events functioning," which consists of accumulating information in images and signals, generating facts that seem interesting. The second is "argumenta functioning," reflecting an ability to discuss, judge and construct. One cannot exist without the other (Dessalles, 2017).

Cultural figures have stamped our historical popular figurations, from cave art to contemporary art. Goya calls attention to the "dark side of humankind," offering what may perhaps be a private vision, but one that challenges our conceptions of the human condition (Brown, 2014).

Charlie Chaplin offers an unforgettable image familiar to all of us – the misfit, the one rejected by society, unlucky in love, but ultimately a survivor. The Chaplin character offers a poetic, bitter image of modern times and of humanity as a whole (Barson and Erickson, 2022).

Claude Lanzmann's nine-hour-long film documentary *Shoah* (1985) retraces the genocide of European Jews during the Second World War. A documentary is a collection of testimonies, an archive in itself. Yet Lanzmann spoke of it as a "fiction of the real" in which it was necessary to transform these people into actors (even though) it is their own story that they are telling.

By this gesture, the 'characters' become cinematographic images. The film is not about reconstitution, nor about archiving, but about how the past affects the present. According to Jean-Michel Frodon (2007), *Shoah* is not only a documentary, "this film changed our perception, the face of the world, and it is through the power of art, through the power of film." (Radio France, 2022) From Chaplin's *The Dictator* to Spielberg's *Schindler's List* to Resnais' *Nuit et Brouillard* to *Shoah*, these directors put technique into the service of (hi)story, employing a creative visual approach to ethics, storytelling, memory, philosophy and (hi)story.

The Japanese photographer Kikuji Kawada (1933) is an example of a disturbing exploration of the trauma of World War II. His work includes images of stains burnt into the walls of Hiroshima's A-Bomb Dome, now the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, in addition to images related to the iconography of the American occupation (Kaneko, 2021).

In 1929, Lee Miller (1907-1977), a young American photographer, was assigned to the U.S. Army as a war correspondent for Condé Nast Publications. Her photographs portrayed army nurses across Europe, including those on the front lines and as prisoners of war (Bouhassane and Watson, 2022).

With photography, she conveyed the voices of dying children in a Vienna hospital, documented peasant life in post-war Hungary, exposed the corpses of Nazi officers and their families, and finally, documented the execution of Hungarian Prime Minister László Bárdossy in *BELIEVE IT! Lee Miller's Second World War Photographs as Modern Memorials* (Hilditch, 2018, pp. 209–222), Lee Miller and many other photographers provided eyewitness accounts of the casualties of life and of war, using the camera to record scenes of desperation and destruction.

Pablo Picasso's painting *Guernica* (1937) has imprinted each and every one of us with a universal cry of grief due to war crimes. The painting is a response to the April 1937 bombing of Guernica, a Basque country town in northern Spain, carried out by Nazi Germany's Condor Legion and the Fascist Italian Aviazione at the behest of the Spanish Nationalists. The painting, a moving and powerful anti-war artwork, was used to raise funds for Spanish war relief. It soon became widely acclaimed, and it helped bring worldwide attention to the Spanish Civil War (Cole, 2021).

Through the arts, artists can demonstrate the similarities between people, their joys and their pains. Artists bridge the gap between thinking and feeling. According to Aristotle, for example, the ethics of obligation versus the ethics of personality is precisely what art can provide – a means of perceiving, with imaginative understanding, that to which one does not formulate or apply global principles but rather emphasizes the particularity and the singularity of individual ethics. Ethical theories aim to improve our lives and are concerned with the nature of human well-being. Ethical virtues are found within the complexity that exists between one's cognitive, rational learning and the emotional singularities of each, becoming socially acquainted.

Wisdom cannot be acquired only by learning, but rather through experiences and the capacities of each to understand, imagine, and venture. Because a symbol is in fact a sign that traverses time and place, it is an 'image' of an object cut in two, of which the two hosts each keep one half that they pass on to their children. Throughout generations, when the two parts are brought together, they serve as the bearers of recognition between minds and the world, and when they prove previously contracted relationships of similitude and hospitality, they are a means of recognition for people, an 'object' by which a generation recognizes its humanity (Bailly, 2020, p. 2180).

According to Gaudi, plants develop very precise and effective architectural stratagems. He was not only inspired to duplicate nature, but also to learn its properties, imitating them to reproduce an architectural order. He said: "I do not invent anything; I copy the large, always open book of nature." (De Jaegher, 2014). Gaudi's work is a fantastic demonstration of a singular appropriation of nature and its order, producing his own unique visual language. From the prehistoric imprints of nature of the Carboniferous period (Black, 2012) to the buildings of Gaudi, we can read nature as a book of interactive tells, of technological secrets, proposing order and serving as the palate for the birth of symbols, of structures, of forms, and of new functionalities.

The cognitive experimental psychologist Stanislas Dehaene, in *How Learning to Read Changes the Cortical Networks for Vision and Language* (2010) and in his conversation paper *What Are Numbers, Really? A Cerebral Basis for Number Sense* (1997), showed that the shapes of letters do not stem solely from arbitrary cultural choices but have been oriented by our capacity to recognize the natural forms that surround us.

The creation of visual signs offered to humanity a tangible form of control, establishing relationships between the world and themselves. Via anthropomorphic, even surrealistic signs, human beings attributed sense to their intentions and behaviours. Thus, unfolded the storytelling of civilizations.

## DISCUSSION

Pre-historical humans buried their dead, carved tools, produced jewellery and figurines, and decorated the caves and rocks with a rich array of images: animals, humans and geometric signs. Paintbrushes, pencils and cameras offer further points of view, in a continuous flow of storytelling, witnessing, and creating (hi)stories. We are more engaged by storytelling than by lists of facts – it is easier to remember stories. Our brains make little distinction between experiences evoked by reading and ones that actually happen. Images add an instantly grasped component to storytelling that texts or numbers do not.

The human intuitive and sensitive intellect does not work like a processor and the physical world is not actually a mathematical structure, but rather symbols and graphics become deductive codes to build with algebraic structures, aesthetics effects and or collective ideas of social living and ethical comprehensions. These are the ways that a singular, subjective eye is evolved to provide meaning and knowledge and is evolved to explain the physical world.

It is thus not surprising that Dan Zarrella, HubSpot's social-media scientist, has found that tweets with images are 94% more likely to be retweeted than tweets without images, or that the Instagram platform has become a powerful political and marketing tool (Zarrella, 2013).

## HOW, THEN, DO IMAGES INFLUENCE OUR VIEW OF THE WORLD?

They most likely correspond with how each, distinctly, 'sees' the world. Images also shape international events and guide our considerations of them. Engravings, photographs and films influence our approach to events like war and disasters, as well as cultural happenings. These days, visual dynamics are transmitted instantly, via various media, and they impact morals, ethics, and social and cultural belonging. The power of images is their capacity to impact the brain and therefore affect all political, social, and cultural choices (Bleiker, 2018).

In *The Vision Machine* (Virilio, 1988), Paul Virilio investigates the perception, production and dissemination of images throughout history, presenting a survey of art history, as well as of technology, war and urban planning. The logistics of imagery have become even more powerful, with the intervention of photography and cinematography proving that history unfolds into the process of 'seeing', generating a collective 'social existence'.

Endless anonymous postcards, family albums, Instagram posts and drone images, among many other forms of imagery, define the paths of the humanities.

Although one may say that images are data-accumulating traces, one may also argue that creativity, the major asset of humanity, is responsible for the process of building (hi)stories. Humanity is the creator of its own knowledge. Logic does not reflect the world as it is, independently of us reason mirrors the structure of our creative mind.

Images work at numerous overlapping levels, across national boundaries and between physical and psychological (idiosyncratic) worlds. No matter how diverse and complex visual images and artefacts are, they all have one thing in common – they work differently than words.

They are often ambiguous and infused with emotions. That is their very nature.

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**ARTICLE**

# BEAUTY IS…

## LOOKING FOR THE MEASURE, THE AESTHETICS AND THE NORM IN PHOTOGRAPHER JULIA HETTA'S FASHION REPRESENTATIONS

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# BEAUTY IS…

## LOOKING FOR THE MEASURE, THE AESTHETICS AND THE NORM IN PHOTOGRAPHER JULIA HETTA'S FASHION REPRESENTATIONS

### Abstract

Walter Benjamin aptly describes the dual role of photography, since its invention, saying that "photography stakes a claim to art as soon as it appears as a commodity".

Although fashion has become the subject of significant philosophical and sociological study over the past 150 years, it continues to be a taboo, or merely too lowly a subject for academic consideration – even in modern – day cultural studies.
The reason is clear: fashion does not pose an argument; it entices and seduces, constantly looking for a new aesthetic paradigm that will embody the eternal polytheism of Beauty.

Photographer Julia Hetta adopts many of the tools and practices of classical painting to capture the paradox and ambiguity of the concept of Beauty, which Victor Hugo likens to Death, noting that: "Death and beauty are two things profound, so of dark and azure, that one might say that they were two sisters terrible and fecund, possessing the one enigma, the one secret."

Hetta illustrates the dualism of the modernist subject with appeals to the imaginary of an insurmountable innocence and purity, as this is captured in depictions of the classical ideal; and precisely therein lies the originality of her gaze.
She develops a personal style in photography, featuring strong elements of drama and theatrics. She illustrates the current, the innovative, the radical in the field of human presence and clothing, recalling the cultural deposits of times past, but also imbuing her creations with new rules that detect a subjective and complex beauty.

### Keywords

photography
painting
fashion
beauty
photographer
Julia Hetta

## INTRODUCTION

"...likewise for the dreaming collective, which, through the arcades, communes with its own insides. We must follow in its wake so as to expound the nineteenth century in fashion and advertising, in buildings and politics as the outcome of its dream visions."

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (p. 389)

Walter Benjamin aptly describes the dual role of photography, since its invention, saying that "photography stakes a claim as an artform as soon as it appears as a commodity." (Benjamin, 2019, p. 384). Moreover, he expresses the following opinion in the *Letter from Paris (2)*.

"Disderi[1] knew that photography is a commodity. But this property is shared by all the products of our society (even painting is a commodity). Beyond that, Disderi understood what photography could contribute to the commodity economy. He was the first to use the method of photography to throw back into circulation goods that had more or less been kept out of it; such as, first of all, works of art. Disderi had the ingenious idea of securing a state monopoly on the reproduction of artworks collected in the Louvre. Since then, photography has made available for sale more and more samples from the field of visual perception. It has conquered and given to commodity circulation objects that until then had never been part of it." (Benjamin, 2019, p. 385).

An extremely important branch of commercial photography has always been, and still is, fashion photography, as this field in particular has undertaken to serve the fantasy constructs of the fashion industry, while at the same time it has been part of discussions concerning the fabrication of the feminine identity and representation based on social gender. Early portraiture and the carte de visite had already established ways of photographing people, in fashionable or dramatic clothing, which were also adopted by early fashion photographers (Ewing, 1991, pp. 6-10).

Photographer Julia Hetta adopts many of the tools and practices of classical painting to capture the paradox and ambiguity of the concept of Beauty, which Victor Hugo likens to Death noting that: "Death and beauty are two things profound, so of dark and azure, that one might say that they were two sisters terrible and fecund, possessing the one enigma, the one secret."

In the book *On Beauty*, Umberto Eco writes in the introduction that "'Beautiful' – together with 'graceful' and 'pretty', or 'sublime', 'marvellous', 'superb' and similar concepts – is an adjective that we often employ to indicate something that we like. In this sense, it seems that what is beautiful is the same as what is good, and in fact in various historical periods there was a close link between the Beautiful and the Good" (Eco, 2004, p. 8).
"The Beautiful is always strange... it always contains a touch of strangeness, of simple, unpremeditated and unconscious strangeness, and it is that touch of strangeness that gives it its particular quality as Beauty," observes Charles Baudelaire.

## FASHION: IN OR OUT OF IT?

"Fashion is the perpetual repetition of the new in the mass-produced form of what is always the same." / "...likewise for the dreaming collective, which, through the arcades, communes with its own insides. We must follow in its wake so as to expound the nineteenth century in fashion and advertising, in buildings and politics as the outcome of its dream visions."

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (p. 389)

According to Walter Benjamin, "fashion prescribes the ritual according to which the commodity fetish demands to be worshipped" (Benjamin, 1999, p. 8). At the beginning of the 20th century, there was a growing interest in the centrality of the body and by extension in its clothing and, hence, fashion. In the 21st century, in the postmodern age of image dominance, the acceptance or rejection of fashion is superseded by a rational reaffirmation of aesthetics, which highlights a series

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[1]. André Adolphe-Eugène Disdéri (1818-1889). Entrepreneur who commercially exploited the possibilities of mass reproduction of portraits. Among other things, he invented the *carte de visite*. Benjamin also refers to Disderi in *The Arcades Project*.

of contradictions that govern fashion, in combination with an individual's social identity or personal aesthetical or political coordinates. If fashion confines to the surface of things, the aesthetical exploration carried out through photographic representation of a subject aims at a different approach to 'beauty' (or the search for it). It gives substance and content, not necessarily to the frantic search for the new, but to a different reconstruction of the image of the subject. Moreover, the question that preoccupied art scholars and philosophers, i.e., whether photography is an artistic or a technological product, has become obsolete since fashion, cooking and other expressions of the "art of everyday life" have taken their place in artistic practice.

Fashion means way, manner, mode – the *modus* by which an individual can adhere to the norms of a social formation. Fashion trends are characterized by contemporary and rapid or gradual change (under the influence of political, economic, sociological and technological factors). Its treacherous character lies in the fact that fashion seems temporary and therefore harmless. In reality, fashion is the timeless stylized way of life, because fashion weaves the normative framework within which life is organized, using the process of identification as its dominant structural element. It is the social imprint of the way in which an individual behaves in his or her everyday dealings (Wilde & Poe, 2019, pp. 49–50). According to Ronald Barthes, the tyranny of fashion is ironic: it makes us believe that it is all about freedom, life, love, when all the while we unconditionally surrender to the seduction of the lifeless fetishistic object. Currently, the old-fashioned, the lack of style, dandyism, street fashion etc. are nothing but the confirmation of the normative – albeit seemingly eccentric – fashion system. In the end, even in the most deviant sartorial choices, fashion triumphs, and photography is called upon to capture these ephemeral and eccentric paradigms in order to endlessly produce 'clothing events' and new forms of life.

Although fashion has become the subject of significant philosophical and sociological study over the past 150 years, it continues to be a taboo, or merely too lowly a subject for academic consideration – even in modern-day cultural studies. The reason is clear: fashion does not pose an argument; it entices and seduces.

For cultural semiotician Roland Barthes (1915–1980), who does not succumb to the "myth of the insignificant object", fashion constitutes a "total social fact". The latter is a concept of sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) and, later, of ethnologist Marcel Mauss (1872-1950), which Barthes borrows to highlight the intertwining of fashion with all social phenomena and institutions (economy, law, power, religion). But above all, for Barthes, "clothing concerns all of the human person, all the body, all the relationships of Man to body as well as the relationships of the body to society" (Barthes, 2013, p. 90). The body which, without clothing and decoration (e.g., tattoos), would be a phenomenon devoid of meaning and significance. Barthes does not miss the opportunity to refer to Hegel's *Aesthetics* (1829), where the German philosopher argues that clothing transforms the human body from a simple tangible object into a meaningful means of communication.

Fashion as the ceaseless and frantic pursuit of the 'New' was not always so; this is a phenomenon of modern societies. What used to exist in traditional societies (e.g., during the French monarchy) were local costumes and strictly coded clothing that indicated social class, profession, religious ritual. No one ever saw the body naked, with the exception of certain religious representations that gave nudity a transcendental, spiritual dimension. After the French Revolution and the spread of democracies across Europe, there was a burgeoning homogenization of dress, which only allowed for differences to emerge in small 'details' (see, for example, the phenomenon of dandyism). For men, the black-and-white suit of the pious Quakers became – and remains to this day – the official dress for work and festive ceremony. As far as women's fashion is concerned, the phase of early capitalism saw women's clothes losing all signs of work-related features and adopting all the fetishistic signs of their husbands' wealth, while later it became more adapted to the working woman and more functional. With political equality came the progressive undoing of the sartorial differences between the sexes: Marlene Dietrich or Madonna in men's suits; Jean-Paul Gaultier's partner in a skirt.

In the late 19th century, Eastlake saw photography as ever-present and classless, a popular mode of communication. In her 1857 text, History of Photography, she wrote:

> "[Photography] is made for the present age, in which the desire for art resides in a small minority, but the craving, or rather necessity for cheap, prompt, and torrent facts in the public at large. Photography is the purveyor of such knowledge to the world. She is the sworn witness of everything presented to her view... What are her studies...but facts...facts which are neither the province of art nor of description, but of that new form of communication between man and man – neither letter, message, nor picture – which now happily fills up the space between them?" (Eastlake, 1857, p. 93)



**Figure 1.** Cover of the magazine *La Dernière Mode,* 1874

In 1874, the French Symbolist poet Stéphane Mallarmé wrote and published a fashion magazine entitled *La Dernière Mode*, believing that fashion was a constituent element of modernity.[2] Fashion (mode, in French) and modernism, or modernity, are not only etymologically related, but constitute an indissoluble mesh of structural and historical vectors. Let it be noted that Mallarmé's fashion magazine relied on the analogy between the poetic word, as an empty signifier, and the garment, this *almost nothing* that is culturally vested with an excess of meaning.

As Heinrich Heine stated as early as 1822, fashion is the ultimate example of modernism. For the first time in the history of Western civilization, the eternal and the ephemeral were no longer a simple metaphysical antithesis, as Baudelaire defined beauty (1863). Concepts such as the contingent, the fleeting, the playful, the silly, the shocking, the fetishistic, but also the logic of citation, recycling and, lately, sampling, are not only features of modernity but also of fashion.

As early as the beginning of the 20th century, sociologist and philosopher Georg Simmel considered the fundamental paradox of modernity to be the simultaneous homogenization and differentiation, massification and individualization. With his essay *Fashion* (1904), Simmel philosophically and sociologically analyzed the phenomenon of fashion in the context of his broader research into objects and aspects of everyday life in modernity. Constantly in touch with social developments (although a popular essayist, the academic establishment always kept him on the sidelines), he insightfully pointed out elements and characteristics of this phenomenon. He analyzed the dualism that characterizes the modern subject as being 'in fashion' even as he or she strives to be 'out of fashion'. He characteristically writes that "the peculiarly piquant and suggestive attraction of fashion lies in the contrast between its extensive, all-embracing distribution and its rapid and complete disintegration." In its right to be unfaithful to itself.

> The very character of fashion demands that it should be exercised at one time only by a portion of the given group, the great majority being merely on the road to adopting it. As soon as an example has been universally adopted, that is, as soon as anything that was originally done only by a few has really come to be practiced by all – as is the case in certain portions of our apparel and in various forms of social conduct – we no longer speak of fashion. As fashion spreads, it gradually goes to its doom. The distinctiveness...is destroyed as the fashion spreads, and as this element wanes, the fashion also is bound to die.

(Simmel, "Fashion," in International Quarterly 10, 1904, p. 138)

Today, fashion appears as the conformism of deviance, the democratization of the different. The regression from excess to normality, with the body as the central point of reference emerging as the place of internalization and display, decoration and resistance. Fashion (*mode*) of the 'new era' becomes modus: a personal experience and knowledge of 'how'. A search for identity and a narrative of life (Tzirtzilakis, 2018).

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**2.**    In this idiosyncratic 'handmade' fashion magazine, Mallarmé wrote all the articles himself using a range of feminine and masculine pseudonyms, including Madame Marguerite de Ponty and many more.

## PHOTOGRAPHY AT THE SERVICE OF FASHION

"…the photograph… is the ultimate Particular, the sovereign Contingency… the Occasion, the Encounter, the Real, in its indefatigable expression."

Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (p. 4)

John Tagg described the development of photography as a "model of capitalist growth in the nineteenth century" (Tagg, 1988, p. 37). The rise of the commodity culture in the 19th century greatly influenced the way in which this technology was developed and used. In Tagg's essay, the ways in which photographic genres were affected by capitalism is explained on the basis of the high demand for photographic portraits in the 19th century among the growing middle and lower middle classes, who desired objects that symbolized high social status. Photographic portraits were affordable, while at the same time alluding to the aristocratic social superiority of the past that "having one's portrait done" signified. Tagg describes how the daguerreotype and, later, the *carte de visite* established a branch of industry that boasted a huge clientele and was governed by the "taste and acceptance of the conventional devices and genres of official art" (Tagg, 1988, 50).
The commercialization of photography dampened any potential creativity of the new technology, as it sought to reproduce a set of conventions that were already entrenched in portrait painting. And yet, it was not only the opinions and desires of the customers who visited photographic studios that encouraged the obsession with conventions but, as McCauley points out in her study of commercial photography in mid-19th-century Paris, it was also the effort of the small business owners of these photo studios to establish themselves as part of the bourgeoisie and support photography's claim to be recognized as high art (McCauley, 1994).

Suren Lalvani has also highlighted the way in which 19th-century photographic portraiture functioned as a powerful expression of bourgeois culture, through the pictorial conventions regarding both clothing and body posture. President Lincoln, for example, is said to have believed that Brady's *carte de visite* of him helped him win the presidency. Thus, in the 19th century, the photographic portrait acts as an example of the influence of bourgeois thought, in terms of both form and style, as well as an example of the development of the "privileging of vision" (Lalvani, 1995).

Currently, studio portraiture insists on similar conventions of display. The development of photographic technology has been influenced by commerce, as have the types of photography. 'Instamatic' technology, for example, was clearly developed in order to expand the use and ownership of cameras. Subsequently, this technology limited the kinds of photographs people could take (Slater, 1983).

Fashion is cultural technology that reveals (uncovers) through concealing (covering up). It is a mechanism of socialization, since the individual participates in a shared sensory experience. This means that, on the one hand, fashion transmits beliefs, cultural norms and values of a specific social authority at a certain point in time, and, on the other hand, it invites the individual to reproduce – through imitation or assimilation – shared rules or patterns of behaviour in order to be part of a social group. During the process of socialization, the individual becomes separated, often violently, from him-or herself (Wilde & Poe, 2019, p. 47).
Thus, fashion functions as a normative system that subdues the human body to strict codifications, especially when it appears to 'liberate' it from them.[3]

The essence of advertising in general, and advertising photography in particular, is to turn something seemingly mundane into an exciting and impressive image.
The advertising photographer is a peddler of dreams and aspirations – oftentimes his own. Commercial photography of this kind entails carefully "creating an elaborate yet intimate image that invites the viewer to almost imagine a story rather than just see the objects in the shot" (Ward, 1990, p. 6).

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[3]. In his text "The Philosophy of Dress," Oscar Wilde writes: "Fashion, again, is reckless of the individuality of her worshippers, cares nothing whether they be tall or short, fair or dark, stately or slight, but bids them all be attired exactly in the same way, until she can invent some new wickedness" (Wilde, 1885).

The fashion industry is yet another tool through which we can see the development of a society of the spectacle. In *The Face of Fashion*, Jennifer Craik (1994) gives an account of the techniques of fashion photography, from the early 19th-century photographic pictorialism and the constructions of the 1920s and 1930s (which increasingly represented women as commodities) to the growing dominance of the fashion photographer in the 1960s and the influence of film techniques, which resulted in less and less clothes and more and more eroticism in fashion photography during the 1970s and 1980s (Wells, 2004).

It is worth looking at some shared characteristics of fashion photography that have been pointed out by various theorists in order to understand fashion photography as a distinct genre. Firstly, the ephemeral nature of fashion has had an impact on the fashion image. Evans and Thornton have dealt with this issue in terms of the ability of the fashion image to take "extraordinary liberties" and get away with images that are unnecessarily violent, pornographic, or offensive. Polly Devlin has pointed out the contradictory nature of the fashion image as it aims to be both timely and timeless: "Its subject is a product with built-in obsolescence, and the result may be an amusing, ephemeral picture or a monumental statement" (Devlin, 1979, p. 113).

There are other obvious contradictions in the fashion image. Rosetta Brooks has suggested that in fashion photography "we see the typical instead of the unique moment or event" (Brooks, 1992, p. 17). Yet, at the same time as producing the typical, fashion photographers aim at constructing a sense of what is original and unique within a particular fashion. They also try to produce images that go beyond the ephemeral realm of the magazine and the transitory nature of fashion, aspiring to a place in an art gallery or in a coffee-table book, for example.

The *Vogue Book of Fashion Photography* and the major Victoria and Albert Museum exhibition and accompanying catalogue *Appearances*: *Fashion Photography since 1945*, bear testimony to this conflict (Devlin, 1979; Harrison, 1992). Both contain a good collection of images of classical fashion photography, as well as historical essays that tend to be uncritical of the genre as a whole. Clearly there is tension between fashion photography and advertising photography, since most fashion editorials are commissioned by some magazine that is not directly selling clothes. Yet the undeniable commercial aspect of fashion is clearly separating it from 'art photography', although the latter does not lack an inevitable commercial context either.

The closer ties of fashion editorials to magazines rather than manufacturers also highlights the importance of the ability of photographs to project "a look, an image, a world" (Evans & Thornton, 1989, p. 82).

In creating illusory worlds, fashion photography has been influenced by all other types of photographic practice. Fashion photographers, such as André Barré, Irving Penn and Erwin Blumenfield have been influenced by artistic movements such as Surrealism. Bruce Weber's photos for Calvin Klein have been influenced by the work of Leni Riefenstahl. The power of photojournalism and documentary photography in the 1930s also influenced fashion images, especially as photographers moved between genres. Still, the fact that fashion photography focuses on something made-up and stylized rather than 'capturing' the moment – to which a documentary strictly adheres – does set it apart. Films have also influenced fashion photography, both in terms of content and the creation of forms and styles, and in terms of how we are able to read what would otherwise seem like a series of fragmentary and disjointed sequences of images in the context of a fashion editorial. By creating images and 'looks', fashion photography, in its quest to always find something new, different, glamorous and often 'exotic', has also been influenced by increasing international travel. This points to the fact that it is rather impossible to examine the various commercial forms of image-making in isolation. We live in a world dominated by lifestyle culture, the conventions of which are "neither fixed nor purposeful" (Wells, 2007, p. 229).

In addition to all of the above, the body is not worshiped exclusively in festive events as something unique and unrepeatable. In the age of technical reproducibility (photographs, internet, cosmetic surgery), it has been transformed into an incessantly overexposed and 'hypercommunicative' body.

The goal of Barthes's 'untamed' semiology is to highlight and even subtly shift the standardized and regulative images of the self that are massively and relentlessly produced through technical means. In an interview on French television in 1978, Barthes comments that there are at least two sides to unisex clothing – the sartorial levelling of the sexes: on the one hand is the disappearance of the gender difference in the clothed body; on the other, the gradual liberation of the body (neck, legs, waist, back) from the garment. Instead of the basic disciplinary fashion code of "male vs. female," we now have a new, even more relentless, biopolitical code: "youthful vs. non-youthful." Meanwhile, the young, beautiful, athletic, healthy and virtually naked body has not only erased from itself every trace of work, but also of mortality.

## LOANS AND REBORROWING IN THE WORK OF PHOTOGRAPHER JULIA HETTA[4]

Almost all of Julia Hetta's photos are associated with classical painting, as well as with newer artistic trends and styles. Her works converse with an alternative enigmatic world, drawing references from situations, sensory qualities and atmospheres of the past. Working almost exclusively with natural lighting and long exposure times, Hetta imbues her subjects with a mysterious sense of peace and power. The use of light, color and textures transforms her fashion photographs into visual compositions of timeless appeal. She aims for a Renaissance kind of beauty, which, according to Girolamo de Michele, consists in the symmetry of the parts and in idealization through perfection of technique. At the same time, however, she focuses on mannerism and the manifestation of centrifugal forces towards an exploration of another, restless and unexpected Beauty, which emerges as an offshoot of a fluid cultural condition in the arts and in society (Eco, 2004, p. 214).

Her photographs borrow compositional principles, style and aesthetical content from classical painting. The flesh, whitish and translucent, seems illuminated by an inner light. The poses have the immobility of classical representations. Faces and objects look like still lives.



**Figure 2.** Julia Hetta for *Rodeo* magazine, 2011

**Figure 3.** Julia Hetta for Hermès children FW/12 campaign

4.  Julia Hetta was born in 1972 in Uppsala, Sweden. She holds a degree in Fine Arts from the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. She has published notable albums, has held several solo exhibitions and has participated in numerous group exhibitions. Her regular clients include Another, Double, Acne Paper and T Magazine, as well as the haute couture houses Lanvin, Jil Sander, Hermès and Chloé..
    In 2014, Hetta's work was featured in the FOAM exhibition *Don't Stop Now: Fashion Photography Next*, which showcased the most innovative next-generation photographers currently working in fashion (www.juliahetta.com).

The folds of fabrics are captured as reliefs with strong shadows, a primary feature of many of Hetta's works being the use of an almost chiaroscuro shadow-and-light contrast. Colours are saturated, featuring soft, harmonious juxtapositions. The dark background from which her figures emerge mainly evokes the mysterious atmosphere of Caravaggio's paintings and Tenebrism, the painting style in which darkness becomes a dominating feature of the image. This technique had been developed by several painters before Caravaggio, but he adopted it in an absolute way and is thus considered its outstanding exponent.



**Figure 4.** Julia Hetta for *Rodeo* magazine, 2011



**Figure 5.** Julia Hetta for Hermès children FW/12 campaign





**Figure 6.** (left) and **Figure 7.** (right) – Julia Hetta for Acne paper SS/11

**Figure 8.** (left) and **Figure 9.** (right) – Julia Hetta for Dior Homme Capsule Collection 2012

The concept of duration, uniqueness, stability, is subtly conveyed through indirect references to aesthetic and visual qualities of timeless, insuperable values. Thus, in Hetta's photographic and visual representation, fashion, a phenomenon characterized by fluidity and transience, acquires other characteristics. In the fleeting, ephemeral representation of a figure wearing a garment, Hetta employs carefully staged and structured shots that render it a sense of immortality and monumentality, as time freezes even when a dove is fluttering.



**Figure 10.** Julia Hetta for Numero Homme magazine

**Figure 11.** Julia Hetta for Another Man magazine SS/18

**Figure 12.** (left) and **Figure 13.** (right) – Julia Hetta for *Dazed & Confused* magazine, 2013

Driven by a sense of grace, she seeks new rules towards a subjective multiplicity of beauty, imbued with a sense of restlessness and alertness.
A beauty that is complex, refined, cultured and cosmopolitan, in search of the glow of the soul. A balance between proportion and disproportion, between the form and the formless, the visible and the invisible, the beautiful and the ugly, the true and the false (Eco, 2004, p. 221).

Hetta juxtaposes the transitory and ephemeral of a clothing collection to the unsurpassed charm of Renaissance patterns and, at the same time, she brings out the paradoxical and the unfamiliar through unexpected choices of spaces and objects.

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ARTICLE

# THE RENEWAL OF THE GREEK ILLUSTRATED CHILDREN'S BOOK DURING THE *METAPOLITEFSI*

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# THE RENEWAL OF THE GREEK ILLUSTRATED CHILDREN'S BOOK DURING THE *METAPOLITEFSI*

## Abstract

With the restoration of democracy in Greece in 1974 a period of transition began, known as *metapolitefsi*, which saw deep political, social and economic changes. Progressive developments also occurred in art, culture and education. The rules of the new pedagogy affected the field of literature and more specifically children's illustrated books.
Thus, writers departed from the old conservative models, dominated by protectionism and superficial idealism. Instead, they introduced political, social and environmental concerns, while the language became friendlier and modern.

At the same time, illustrators such as Kyritsopoulos, Zarampouka, Fakinou, Maroulakis, Psaraki a.s.o., begin to move away from the dry literalness and naive realism of most of their predecessors. They draw on a wide range of sources, from cartoons to abstraction and from Art Nouveau to Pop Art, they experiment with techniques never before used in Greek book illustration, and use innovative symbolism to convey textual meanings. Their style becomes intimate, imaginative and humorous.

Pictures are no longer a merely decorative accompaniment to the text which is particularly important. They often cover the entire surface of the page, and play a decisive role in the development of the story. In short, they become central to the experience of the book. It is no coincidence that the young illustrators of the 70s and 80s often wrote their own texts. Typography, too, escapes from strict rules. Handwritten lettering, previously unheard of in Greek books, is often used on covers and title pages.

Overall, during the early years of the Greek *metapolitefsi*, children's illustrated books changed radically and caught up with international developments.
The predictable layout and obvious didacticism of previous decades, especially during the military junta (1967-1974), gave way to sophistication, sensitivity and wit, fresh and intelligent ways of introducing children to real-life social and ethical issues.

## Keywords

## INTRODUCTION

The re-establishment of democracy in Greece in 1974, after a 7-year military junta, marks the beginning of the period known as *metapolitefsi*. During the *metapolitefsi*, Greece underwent important and welcome social and cultural changes. Historians are not unanimous as to when exactly this period ends – different years have been proposed, such as the end of the Cold War (1989-1991), or the death of prime minister Andreas Papandreou (1996) (Voulgaris, 2001). In any case, the restoration of democracy also brought changes in Greek culture and education, including the field of children's literature which is now influenced by the ideas of the new pedagogy. Thus, there are writers such as Georges Sari and Alki Zei who, departing from conservative models of protectionism and fabricated idealism, introduce political, social, and historical elements into the Greek youth novel and help establish a new outlook.

The new spirit also affects illustrated children's books. The emergence of new authors, illustrators, and author-illustrators was facilitated by the general flowering in the field of publishing (Skiada, 2018, p. 60). Besides the air of freedom that followed the fall of the junta, the development of technology with the new printing possibilities contributed to the growth in the production and quality of publications.

The stories touch upon a wider range of themes, from social issues to ecology, sometimes involving subtle existential concerns and more rarely elements of the absurd. The writing style changes; it becomes more intimate, intelligent, humorous, and the language is modernized. At the same time, the illustrations take on an essential and decisive role in the stories, ceasing to be decorative. The new wave of illustrators of the 70s and 80s began to explore new directions, away from conventional drawing and mere technical perfection (Tzitzili, 2016, p. 72). They often write the texts themselves or work on stories by pioneering contemporary authors that satirize the morals of the time. Eugene Trivizas' humorous commentaries on situations of modern Greek reality were illustrated by Nikos Maroulakis, while Alki Zei's social and ecological concerns were visually expressed by Sofia Zarampouka. At the same time, artists such as Alexis Kyritsopoulos brought innovations to the whole book concept, in layout and pictorial style; he introduced unusual techniques to the hitherto mostly conservative Greek illustration and used various materials in elliptical, abstract compositions, without margins and limitations.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF GREEK ILLUSTRATION

Historically, the first notable examples of Greek book illustration appeared in the second decade of the 20th century. They were monochromatic woodcuts and etchings in academic style, sometimes enriched with elements from antiquity or the Greek folk tradition, and usually illustrated poetry and literature books. They were created by artist-printmakers such as Dimitris Galanis, Lykourgos Kogevinas and, in later decades, Markos Zavitsianos, Giannis Kefallinos, Spyros Vassiliou, Giorgis Varlamos and Tassos.

The dictatorial regime of Ioannis Metaxas (1936-41), in order to control the communist ideas that had been spreading after the Russian Revolution and the destruction of Smyrna in 1922, implemented the state monopoly policy of schoolbooks. As a result, literary didacticism and national-religious propaganda prevailed in most of the children's publications (Delonois, 1986, p. 27). In the early post-war period Kostas Grammatopoulos introduced important changes to illustrated books with the internationally awarded *Ta kala paidia*[1] [The good kids, 1949] and *Alphavetario* (1955). Noteworthy was also Louisa Montesantou's second grade reading book *Ergasia kai hara* [Work and joy, 1949], where colour was the dominant element. A more abstract approach was adopted by important modernist painters such as Yiannis Moralis, Nikos Hadjikyriakos-Ghikas, Nikos Engonopoulos and Yiannis Tsarouchis, who occasionally worked on editions of poetry, theatre programs and vinyl record covers.

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[1]. In the same year he was awarded with the first prize of the International Teaching Book Fair, at the World Pedagogical Symposium in Laeken, Belgium, for his alphabet *Ta kala paidia* [The good kids].

In the '60s Agni Katzouraki made a decisive contribution to the evolution of Greek graphic design by creating advertising posters and children's books, introducing a cosmopolitan aesthetic, ignoring the Greek stereotypes and challenging the design rules of the time (Konstantopoulos, 2017). Although pioneering compositions had begun to appear in the '60s, the bans and censorship imposed by the military junta of 1967 in the field of publishing brought a relapse into nationalist conservatism and simplistic Greek-Orthodox moralism (Asonitis, 2001, p. 104).

## ILLUSTRATED CHILDREN'S BOOKS DURING THE *METAPOLITEFSI*

With the restoration of democracy in 1974, the rapid developments in all sectors of political, social and economic life, as well as the movements for human rights and feminism, led to a stylistic and thematic renewal of literature (Tzitzili, 2016, p. 63). In general, there was a freedom in the arts, an upsurge after the repressive censorship of the previous years. New publishers and magazines move in liberal directions and even more so in the children's book, as the new pedagogy seeks to introduce children to contemporary concerns. New literary magazines such as *Diavazo, Diadromes* and *Lexi*, as well as the children's magazines *To Rodi, Gia Hara, Eleftheri Genia a.s.o.*, offered the opportunity to young creators to present their work.

Young writers began to be inspired by everyday life, addressing real issues through a kind of metafiction linked to the wider social environment, usually with a sense of humour. The writing style changed, becoming more intimate and intelligent, in modern language. At the same time, the illustrations cease to be decorative and take on an essential and decisive role in the stories.

In this transition to democracy the illustrators, unlike their predecessors, quite often write their own stories where social issues are raised through allegory and humour. In technique and composition, their work is entirely different from conventional Greek illustration, with various materials used in off-centre, playful and abstract ways.

What used to be black and white, simple, realistic illustrations, with their strict contours and origins in folk painting, now become colourful and occupy entire layouts. Illustrations become integral parts of the texts, and sometimes it is the text that adapts to the picture rather than the other way round. Illustrators are no longer concerned with the realistic depiction of subjects, but with constant experimentation they seek to convey emotions and messages through innovative techniques and symbolisms (Tzitzili, 2016, p. 73).

Book design and typography not only began to deviate from the strict rules that applied until then, but often overturned them. Covers were often printed with hand-written titles and credits. The usual portrait book format changed into landscape or square so that the images could be spread better, and paperback covers sometimes folded inwards like book jackets. Also, the texts were given more freedom, so left alignment of large texts first appeared, while section titles were often handwritten in media such as markers, pastels, and even collage.

## ALEXIS KYRITSOPOULOS

As some of the new illustrators came from the field of comics, cartoon and caricature, they introduced such elements into their images. They moved away from realism and the traditional design aesthetic was replaced by a new concept, emphasizing the atmosphere of the story and not so much the figures of the heroes.
Such is the case of the artist Alexis Kyritsopoulos (b. 1943) who first appeared in the field of children's books in 1976. His revolutionary aesthetic had been prefigured in his mid-60s work for the covers of singer-songwriter Dionysis Savvopoulos' vinyl records.

Until then, the graphic design of record covers was restricted to the use of simple typography combined with photographs or sometimes works by well-known fine artists such as Yiannis Moralis and Yiannis Tsarouhis. But there was absolutely no Greek precedent for the cover of Dionysis Savvopoulos' album "Fortigo" (1966), with its emblematic, typographic collage. Kyritsopoulos' intention was to visualize in the word "Fortigo" the husky voice, screams and breathing of Savvopoulos.
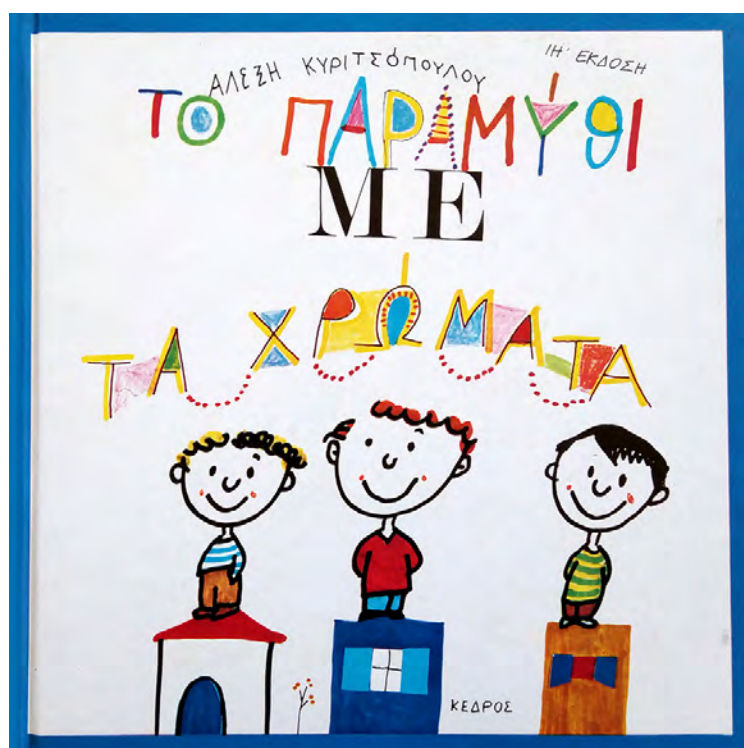
**Figure 1.** Alexis Kyritsopoulos, book cover of *To paramythi me ta hromata*. Kedros Publishers, 1976. (https://www.kedros.gr

Ten years later, and in a similar spirit, he wrote and illustrated the innovative children's book *To paramythi me ta hromata* [Fairy Tale with Colours, 1976]. In this allusion to the lifestyle of modern man, the author-illustrator uses a wide range of materials with an impressive variety of techniques (crayons, tempera, collage with cardboards, coloured and ripped papers), so that almost every spread has a different feel and quality.

Moreover, Kyritsopoulos spread the images of *To paramythi...* beyond the limits of the pages, without any margins. Overall, the book displays an unprecedented freedom from the established structure of Greek children's books. His disorderly compositions broke with the rules which pioneering graphic designers such as Agni Katzouraki and Freddy Carabot had begun to apply in the early to mid-1960s. Instead of adhering to Bauhaus and Swiss design principles, he incorporated hand-written lettering into the images and also treated the layouts as painting canvases, the result being that each one becomes a unique work of art. This approach is even more manifest in his later book *ELA*. A gifted colourist, with a preference for summative and abstract forms, Kyritsopoulos has often spoken of his love for the art of Paul Klee and other European modernists. Indeed, such influences are recognizable throughout his work.

The cover of *To paramythi me ta hromata* was done mainly with markers. The choice of this handy medium was somewhat risky, as it had been exclusively associated with children's drawings. However, his own loose and sketchy use of the marker creates an intimate feel for the reader. The brilliant colours build up the image and give it a festive, joyful mood, which begins with the placement of the colourful capital letters that take up almost half of the cover's surface. This dominant placing of the title on the cover was also unprecedented for Greek standards. The bright cover is followed by the title page in deep red. Here all the credits were written by hand in capitals with black ink, but more like a draft, since the guides of pencil between the letters and the leading lines are left intentionally visible. Kyritsopoulos works by instinct. Considering the way he mixes the different techniques in each illustration, one realizes that his work is not based on predefined principles, but on the "visual surprise of contrasts".

For the book *Nastradin Hodza*, published by Kedros in 1980, he chose the collage technique of composing his images out of painted paper cut-outs upon which he draws with oil pastels. The figure of Hodza shows similarities with those of folk shadow theatre and particularly Karagiozis. This influence is often found in the works of Kyritsopoulos and especially in his illustrations for the Savvopoulos covers, as he believes that Karagiozis represents the modern Greek who is poor, clever and a bit of a rascal. Kyritsopoulos approached the theme of the book in an abstract way using colours reminiscent of sunrise, such as many different tones of blue, along with orange, ochre and green, illuminating with small amounts of white.

Giorgos Ioannou's satirical play for children *To avgo tis kotas* [The hen's egg] was published by Kedros in 1981. With sarcasm and bitter humour, the author comments on the difficult cohabitation of humans and animals in the apartments of big cities. For this book, Kyritsopoulos created ten images in the simple but effective style of his earlier work. Large parts of the illustrations were coloured flat so as to provide the space for the actions of the human and animal characters.



**Figure 2.** Alexis Kyritsopoulos, book cover of *Nastradin Hodza*. Text by Sophoklis Dimitrakopoulos. Kedros Publishers, 1980. (https://www.kedros.gr)

**Figure 3.** Alexis Kyritsopoulos, book cover of
*To Avgo tis kotas.* Text by Giorgos Ioannou.
Kedros Publishers, 1981.
(https://www.kedros.gr)

The figures have no details and are shaped by strong black outlines. On the edge of these outlines, Kyritsopoulos adds a touch of pink watercolour to create a sense of luminous volume. Sometimes he also thins the black to suggest shadow and depth. Kyritsopoulos' favourite colour, blue, is absent from the book, possibly for reasons of printing economy, but it could also symbolize the absence of the sky from the big city.

In 1985 Kyritsopoulos worked on Eugene Trivizas' *O Laimargos Tunnelodrakos.* [Gluttonous tunnel dragon]. The innovative twists of the humorous, filled with puns, text of Trivizas and the artist's visual interpretation complement each other, creating a complex, brilliantly anarchic book. Some of the illustrations are made with collage and are quite abstract, while those in mixed media techniques (crayons, oil pastels and watercolours) are more descriptive, with elements borrowed from children's drawings.



**Figure 4.**
Alexis Kyritsopoulos,
book cover of *O Laimargos Tunnelodrakos.*
Text by Eugene Trivizas. Kedros Publishers, 1985.
(https://www.kedros.gr)

In 1994 Kedros published another personal work of Kyritsopoulos, *To aspro alogo* [The white horse], a collection of nine short stories "for minors and grown-ups".
The absence of any uniformity or consistency in the design reflects the surreal development of the stories. Together they work like free associations of thought with dreamlike paradoxes.
This is particularly noticeable in the final - and lengthiest - story where all sorts of absurdities unfold. In the midst of all this feast of colours and textual irrationalities, there is the occasional allusion to ecological issues.

To sum up, Alexis Kyritsopoulos was a central figure in the renewal of Greek children's book illustration during the metapolitefsi. He subverted all rules and stereotypes, introduced an original pictorial style, and his influence has been steadily growing among younger illustrators.

## SOFIA ZARAMPOUKA

In 1976, the same year that Kyritsopoulos released *To paramythi me ta hromata*, another important book caught the public's attention. Titled *Sto dasos* [In the forest], it was written and illustrated by Sofia Zarampouka (b. 1939), a major figure in the modernization of Greek illustrated children's books. Compared to Kyritsopoulos, Zarampouka's books are more educational in nature. With very few exceptions, she writes her own stories and often uses anthropomorphic animals as protagonists as she believes that such characters make it easier to refer to issues such as racism, discrimination, divorce etc., to explain concepts like totalitarianism and democracy, and to share her concerns about environmental destruction.

Her aforementioned *Sto dasos* created a sensation. It is a political allegory in which Zarampouka tries to introduce children to the concepts of power and dictatorship through the microcosm of the forest. In the unusual square shape of the cover the massive figure of the elephant turns menacingly towards the two other protagonists, the chief owl and the ferocious but herbivorous lion. The large size of the owl probably corresponds to its qualities and its leading position in the story.
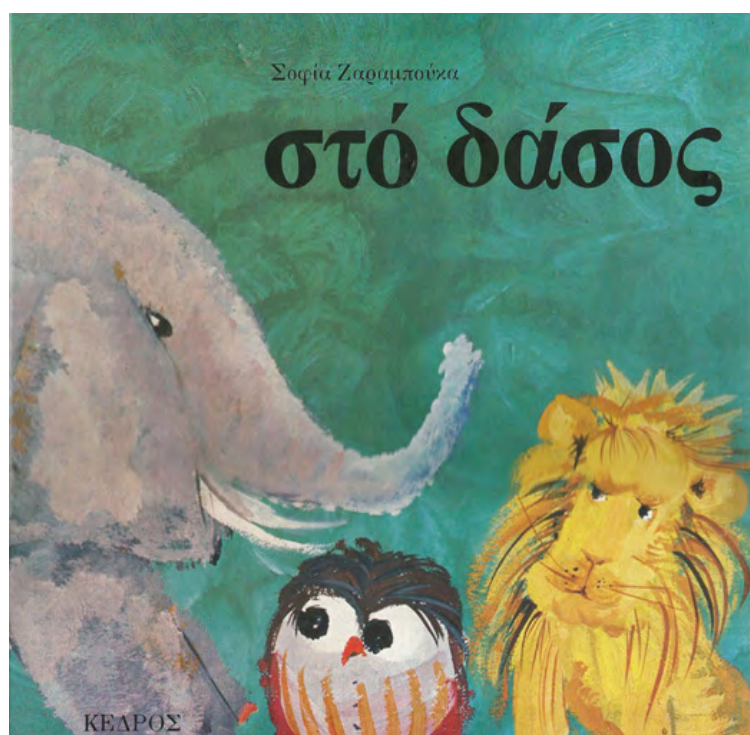


**Figure 5.** Sofia Zarampouka, book cover of *Sto dasos*. Kedros Publishers, 1976. (https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/56161432

The title and the author's name are placed as a block in the upper right side, in lowercase Times typeface, and in left alignment. This off-centre placement was rare in earlier book covers and marks a new tendency whereby the credits are adapted to the space available in the picture. Inside, the images are very large and outweigh the text. Although this was already standard practice in foreign books for small children, it had never been before attempted in Greece. The brightly coloured, without contours characters, move through the abstract environments of the forest, which consist of quieter colour textures and spread across the layouts of the book. The texts are embedded within the compositions as grey forms typed in left alignment, without any typographic treatment.

The full-page illustrations give a parallel visual narration of the story. The succession and consistency of the pictures enable the child to follow the story even if he/she cannot read. Although the forest background is abstract, carefully positioned details guide the child's understanding of the plot. Among such details are elements from the human world, like the bed and library of the owl, the suitcases of the animals etc. Also, the colour choices predispose the reader emotionally to interpret situations, e. g. between the symmetrical green trees on the small strip of the hunters' land there are orange forms that resemble fire and thus foreshadow the danger to come. In some cases, the horizontal division of the images creates a depth, where the story unfolds on three levels. At the bottom is the territory of the forest animals, separated from the hunters' land at the top by the uncrossable river and the small text on either side. The group of hunters, whose spears are visible among the trees, consists of schematic dark forms and create a strong contrast with the rich colours of the animals, with obvious influences from the illustrations of Eric Carle.

The book ends with a composition that shows the defeated elephants on the lower left, with their leader weeping in regret, while in the background on the upper right we can see the silhouettes of the other animals moving away on the hill. The bright warm reddish-yellow background gives a calm feeling of a tropical sunset. Peace and tranquillity have prevailed in the land of forest animals.[2]

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2.    *To paramythi me ta chromata* [The fairy tale with colours] by Alexis Kyritsopoulos, together with Vromohori [Dirtville] by Sofia Zarampouka, were the only illustrated children's literature books, of the short stories type that were exhibited at the National Gallery of Greece in 1994, as part of the 1st Panhellenic Exhibition of Greek Children's Book Illustrators, members of the Artistic Society AESOPOS.

In the same year, in 1976, Kedros published the first Greek children's book with ecological concerns, where the problem of smog was addressed. In *Vromohori* [Dirtville] the children decide to stop environmental pollution caused by narrow-minded and unscrupulous adults. It has been said by educators that the gloomy background in the pictures may be a little depressing for a young reader (Benekos, 1981, p. 48). On the other hand, the theme of the book, which is hardly joyful, justifies Zarampouka's choice. The typography on the cover is placed in its upper part, in left-aligned capital letters. The 11 illustrations occupy the right-hand pages of the book. Most of the action unfolds against a black background, representing the smoggy atmosphere (Sivropoulou, 2003, p. 146). Against this black, there are figures in vivid acrylic colours, schematic and flat, without perspective. Much of the light comes from the children's pale faces. Zarampouka's thick strokes may have been inspired by German expressionist painters such as Emil Nolde.

**Figure 6.** Sofia Zarampouka, book cover of *Vromohori*. Kedros Publishers, 1976. https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/24470883)

A completely different expressive technique in black and white is used by Zarampouka in *H Kyria Annoula* [Mrs Ann, 1978]. It is a social and sentimental tale, featuring an odd, mismatched couple: an anthropomorphic mouse falls in love with a lady who loves beauty and nature.

The drawing style, in black ink on white paper, is more detailed than Vromohori; it approximates the look of etchings and creates a melancholy atmosphere, subtly enriched with small touches of red. The grey of the text is integrated into the pictures creating a nice balance. Kuria Annoula was inspired by the personality of writer Anna Sikelianou and includes an indirect ecological message as the main character intervenes in the concrete jungle of the city by creating a garden of plant pots outside her house, which earns the admiration of all passers-by.



**Figure 7.** Sofia Zarampouka, book cover of *H Kyria Annoula*. Kedros Publishers, 1978. (https://issuu.com/kedrospbl/docs/20101018_paidikos_katalogos/9)

## EUGENIA FAKINOU

Eugenia Fakinou (b. 1945) appeared as a children's book author-illustrator in 1977 with the legendary *Ntenekedoupoli* [Tin Town], published by Kedros. *Ntenekedoupoli,* which began as a successful object theatre play, voices social concerns similar to those of Zarampouka's *Sto dasos*. Its vivid illustrations are spread across whole pages, on coloured cardboards, with sophisticated simplicity. The characters are anthropomorphic tin cans, with strong contours of oil pastels.

As with Kyritsopoulos' markers, Fakinou's choice of oil pastels – a medium primarily associated with classroom practice – was intended to give a more intimate feel to young readers.

The figures and settings are two-dimensional. Only in the last image a slight perspective is created by the difference in the sizes of the characters and their positions, while the defeated dictator is depicted as a distorted square.

The book cover features an unusual typographic composition: all the letters are written by hand, including the publisher's logo which has the same size and colour as the author's name, in small caps, aligned left above and below the title, respectively. The title, in large outline white capitals, forms an arch over the figures of the protagonists.
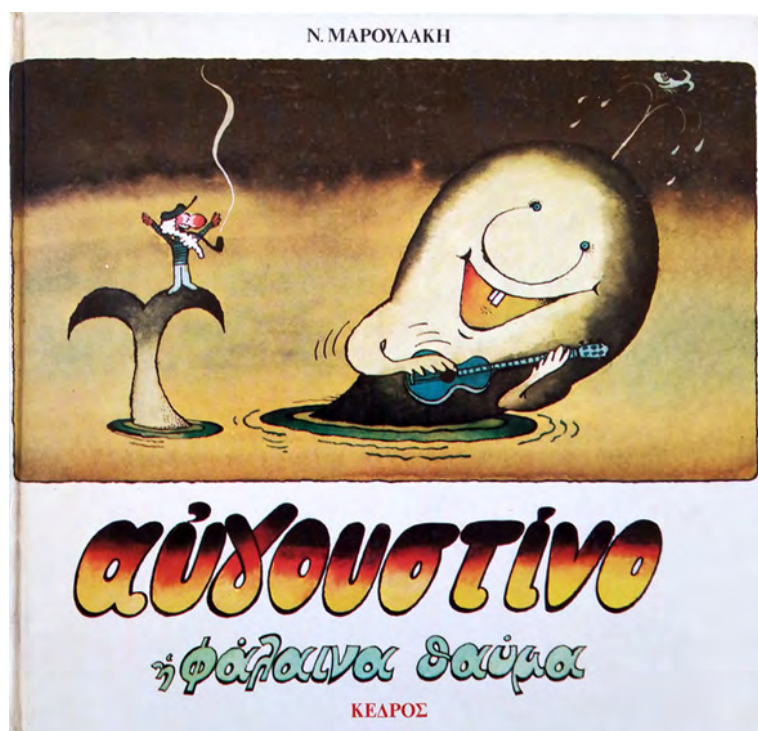
**Figure 8.** Eugenia Fakinou, book cover of *Ntenekedoupoli*. Kedros Publishers, 1977. (https://www.kedros.gr)

The soft book cover resembles a book jacket which folds inside and the image extends to the front flap – another innovation during this period. On the front flap, hand-written and in vertical position, are the words of the narrator *Helios* at the beginning of the text, by way of an introduction. The title page is dominated by the large image of *Helios* instead of the usual small ornament below the credits.

Inside, the body text is printed on the pictures and there is admittedly a problem with the legibility of some pages. Despite large margins and the loose leading of the text, the background colours make it rather hard to make out the words. Of note is also Fakinou's use of visual sounds in the pictures. For decades they had been a standard feature in comics but never before used in Greek children's books. Hand-written letters in oil pastel, with exclamation marks, such as "Ha! Ha! Ha!" or "Chr! Chr!" assure that someone is laughing or snoring. Fakinou's next books continued the story of *Ntenekedoupoli. Sto Kurdistan* [In Kurdistan, 1977], was created with vibrant marker colours. In *Xipna Ntenekedoupoli* [Wake Up, Tin Town] published in 1979 by Kastaniotis, she worked with watercolour on linocut prints, which gives her art a more expressionist tone. *Xipna…* is in landscape format. The title on the cover is drawn by hand in red tempera and takes up the space from edge to edge, creating great tension on the white surface. The landscape format allows room for extensive spread of the illustrations. Fakinou also takes advantage of the large margins to the left and right of the body copy to present additional visual details of the story.

The same format and layout were used for *To megalo taxidi tou Meleniou* [The Great Journey of Melenios], the fourth part of the *Ntenekedoupoli* series, published in 1979 again by Kastaniotis. But this time, Fakinou worked with crayons, using black fine markers for the outlines; the combination of these media allowed for more detail and the compositions were more organized. The long landscape format of the book is ideal for spreading out the images of Melenios' wanderings. Of particular interest are the colour patterns that decorate areas such as the character's clothes or the foliage of the forests.

## NIKOS MAROULAKIS

Another distinctive artist of the *metapolitefsi* was Nikos Maroulakis (1941-2015). He is especially important for further developing the link between comics and children's book illustration. His style is light and funny, and his themes touch on everyday situations with subversive humour.

His first appearance was in 1979 with his story *Augustino, i falaina thauma* [Augustino, the wonder whale], published by Kedros. In this square format book, the pictures stand out on the right pages, while the text is placed at the bottom of the left, roughly at the golden section, leaving a large gap at the top. In *Mayiko tsoukali* [The magic pot, 1981] he keeps the same general layout, but here the text on the left pages is much larger. In order to break this monotony of long text, Maroulakis takes advantage of page margins by inserting little vignettes of characters and other visual elements in the story.



**Figure 9.** Nikos Maroulakis, book cover of *Augustino, i falaina thauma*. Kedros Publishers, 1979. (https://www.kedros.gr)

**Figure 10.** NNikos Maroulakis, book cover of *Augustino, To mayiko tsoukali.*
Kastaniotis Publishers, 1981.
(https://www.kastaniotis.com/960-03-0118-2-c.html)

Maroulakis draws with black marker and then fills in with vivid watercolours. His characters act on colour-graded backgrounds, from darker to brighter tones, which lend depth to the pictures. They also include lots of amusing details, which have no connection to the core of the plot (Asonotis, 2001, p. 189). In most of the books where he has written the text himself, the images cover the entire page. As for the title lettering, it is usually hand-drawn and appears differently on the cover than on the title page – a practice not unusual in books of that period.

In 1983 Maroulakis illustrated a story by the Katsimihas brothers, entitled *I Agelasti Politeia kai i kalikantzaroi* [The unsmiling state and the goblins]. The goblin figures are elongated and narrow, with long legs and pointed noses and jaws, whereas ordinary citizens have more rounded features and soft edges.

As already mentioned, Maroulakis comes from the field of comics. For several years he worked in Germany for various magazines, including *Stern*. During those years, the Argentine cartoonist Guillermo Mordillo also collaborated with *Stern*, and his influence is traceable on Maroulakis. However, Mordillo's characters are always white whereas Maroulakis' are rich in colour and their flesh colours change to indicate their different moods. Also, Maroulakis tends to fill the scenes with a plethora of visual details, in order to prolong the young reader's attention.

The best-known project involving Maroulakis is *Frutopia* [Fruitopia]. Written by the famous author Eugene Trivizas, it is a wonderful parody of 1980s Greek society and a comment on exploitation, power and revolt wherein vegetables rise against the ruthless greengrocers. Rather than an illustrated children's book, *Frutopia* is actually a comic, with panels and speech balloons etc. It began in 1983 and extended to a series of 50 issues, later assembled in book form. Maroulakis adapted his marker-and-watercolour technique to the successive frames of the comic, all created in his, by now familiar, cartoonish style. The main difference is the absence of secondary details, which is not surprising, given the small space afforded by each frame.



## VASSO PSARAKI

In the post-1974 era of Greek illustrated children's books, subject-matter has changed significantly. Big cities replace the old enchanted forests, instead of authoritarian kings we get ugly anthropomorphic objects or evil animals, instead of beautiful princesses we have miraculous natural phenomena and intelligent animals.
Princes, who used to provide the solution to the stories, are now replaced by children who determine the future of the planet. And the 'monster' is not some fire-spitting dragon, but environmental pollution.
Where have all those heroes gone?
Zoi Valassi wrote an intelligent story with social and satirical edges, about old fairy tale heroes who lose their purpose since children have been won over by television, so they migrate to the world of reality to find work.
The book, entitled *Epanastasi ton paramythion* [The Revolution of Fairy tales, 1982] was illustrated by Vasso Psaraki.

**Figure 11.** Vasso Psaraki, book cover of *Mayika molivia*, text by Zoi Valassi.
Kedros Publishers, 1981. (https://www.kedros.gr)

Over the years, and beginning with *Mayika molivia* [Magic Pencils, 1981], Psaraki has developed an attractive and sophisticated approach combining abstraction with exquisite graphic details, a personal mix of old-school caricature, folk art, Art Nouveau, high modernism and 1960s Pop and Psychedelia. In *Epanastasi…*, her black and white figures are outlined with dense black dots, and have an air of transparency as they move through the coloured environments of the real world (Asonitis, 2001, p. 182).

Compared to other books we have discussed, the typography of *Epanastasi…* is neater and tidier. Its structure follows rules and the long texts are easily legible. The whole book is part of the general 1980s tendency towards greater organization and attention to format, layout and typography, while keeping the innovative spirit of the '70s. Text and image work together, blending effectively in interesting narratives.

## EPILOGUE

A lot has changed since the early *metapolitefsi*. Globalization, digital technology and the abundance of visual information has affected developments in Greek illustration. The number of children's books publications has increased spectacularly, while elements of international contemporary art trends have been incorporated to such an extent that it is not always easy to distinguish the identity of the illustrators.

Of course, quality work is still being created and published and some of it does build upon the adventurous spirit of the 70s and 80s, which brought the true renewal and modernization of Greek illustrated children's books.

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ARTICLE

# PETER DOIG'S ART AS A SIGNIFICATION OF THE RE-APPEARANCE OF THE SUBLIME IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH LANDSCAPE PAINTING

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## Abstract

Purpose: The core of this research is the multi-layered and diverse presence of the Sublime in art today, as analysed through the oeuvre of Peter Doig, the contemporary British painter who belongs to the stream of the Young British Artists, which was developed in Great Britain in the 1990s.

Topic: The present research begins with the definition of the idea of the Sublime and continues with a historical review of its manifestations in British art. Peter Doig is chosen because it is a suitable field of research into the current image of the Sublime.

Methodology: Peter Doig's work will be thoroughly examined so that the above view can be demonstrated, through a critical analysis of his paintings, and the similarities and differences with the powerful landscape painting of the 19th-century Romanticism that filled the viewer with awe and fear. Doig translates this artistic knowledge into a peculiar, internally experienced image-making that acrobats on the fringes of the established structures of artistic composition, attempting to portray the unpresentable, the timeless, the transcendent, the ambiguous, the illusory, the after-human elements that construct the landscape of Today. The selected works' analysis is based on the immediacy of representation as an independent carrier of energy of human experience, which leads the artist to re-use the medium of painting. The research continues by examining, through its painting techniques but also via his use of photography and ready-made postcards, the ways in which the artist uses the materiality of the medium to test how the seemingly closed boundaries of representation expand into many fields of feeling, reading and understanding a timeless Now.

Result: The research concludes with critical predictions about the directions and the position that the notion of the Sublime may take, starting from the creative codes in the work of Peter Doig. The paper does not seek to build a position based on unshakable, definitive and non-negotiable conclusions, but to constitute an original and thorough academic springboard, with poetic coordinates of aesthetic consideration, in the research on the applications of the painterly Sublime today.

## Keywords

DAC Journal Vol. 3 | Nº 2

PETER DOIG'S ART AS A SIGNIFICATION OF THE RE-APPEARANCE OF THE SUBLIME IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH LANDSCAPE PAINTING | Eftychia (Faye) Tzanetoulakou

page | 54

## INTRODUCTION

The Sublime — what exactly does this idea encompass, how is it defined conceptually and how is it visually represented? The Sublime is contained in the enigmatic experience of the intense pleasure that the human condition receives when overwhelmed by images, sensations, thoughts, greater and more powerful than anything the mind thinks it can experience or produce, resulting in feelings of awe and fear.

From classical antiquity to modern times and throughout the diversity of various forms of culture around the world, the Sublime has inspired generations of scholars and artists, while being connected to a wide range of topics from nature and art to politics and religion. Primarily the artistic image that is inspired by the idea of the Sublime, follows the philosophical definition of the concept, which as an aesthetic experience is separated from the Beautiful and the Picturesque. At the same time, due to the aforementioned aesthetic pleasure contained in the feeling of awe, it is also separated from the concepts of the purely melancholic, tragic and terrible.

The concept of the Sublime in contrast with the Everyday, via its osmosis of fear with pleasure, of the positive arising from the negative, is endemic in both texts and paintings, which, by surpassing the first impact on the retina, seek to penetrate deep into the psyche, delving into the Unconscious, making the experience superhuman and supermundane. The Sublime, as it first appeared in the writings of Longinus and was later defined by Burke and Kant, influenced the philosophical thought of Romanticism of the early 19th century, mainly through the impressive landscape expressions of its exponents, is experiencing a great revival nowadays in contemporary painting reflecting an environment that is constantly changing.

Today, the representation of the Sublime rediscovers the image, which, having travelled a path of deconstruction, fragmentation, abstraction and decline, returns dynamically. Before the end of the 20th century, after the development of conceptual art, the controversial theory of the 'death' of painting had started a debate within art, when figurative painting seemed to retreat from the foreground to gain strength and absorb new techniques of artistic creation brought forward by the new forms of installations, multimedia, physical performance and video art. The restoration of representational art during the fin de siècle, followed by the new millennium, was dynamic and conceptually expressive. A possible reason for this triumphant return is the revival of Romanticism, as the revision, in times characterized as uncertain and transitory, of the inner feelings that drive artistic inspiration and reflect feelings of pleasure and existential anxiety, contemplation and aesthetic experience. The re-emergence of Romanticism today will be sought in the work of the contemporary British painter Peter Doig, and his candidacy as a contemporary representative of the idea of the Sublime will be explored.

## PETER DOIG, WHEN THE LANDSCAPE TRAVELS THROUGH SPACE AND TIME

Peter Doig, 1959, is considered one of the most important figures of the new landscape. Peter Doig was born in Edinburgh. During the 1980s he studied at the great nurseries of contemporary British art, St. Martin's School of Art and Chelsea School of Art. One of the first artists of the YBA generation, his solo exhibition early in his career at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London in 1991, while simultaneously winning the Whitechapel Artist Prize, gave a great boost to the young artist's career, which culminated in his participation in the prestigious annual award given by the Tate Gallery, the Turner Prize in 1994. With his retrospective at Tate Britain in London in 2008, his career was universally recognized. He is also an example of a successful artist in terms of the sales of his works, as in the years 2007 and 2013 the prices of his works set sales records for a living contemporary visual artist.

During 1989, when Doig was studying at St. Martin's School of Art he came into contact with his fellow students who together would form the visual spring of the Young British Artists (YBA), an open group of iconoclastic artists who re-interpreted the shock of the everyday and the mundane with an exuberant iconographic style, such as Damien Hirst, Tracy Emin and Chris Ofili. Despite all the sensationalist ways of expressing the new language of art that characterized their generation,

the new British art scene mostly relied on the traditional painting medium that had been praised so much by great British painters such as Lucian Freud, Francis Bacon, David Hockney. The common feature between them and Peter Doig is the treatment of painting with as much emotional distance as is necessary to avoid yet another sugar-coated representation of reality.

Like David Hockney before him, Doig chooses to distance himself in order to paint, and in this way to revive a feeling that remained in his mind as an invisible memory of something ideal for him, such as the feeling of vastness across the open Canadian planes he grew up in. The emotional distance is necessary attaining a visual balance, especially when living and working in a crowded and feverish cityscape like that of London and its fast-paced cultural milieu in the first half of the 90s epoch of Cool Britannia.

At the epicentre of his searches, a post-romantic immersion in a secret, inner place is being developed, an emblematic sacred garden (hortus conclusus) that unfolds as an idiosyncratic visual arabesque of fantasy, dream, irrationality.

Through a hyper-realist gaze, as well as his need to return to the painstaking gesture of figurative painting, Doig's iconography bears affinities with early Renaissance attempts to represent a rich newfound naturalism, where at its core lurks a latent atmosphere of theological hubris, through pity and fear when confronted with the smallness of man.

Similar to Dürer, Doig explores with wonderfully minute, almost monastic design detail, botanical realms of dense viridian vegetation, where he will weave his metaphors for the timeless, fundamental metaphysical error of the human condition, around pagan silhouettes, polished with intense emotional activity, characteristic of William Blake but this time more ethereal and non-corporeal, struggling to escape from their own nature, and at the same time yearning to integrate with it. Doig's romantic landscapes are full of distant horizons, waters deep and opaque, and trees standing bare. The impression of superlative scale is enhanced by the use of small human figures, as in Flemish painting. It also relates to early Romantic landscapes, used as the emotive backdrop in mythological, historical and theological scenes, or as a scenographic framework (coulisses) that brings the viewer into the center of the scene. With Casper David Friedrich, the human presence grew in size and the landscape was masterfully staged to be the vessel of a purely Romantic angst, during the Sturm und Drang era.

For Doig, the landscape functions both as a visual support and as the stage where several muted, ambiguous scenes, that walk a tightrope between reality and artificiality, are enacted. The works mainly feature large open landscapes with little or no visible human presence. The inertness they evoke looks back to the personal look of diverse artists such as Gaspar David Friedrich, Claude Monet, Pierre Bonnard, Gustav Klimt, Henry Matisse, Emil Nolde, Edvard Munch. The use of a dull, almost bleached palette that creates a continuous subcutaneous tension between involved emotions and distance, reflects similar visual preoccupations with Doig's contemporary Belgian artist, Luc Tuymans.

The signs that the paint has undergone a struggle before drying on the canvas, are evident, which brings materiality back to the artwork as the expressive conceptual tool that inscribes on the surface, in addition to the memories of the creator and the autonomous memory of the material itself. The sources of the artist's inspiration, even though they do not concern the traditional starting points of Romanticism, i.e., the awe-inspiring landscapes of the end of the 18th century, remain just as idealistic, since, like his predecessors (with Turner as the main exponent), he does not seek to reflect the topography of a particular place but to create a feeling corresponding to the German term 'stimmung' (mood of introspection, attunement of the soul). Accordingly, the sources of Doig's rich iconography come not from a search for the right landscape but from a large archive consisting of photographs, postcards, newspaper clippings, album covers, films. This material, the artist transforms and binds it together, often discolouring it, photocopying it and creating collages, which he will later paint anew. With this process, he opens the everyday to the otherworldly, connecting indeterminate meadows to Arcadian places, eventually forming inescapable landscapes of solitude that seem to swallow the person, in or outside the painting.

The subject matter is deliberately anti-heroic, approaching the banal, such as rowers, vacations, empty buildings, nature, and each of these is presented in a way that while at first seems familiar and a place of vacation, becomes increasingly distant, alienating, out of sync with the reality.

DAC Journal Vol. 3 | Nº 2

PETER DOIG'S ART AS A SIGNIFICATION OF THE RE-APPEARANCE OF THE SUBLIME IN
CONTEMPORARY BRITISH LANDSCAPE PAINTING | Eftychia (Faye) Tzanetoulakou

page | 56

Doig's canoes are not mere boats but long rust-coloured bridges that connect the two realities of the viewer and the painted adventure. The people in them look pale, with long unkempt hair, emaciated, shadowy transporters of souls to another world, the subconscious, the dream, an imaginary unknown beyond. The colours of the atmosphere seem toxically intense, the whites are bleached, the blues frozen, the qualities, occupations and intentions of the people unclear, while nothing seems to happen on first reading, except the image itself, or rather its strange reflection. There is nothing in the work that belongs anywhere, everything seems aloof and incongruous, as if there is nothing that stands concentrated, peaceful or stable. Everything has a strange glow, alluring and deceptive. It is this confusion and hazy emotional atmosphere, but at the same time the creative complications along with the gestating chaos and all that lies between the images, the lines and the meanings, that makes Doig's works bearers of the Sublime.

In his paintings, Doig challenges the viewer to remember if he has ever seen, or has ever experienced the image unfolding before him. The unsettling feeling of déjà vu is common. The memory that someone has once experienced something similar places Doig's works in reality. In a sort of Rorschach blot performance, the painting invites the viewer to decipher aspects of himself. The works seem like a second life, but not in the sense that modern technology gives, for example, through RPGs (Role Playing Games), but through a more refined and at the same time more atmospheric inversion of reality. Doig attempts to create the feeling that the viewer is inside a dream, through the use of inverted colours and design techniques such as the grid, a dream governed by seeming calmness and anticipation as if experiencing the moment vividly and inescapably. Rather than provoking the emotional response directly from the image, Doig's landscapes and the response to them are 'shaped' by the very space of memory, by the dreams left there, which these emotions have raised. Peter Doig's choice of subject matter is interwoven with the style of art creation, banal and sublime at the same time, with an element of surprise interspersed, drawn from disparate sources such as film scenes, album covers and autobiographical elements from photographs, constructing the modern idiom of the casually charming (Solway, 2008).

High and everyday culture, abstraction and realism, the need of constantly seeking a refuge, or the question of what it means to belong somewhere, are issues to analyze, with wilderness or willful exile standing seemingly opposite to each other or meddling within. Although he himself considers painting to be nothing more than a specific placement of colours, it is the color of human absence that is the deepest and most penetrating of all in his painting.



Figure 1. Peter Doig, *Pond Life*, 1993, oil on canvas

## IMMERSING INTO THE WORKS

The work *Pond Life*, 1993, [Figure 1] is based on a photograph of a house near the artist's father in the cold Canadian landscape where they had moved as a family for a long time, and it is a motif to which he often returns. The ataraxia of the landscape with an idea of classical perspective leading the eye beyond the house to the horizon could result in yet another representational landscape of the revival of traditional painting. But the result is unexpectedly abstract as the artist leaves behind the documentary role of the photograph and creates a grid of geometric shapes sculpted almost in relief.

White vertical lines that cross the bare trees and are separated in the same shot by a strong horizontal line in the reflection of the building on the frozen lake, form a dreamlike image reminiscent of Van Gogh when he translated the simple wetness of Japanese Ukiyo-e painting with allegorical expressionism.

Doig worked on the piece for three months before adding, as another Pieter Brueghel, the three skating human figures, which only function as coloured buoys that slowly liquefy as they fail to 'climb' the dividing line of the upper part, remaining forever trapped within the transparent flat depth of the shattered glassy ice surface. The light, the shadows, the reflections, the airborne snowflakes (like snow on a television set), the indentations from the ice skates, the vegetation, the people, everything is woven into this crystalline unbroken web (like the women in the upholstered interiors of The Nabis), all focus on an otherworldly form of life that stirs in the heart of the lake, drawing modernist constructivist shapes on the canvas. The visual effect is like an arabesque, extremely rich both in readings and references. The realistic frame of the work and the tonal feel of an old sepia photograph, make even more evident the link between past and present, between reality and image, between the existent and the imaginary, but also between a homeland and a faraway foreign land.

Although abstraction dominates the artist's influences, the way he constructs its painterly synthesis remains recognizable and contributes to the creation of an atmosphere, usually muted and gloomy. The large three-story house on the corner, of a typical North American architectural style, enhances the brooding feeling reminiscent of a Hitchcock movie house. Nevertheless, it is the metaphysical immensity of Canada's landscapes that dominates the artistic memory and translates as the Great Loneliness of the Sublime in Doig's work. Like a young Friedrich, he pushes humans to the brink of their existence, leaving them teetering between personal insignificance and universal immensity. The landscape acts as a host for this immensity, to the point that it exhausts even the color that seems to stretch in order to embrace the infinite and bring its surface to life.
Historically, the landscape motif, as it appears in the medieval manuscripts, over to Leonardo da Vinci, right up to minimalism and conceptual art, is an ideal gymnasium for the artist to practice technical innovation, but also to express the innermost feelings towards the mysterious space that surrounds him. Doig's Romanticism implicitly capture, with its effortless truth reflected in realistic fragments of memory built upon the fleeting moving glimpse of a landscape, familiar and at the same time strange, the reflections on the faceless passers-by who occasionally cross it, expressing a complete absence of irony for the small, unseen dramas taking place (Jones, 1992). And although painting at the end of the 20th century became a tug-of-war of fierce ideological and aesthetic confrontations, like a showcase where everyone projected their idea of what art is, and what can be considered modern or not, Doig treats landscape painting as a natural process of externalizing internal images.

In relation to his pictorial choices, a particular element that underlies several of his works, some of which feature human activities, e.g., *Milky Way, Iron Hill and Red Deer*, (the latter playfully inspired by a banal postcard of the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History), is imbued with a folkloric naïve atmosphere, justified by the willful departure from its sources. This clearly distinguishes him from the faithfully idiomatic style (vernacular genre) of the Flemish landscape painters of the 16th century, bringing him also close to non-establishment artists such as the primitivist Henri Rousseau or early Romantics such as Salvator Rosa. The element of the Naive, which interests the artist is the structural simplification and the formalization of the composition as a whole.
Decorative eccentric elements appear and are repeated as long as they add to the flatness rather than the traditional sense of depth and the need for a 'livelier' transfer of the image on the frame. This combined with the large sizes of the canvases 'tie' the image from a distance, while the colours are chosen directly from the Symbolist vocabulary. The tension of the composition is resolved in this timeless environment that breathes with a pulsating rhythm and places fragments of myth directly into the collective mnemonic, approaching iconic works of archaic allegory such as Henri Matisse's *Dance,* 1909-10. Doig pursues the austerity of expressive means as an instrument in the appearance of the Sublime because it gives him the necessary freedom to externalize specific emotions, without losing his integrity as an avant-garde artist.

DAC Journal Vol. 3 | N° 2

PETER DOIG'S ART AS A SIGNIFICATION OF THE RE-APPEARANCE OF THE SUBLIME IN
CONTEMPORARY BRITISH LANDSCAPE PAINTING | Eftychia (Faye) Tzanetoulakou

page | 58



**Figure 2.** Peter Doig
*Canoe Lake*, 1997,
oil on canvas



**Figure 3.** Peter Doig, *Ghost Canoe*, 1991, oil on canvas



**Figure 4.**
Peter Doig
*100 Years Ago*, 2000,
oil on canvasvas

The canoe-lake themed works *Ghost Canoe*, 1991, *Canoe-lake*, 1997-98, and *100 Years Ago*, 2000-01, [Figures 2.3.4.] summarize the above ideas as typical examples of his work. The use of individual elements such as the bushes behind the lake suggests the voyeuristic observation of a scene that contains the element of privacy and exclusivity, as if we are peeking into someone else's dreams, staying there and being hypnotized by them. The horizontal, Rothkoesque format in most of the paintings seems to have been cut from a reel of film, a haunting stop-frame from a menacing series of ominous narratives that still carry the terror of loneliness in the original dream.

The colour choice of the background, from yellowish off-white, to pale green and cold grey, is also employed in the shades of the man. Yet the canoe with its strong colour forms a contrast, perhaps because, while the man is seen as part of the background, the canoe is the only medium that separates him from the abyss. Although the person in the canoe seems part of the dream, he seems to be dreaming, a dream within a dream. The latter work is inspired by a rock album cover, while the title is thought to refer to the art history of the previous century, and is characterized by a similar fin-de-siècle tone-deaf anxiety about the times to come.

References to Arnold Böcklin's *Die Toteninsel-The Island of the Dead*, 1881-86, are evident, as is the influence of Van Gogh's *Starry Night*, 1889, [Figure 6] on Doig's existentially galactic *Milky Way*, 1989 -90 [Figure 5].



**Figure 5.** Peter Doig, *Milky Way*, 1989-90, oil on canvas



**Figure 6.** Vincent Van Gogh, *Starry Night*, 1889, oil on canvas

Doig in these works has an unexpected conversation with the idiosyncratic realist painter, Edward Hopper. The resignation of human existence, like a Robinson Crusoe forgotten in a canoe in the middle of nowhere, or like a drinker left in a bar in the Midwest in the *Nighthawks* [Figure 7], expressed by a horizontal line intersecting a vertical and surrounding flat colours forming strange reflections in an eerie light, forms the spiritual universes of both Doig and Hopper, and their bona fide landscapes of sublime solitude, that stay in memory just as much as it is needed to change the viewer's worldview. Lonely figures are the par-excellence exponents of a dystopia, which experiences everyday life on the fringes of lost dreams, through one-act visual stories. Those stories form a palimpsest of silent moments overflowing with unutterable emotion, through a visual gaze that circulates unbroken across the canvas and with equal comfort between the adventurous avenues of Romanticism, Realism, Symbolism.



**Figure 7.**
Edward Hopper
Nighthawks, 1942,
oil on canvas

Despite all the realist rendering, the abstract impression of emotion and the metaphysical, Giorgio de Chirico-like mystical atmosphere of the setting, foreshadows the post-reading of Modernism in representational painting, where the esthete naturalism of the Nouveaux Réalistes meets the deadpan realism of British YBAs. With the cinematographic method of montage, the artist joins the gap between a scene that does not refer to reality with the portrayal of a potentially real event, but also to the narrative one has in one's mind, referring to one's personal archives. Cinema's ability to create stop-frame works of art inspires Doig, as did the fine arts, influencing cinema in the previous century.

The work *Canoe Lake*, 1997, came from observing the dream sequence at the end of the 1980 pop horror film *Friday the 13th*, where the evil lurking inside the boat during a seemingly peaceful boating trip suddenly appears before the viewer. The extroverted symbolism of *Milky Way*, 1989-1990, which attempts to unite the viewer with the universe, here is twisted inwards, in an inner trial that vibrates with an undefined threat akin to *Goya's Sleep of Reason*, 1797, but without the small nightmarish figures peeking around. Here the source of danger is lurking in the subcutaneous tension that exudes from the apparently calm scene.



**Figure 8.**
Peter Doig
Charley's Space, 1990,
oil on canvas

The sense of fantasy is enhanced in the artist's most peculiar work, *Charley's Space*, 1990 [Figure 8]. Orange snow falling in the twilight leaves a thatched house glowing. A white shadow enters from the lower right corner while an eerie purple circular presence of some indistinct matter, with trees growing on top of it, occupies the center and draws attention within the painting. The artist's purpose in creating this spectral scene is to present viewers with a world behind what is visible. As the artist believes, beyond the influences from movies or books, there is something more primal in painting that has to do with its materiality. Painting is completely non-linguistic, non-descriptive, supra-textual. What he does is to construct something that will form a challenge, something that cannot be expressed in words, or that precedes them, while he will constantly change perceptions, opinions and meaning, in the same way that the canoe is carried away by the flow of water in his works or as the meanings twist into purple vortices. The particular apocalyptic landscape dominated by the metaphysical purple orb is reminiscent of Antoine de Saint-Exupery's outwardly illustrations of The Little Prince that chronicle the loneliness of a planet brought to life through the communication of a flower with a child, as the 'skin' of Doig's work seems to breathe through the perpetual dance of snowflakes.

Another reading is that this enigmatic circle refers to the opening sequence of Orson Welles' landmark 1941 film noir *Citizen Kane*, with its surreal landscape reflected in a falling and shattering glass snowball, while a pair of male lips whisper the mysterious, symbolic word 'Rosebud'. At the same time, it could work as the refraction of an invisible lens that magnifies a piece of reality to explore the hidden image within the circle, awakening the voyeuristic mood of the viewer who attempts to plunge his gaze into the forbidden area of a possible, grand secret. With the project *Concrete Cabin*, 1991, [Figure 9] Doig pays homage to the father of modernism in architecture Le Corbusier (Charles-Édouard Jeanneret 1887-1965), and his demystifying view that buildings are mere machines that serve as shelters, with emphasis on their building materials, glass, steel, cement. In Concrete Cabin, he draws inspiration from his vision of *Unité d'Habitation*, a modernist apartment building in Marseille in 1945.



**Figure 9.** Peter Doig
*Concrete Cabin*, 1991, oil on canvas

DAC Journal Vol. 3 | Nº 2

PETER DOIG'S ART AS A SIGNIFICATION OF THE RE-APPEARANCE OF THE SUBLIME IN
CONTEMPORARY BRITISH LANDSCAPE PAINTING | Eftychia (Faye) Tzanetoulakou

page | 61

The painting is only a glimpse of the building, part of which is hidden by the trees in the foreground. Unconstrained by the absent horizon line or the existence of terrain, the image hovers in the space between sensation and memory created in a moment. The rare flowing abundance of the painted surface, where there is not even the smallest part unpainted, recalls the symbolically suffocating decor of The Nabis. In the painterly social commentary of the latter through their Ibsenian claustrophobic interiors, Doig juxtaposes an artificially constructed nature that spreads and branches like a mutated biomorphic organism that swallows Le Corbusier's modernism, condemning it to the fate of architecture, failing to escape from its inevitable natural decay, an ephemeral melancholic elegy of the decline of human creations that Piranesi so eloquently captured in his once-heroic ruins decorated with ruin-lust architectural memento mori or seen in the unfulfilled non-buildings by Étienne-Louis Boullée.

Here modernism collides with nature, as it is presented through traditional landscape painting. The artist does not openly reveal this creative confrontation. He only shows as much as is needed to pose these questions to the viewer, and no more that would distract him from appreciating the moment. Moreover, according to the dream dimension of the artist's works, the dream is the most suitable place where two opposite images can freely coexist.

In *Concrete Cabin*, although at a first reading the concrete volume of the building contrasts with the rich nature around, the glow of the building illuminates the very landscape that its visible entity depends on.



**Figure 10.**
Peter Doig
*Iron Hill*, 1991, oil on canvas

Peter Doig's solo exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery, which occurred so early in his career as mentioned above, gave rise to the first works of buildings on hills, most comprehensively *Iron Hill*, 1991 [Figure 10]. The artist enlivens the memory of the Canadian landscape of Quebec but also recalls a certain photo of North American houses of Maine from National Geographic, working on a project that overturns the landscape so far. The landscape that unfolds before the viewer's eyes is not a specific place but a well-organized capriccio in the atelier, despite the plain air elements it seems to bring forward with the use of sharp impressionistic brushwork and vivid colours. The original sense of indeterminacy is replaced by a poetic composition that looks back for inspiration to Giotto's landscape backgrounds, when the landscape first comes to life, aiming to climb out of the pages of the *Book of Hours* and be read not transversely but sculpted in winding paths along the way, offering several narratives instead of one.

With greater intensity but via a more schematic structure, early childhood memories are formed in the white of the snow, the dark cypress of the trees and the red of the rust that carves, like a bloody waterfall, the right edge of the canvas, creating a new fantasy landscape, constructing a scene that partly reflects reality, partly borrows from purely cerebral data.

This non-specific nature of the image invites the viewer to mentally participate in its structure, being astounded in front of the Sublime of the unnaturally elevated perspective and superlative scale of the hill that 'absorbs' and dwarfs the hut, a commentary on nature which will always prevail over human forgeries and treasons. The frontal intake of the image is done by collapsing perspective and illusory depth using the very tools of illusion, such as the road on the right, as abstract forms where nothing comes forward and nothing recedes to create some kind of depth of field. The sensation of awe is enhanced by the temporal placement of the scene at the dramatically reflective hour of twilight, which is presented poetically above the horizon line as a blood-red hue occupied with supernatural miracles such as sparkling stars, the glittering reflections of the snow, and the dim lights of the of ridge houses, with their evocative abstract shadows.

Doig's virtuosity lies in his ability to marry the creative process with the image, developing a tension between the content of the canvas and the abstract concepts behind it.

DAC Journal Vol. 3 | Nº 2

PETER DOIG'S ART AS A SIGNIFICATION OF THE RE-APPEARANCE OF THE SUBLIME IN
CONTEMPORARY BRITISH LANDSCAPE PAINTING | Eftychia (Faye) Tzanetoulakou

page | 62

Practically evolving the performance through abstraction, Doig constructs a painting surface with various layers, whose final image is constantly moving and changing.

Translucent films of color are painted over while other colour elements are either dispersed or submerged, seeped or poured into each other, in reptilian mazes on and into the canvas, like a variegated 'tapestry' reminiscent of Monet's late Giverny water lily works. The different levels of color and the rich impasto, characteristic of the great Impressionist painter, create a special state of depth in themselves as in the case of Doig.
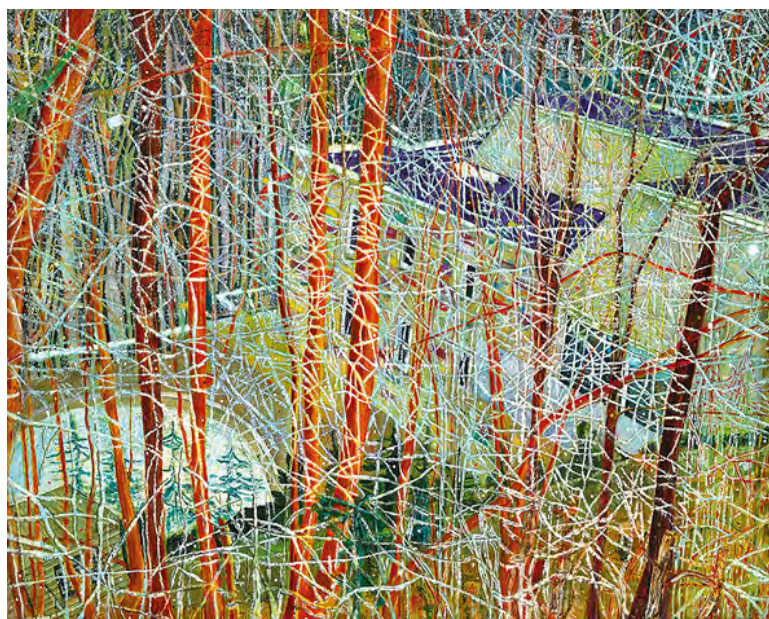


The skilful use of figurativeness in the foreground houses in Iron Hill coexists with extended abstract areas, often featuring a panspermia of splatters and intentional flecks of colour that recalls Jackson Pollock's flat disturbing surfaces, joining the background with the foreground, as in the *Architect's Home in the Ravine*, 1991, [Figure 11].

**Figure 11.**
Peter Doig
*The Architect's Home in the Ravine*, 1991,
oil on canvas



**Figure 12.**
Peter Doig
*Daytime Astronomy*, 1999,
oil on canvas

The work *Daytime Astronomy*, 1999, [Figure 12] contains all the achievements of Peter Doig's painting explorations and at the same time is a peculiar homage to Jackson Pollock and to a photograph of the artist sitting on the grass in front of his East Hampton studio taken by Hans Namuth. Its geometric structure is dynamic and carries the aura of a glance as if from a window view of a moving car. It is divided into three parts by colour and design. Light and transparent colour back and foreground darkness, and three black horizontal lines, where the great Abstract Expressionist once rested, now stretched like a tightrope between representation and abstraction. In this work, although the design motif is based on Pollock's photograph, Doig's entire world is built upon the three horizontal monographs that cut through the raging vegetation in the foreground, reminiscent of Barnett Newman's recumbent zips which Doig says look like openings that allow the existence of life to be seen but at the same time can also suddenly close it within themselves (Bonaventura, 1994, p. 14).

The thick impasto of the lush vegetation in Klimt's footsteps, gradually degrading into the white, ethereal line at the horizon ridge, which just might be an electric wire, echoes the absorbing quality of colour in the works of Mark Rothko. In Doig's work the pervasive heroism of the epic landscapes in Abstract Expressionism are instilled in an everyday, ephemeral snapshot of man's influence on his environment and vice versa, in apparently familiar but at the same time disturbingly indeterminate environments, nostalgic and at the same time enigmatic (Shiff and Lambert, 2011, p. 323).

This painted snapshot demonstrates the new face of painting, as a melancholic record of the unspeakable, with the humanism of painting now spreading over many levels of visual-mental representation with photographic, cinematic, and virtual reality elements, some of which the artist collects himself and incorporates in his painting practice. But it also works on a higher metaphysical level of perception which is orchestrated by the geometry of the composition, creating a symbolic tripartite elevation, born in the chthonic secrets of the ground, suspended in the ambiguity of the idea of memory[1], when the artist uses his own experience to paint the collective experiences of others. Peter Doig presents us with a painting that can still evoke the feeling of pathos, although the truth no longer emerges like a cataclysmic, apocalyptic event from the depth of the canvas, but momentarily touches upon its unstable, planetary surface, and in her, every meteoric step, reveals the Sublimity of the fragility of existence.

## CONCLUSION

Contemporary landscape painter Peter Doig rekindles interest in a landscape that embodies Immanuel Kant's thought as it exudes awe and fear, provoking the philosophical paradox of 'negative pleasure' in the viewer. The murky waters of rivers, where attraction and repulsion liquefy into an ambiguous and timeless form, function as weaning cradles of the unconfirmed present that is life. The artist's colour palette is saturated with ripe autumn grasses, dry and at the same time wet, with the textures thick and impenetrable, and the emotions just as distant and indecipherable the rare instances they appear on the scene. It is the human absence that is the main protagonist, but also the viewer himself, from the particular way the artist uses the viewpoint on eye-level, being the most 'human' element of the works.

The landscape expresses the season of the year with its corresponding weather, like a prelude to a coming event. Winterscapes cover human existence with a transparent atmospheric film, as if life is crystallized in an inescapable cage where the snow never seems to melt, creating a hermetic narrative that the viewer watches through its reflection but cannot penetrate, trapped in a mirror-like mesmeric image.

The iconography develops against a background of complex disorienting decorativeness reminiscent of Klimt, as the artist presents images like photographic snapshots or film frames, sculpted with an aura of timelessness and monumentality, made up with fragments from the chest of dreams.

The design abstractness and the use of grids aim to relinquish the memory of a landscape from some time in the artist's childhood in Canada, when the strange image of the existence of geometric modernist buildings in the natural landscape back then fascinated and at the same time puzzled Doig, who began to perceive architecture as a self-willed entity and as an interesting discontinuity of natural spatial planning. With the image divided into foreground, middle and back, but not necessarily in that order, or in depth, often overlapping or even with multiple points of convergence in the horizon, the familiar becomes open and the viewer feels like a climber on a hill with many peaks, where the experience of the Sublime is always so near and at the same time so far. Doig's landscapes sometimes look like safe havens, sometimes impersonal places of strange events, points of personal narratives, shared experiences and unknown encounters. Their commanding presence, their complex layout, the drama that develops, not so much in front of the eyes but in the mind of the viewer, and the ambiguity of this drama being influenced by humanity but also evolving independent of it, make Peter Doig's landscapes the forerunners of the contemporary re-reading of Romantic landscape painting. The perception and rendering of contemporary painting by Peter Doig has been discussed thoroughly in order to show that the artist succeeds in articulating a new aesthetic proposal that will reflect the image of the society from which it originates, proposing an evolved Meta-Romantic aesthetic as a possible method of viewing images. It focuses on how this art can create open images by proposing a new humanistic model of thinking, expressing a world where we will not have to align so much with shock, but more with the fractured times of today. These images will always be there to remind the viewer that the ceaseless flow of human imagination gives birth to the idea of the Sublime when lined up against its limits.

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1.    Peter Doig, exhibition catalogue, Tate Britain, 2008, p. 21.

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ARTICLE

# THE PICTURE AS A RESULT OF MEMORY IN NEMERE KEREZSI'S ART

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# THE PICTURE AS A RESULT OF MEMORY IN NEMERE KEREZSI'S ART

## Abstract

In this paper I focus on a case study concerning Nemere Kerezsi's artistic approach presented in the exhibition *Nemere Kerezsi: Thiemann-Etüde* (Quadro Gallery, Cluj-Napoca, 13th of May – 24th of June 2022). The aim of this article is to analyze the close relationship between memory and image, starting from the way the artist observes and researches the memory and narratives created around places, which he claims as the central resource for the creation of his works present in the *Thiemann-Etüde* exhibition.

The artist systematically starts from the micro framework of personal memories and narratives, which are then recorded and reproduced, through suggestive images, for the macro framework of the Anthropocene topic of the current history.
Thus, the theoretical debates on the issue of the Anthropocene are relevant in this context, because the artist captures through a diversified visual language (video, photography, sculpture, installation etc.) the cultural-artificial intervention of man on nature and the consequences of this intrusion.

Starting from the premise that the natural environment and history present themselves more and more as a result built on the basis of the interconnection of people who fabricate communities, Nemere Kerezsi developed his artistic approach similar to anthropological research.

Namely, the artist collects subtle data about the personal memory of different places he's visited, in order to generate the "image of an experience".

## Keywords

contemporary art

*Nemere Kerezsi: Thiemann-Etüde* exhibition

Quadro Gallery

individual memory

collective memory

places of memory

Anthropocene

## INTRODUCTION

PREMISES - STRUCTURE AND METHODS OF THE CASE STUDY

This article has as its main purpose an analysis of the memory-image relation as a resource for artistic creation, in the case of Nemere Kerezsi's visual approach. A main objective of this research is to investigate to what extent memory can serve as a source of inspiration and determining point of the artistic process in Nemere Kerezsi's case. The option to dedicate a particular case study to the *Thiemann-Etüde* exhibition at the Quadro gallery from Cluj-Napoca is related to the fact that Nemere Kerezsi's artistic career is suggestive of the way in which the contemporary artist can re-actualize the memory of 'places' with the help of different work media and materiality. With greater reason, the heterogeneous visual language of Nemere Kerezsi proves to be more relevant within the proposed discussion because his approach illustrates the different images that personal memory can acquire and the way it can stick to a cultural-historical narrative much more extensive. The premise that memory is a factor of inspiration for Nemere Kerezsi's works and, at the same time, a conceptual binder of the various forms of artistic expression found in the context of the *Nemere Kerezsi: Thiemann-Etüde* exhibition will be verified during the elaboration of the present article. To prove this idea, the present research is based on my direct personal experience as a spectator in the exhibition of Nemere Kerezsi at Quadro Gallery, as well as the use of materials such as: photographs, the curatorial text, fragments of text written by the artist accompanying the works in the exhibition, video with the artist etc. All these resources are useful in applying in the case study other working methods such as image analysis or close reading on the text (explanations related to the works provided by the artist, the curatorial text) from an aesthetic and hermeneutic perspective which, in turn, adheres to the interdisciplinary theoretical discourse of Visual Culture Studies.

The contribution I want to make with this research is to clarify key features of Nemere Kerezsi's individual and complex artistic approach. Also, throughout the article I will bring arguments that emphasize the relevance of memory as an essential factor in the configuration of the artist's works, as a connecting thread between the artistic objects and the various themes of interest presented to the public in the Quadro exhibition. To strengthen this reasoning, the study of the *Thiemann-Etüde* exhibition will be structured on three directions of analysis of the involvement of memory as a working tool in the realization of artworks.

A first direction of analysis will take into account the artist's works that are based on individual memory resulting from personal subjective experience. The second point of inquiry will be located around the examination of the works in the exhibition that connect the narratives resulting from personal memories with those embodied into a much wider 'memory of place'. For the artist, the problematization of the manner in which the geological time of the Anthropocene leaves its mark on the 'memory of places' becomes a topic of interest. The third track of analysis will assess the contribution and relevance of the archive as a way of storing memory, alongside the subsequent appropriation of the archive as a working tool within Nemere Kerezsi's artistic process. Finally, in order to observe how the 'memory of the place' becomes for the artist the primary resource in generating the "image of an experience" (György, 2022), through the prism of the memory-image relationship, I will apply in the case study concepts and theories of authors such as: Paul Ricoeur, Joan Gibbons, Pierre Nora, Ross Poole, Hal Foster, Maurice Halbwachs, Boris Groys. An interdisciplinary theoretical perspective, based on the conceptions of the listed authors will help to better understand and frame Nemere Kerezsi's distinctive approach in the context of contemporary artistic creation.

THE CONTEXT OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE EXHIBITION
*NEMERE KEREZSI: TIEMANN-ETÜDE*

Since 2008, Quadro Gallery has built a commercial profile on the Cluj-Napoca (Romania) art scene, mainly focused on selling and promoting lesser-known modern art from Transylvania. The clear stake of the Quadro Gallery to capitalize on modern art, later materialized in the establishment of the Quadro auction program. In a pragmatic sense, Quadro gallery's entry into the secondary

art market has allowed this organization a sustainable existence and development. In addition to this practical aspect necessary to ensure the longevity of Quadro, the art historian Szekely Sebestyén György – the founder and director of Quadro – conceived the gallery's program focused predominantly on modern art and from an ideal that wants to understand the context of the artistic production in Central and Eastern Europe. However, over time, Quadro has not remained an active space only within the parameters of a commercial gallery dedicated to modern art from the region. Since 2016, the Quadro Gallery has increasingly started to present to the public contemporary art exhibitions that explore the neo-avant-garde direction and reach the most original visual and thematic concerns of the current artistic generations.
The opening of the Quadro Gallery to the technical and conceptual pluralism that characterizes contemporary art (Rațiu, 2011, pp. 23-36) in recent times can be noted perhaps most obviously in the exhibition *Nemere Kerezsi: Thiemann-Etüde*.

The exhibition eloquently captures *Nemere Kerezsi's* over 20 years of artistic activity, through his heterogeneous thematic and technical interests. Kerezsi's concern for distinct mediums of artistic expression also results from his artistic-academic training at the University of Fine Arts in Budapest. In his career so far, his artistic activity has been characterized by interdisciplinarity on the border between sculpture, intermedia art, video, photography, graphic arts, installation and other media. As the curatorial text suggests, the works selected by the artist (himself participating in the curating process), together with the curator Szekely Sebestyén György, are „based on a direct observation of reality and, in many cases, on its long, in-depth research" (György, 2022). The assumption of a research approach, which resides in a rather methodological and less intuitive artistic approach, could be noted in the Quadro exhibition by the way the artist follows the stages of a scientific research to get closer to the subject that concerns him: like the ecosystem of bees, the optical phenomenon, the consequences of Anthropocene on the environment and even in our way of living together, our present relation with the past through the memory of a place, and not only. Nemere Kerezsi's methodological artistic process takes shape starting from the study and direct documentation of the subjects that concern him by means of: video or photo camera, images from archives (photos, maps, postcards etc.). Then, the artist follows and records the manner of creative transposition of the subject concerned, by recording and noting some empirical observations and ideas. They emerge as his artistic process evolves. Such explanations accompanied the works also present in the exhibition at the Quadro Gallery, from the author's intention to help the public decode the unitary vision behind his artistic agenda. Despite the very different works both as topic and also as artistic medium, there is a holistic approach which is the center of Kerezsi's artistic agenda: "interconnectedness and the search for connection or alliance" (György, 2022), which, finally, is able to build a functional community.

A particular aspect that this study wants to capture is that the diversity of themes of artistic interest in Nemere Kerezsi's eclectic approach have their common origin in the factor of memory as a creative resource, whether we are discussing the contribution of individual or collective memory. As we will see, in some works of the artist, the interconnection and the sense of a community can be triggered by accessing the collective memory present in the structure of some events and places.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMES: FROM MEMORY TO IMAGE, PICTURE AND ART

Paul Ricoeur argues in his phenomenological approach to memory that it is more than a simple rational 'apparatus' for storing information. Memory is also a form of accessing the past, it is always of the past and, despite all this, not to be confused with history, because one of its components intervenes, namely: imagination (Ricoeur, 2004, pp. 5-6). Memory is the one that has the power to change the concrete data of the past because, in the process of remembering, memory occurs together with an association of ideas, via imagination. It can be altered through deformations, interpretations, uncertainties being in constant evolution as an integral part of our individuality. Throughout the history of ideas, memory has been conceptualized through dichotomies such as individual versus collective memory.

The early paradigms of modern thought that tended towards a "subjectivist radicalization" (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 94) rejected the possibility of a collective subject. The idea of collective memory aroused a great deal of skepticism, until the progress of the humanities in the 20th century. With the advancement of disciplines such as sociology, psychology, anthropology or history, the opposition between individual memory and collective memory started losing ground. New reasonings on memory, such as "sites or [...] environments of memory" (Nora, 1989, p. 7), appeared on the horizon and began to blur the much-disputed philosophical opposition between individual and collective memory. Paul Ricoeur finds that, despite the inevitable distinction between the two, both of these dimensions of memory are equally valid and also, there is a "constitution of individual memory and of collective memory reciprocal and interconnected" (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 95). Through individual memory our past and present are reconciled as part of identity impacting our emotions and morality that make up our subjectivity. Instead, collective or cultural memory, as it is also called, does not belong exclusively to a single individual, it has a social character because it is revealed "in social practices and artifacts, as well as in public discourse" (Poole, 2008, p. 155). Moreover, all these characteristics of the collective memory keep the traces of individualities summed up, while the individuality is affected by the socio-cultural and historical load contained in a certain environment or accessed within some communities.

The fact that there is a close relationship between memory and image, and that memories often come back to us in the form of images, is nothing new. The already mentioned Paul Ricoeur remarks: "It does appear that the return of the memory can only take place in the mode of becoming-an-image" (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 7). However, images are not limited to the memory frame. In his distinction between image and picture, W.J.T. Mitchell classifies memory as a mental image alongside dreams or fantasies, and linguistic expressions can represent images as well. What Mitchell wants to draw our attention to is that an image is the result of an abstract creation of the intellect, which without a support, remains only a mental image. Instead, "the picture is the image plus the support; it is the appearance of the immaterial image in a material medium. That is why we can speak of architectural, sculptural, cinematic, textual, and even mental images..." (Mitchell, 2005, p. 85). Therefore, the artistic image becomes an expression of the total union between the mental image of the artist and the material support that he attributes to it. At the same time, in its capacity as a mental image, the memory is valued artistically and aesthetically only when it is transferred by the artist to the working medium to share it with the Other, his audience in this case.

A study that traces the transformation of current cultural conceptions of memory and the way in which they are reflected in contemporary visual art is that of Joan Gibbons. Her text can still produce a serious debate around the various uses of memory as a source of creation in contemporary art. As the author shows us, the reflection of memory in art is much older and can be seen indirectly including from the self-portraits of Rembrandt or Van Gogh, later, those of Frida Kahlo, due to the autobiographical character of their artworks. However, a truly assumed concern of artists towards the subject of memory is clearly displayed starting with contemporary art from the 70s (Gibbons, 2007, pp. 9-15). Moreover, the amplification of pluralism in the contemporary art of the 90s due to the development of new technologies which, at the same time, caused the increasingly present intersection between art and technology, produced an expansion of the artistic perspectives in transposition of the memory.

In her book, *Contemporary Art and Memory Images of Recollection and Remembrance*, Gibbons does not necessarily insist on the aspect of memory as a cognitive function of 're-cognition' and storage of data and information that can be updated. Rather, following the course of some inevitable features of memory such as its flexibility or fallibility in rendering the past accurately, the author seeks to highlight the emotional side of memory, which can be "a key to our emotional understanding of ourselves and the world" (Gibbons, 2007, p. 5). Furthermore, art is able to work with the emotional aspect of memory. Starting from Proust's example in literature, Joan Gibbons understands memory as a creative force capable of tracing a channel of communication between the past and the present, where the artist can use this to link his/her "personal truths to a wider audience or readership" (Gibbons, 2007, p. 3). Therefore, the appropriation of memory as a creative resource within the artistic process can be a connection within the aesthetic appreciation, which connects the artist to his/her audience.

Throughout her book, Gibbons presents the various ways in which contemporary artists use memory in their work, whether they do so in a consciously assumed way, in which memory becomes a subject of interest, or, indirectly, memory is already embedded in the aesthetic and conceptual qualities of their work. Starting from the work of contemporary artists such as Louise Bourgeois or Tracey Emin, Gibbons observes their specific self-referential way of exploring their own past through memory and, thus, their works acquire an autobiographical character. Then, the author offers the example of the works of Rachel Whiteread, Nan Goldin, Miyako Ishiuchi, to demonstrate that a potential stage of manifestation of memory in contemporary art can be detected "through an indexical relationship with the subject represented" (Gibbons, 2007, p. 29). Rather, this indexical relationship implies the configuration of the works with the help of some elements, called by Gibbons 'memory traces', which are parts contained directly in the artist's original memory or that refer to it. The indexical relationship of art and memory that Joan Gibbons sustains is more obvious if we return to Paul Ricoeur's assertion that "the final referent of the memory remains the past" (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 15). Another method of exploring memory in contemporary art is that of revising history, through which artists like Keith Piper or Doris Salcedo "recycle" socio-political narratives of the past that they re-actualize via their own works. Then, the idea of recovery of history is even more extended by Gibbons, by applying Marianne Hirsch's concept of 'postmemory' to the work of contemporary artists. These artists, proposed by Gibbon in her book, touch on the sensitive subject of the need for collective healing in the face of traumas that have persisted throughout history. The idea of postmemory refers to the sensitive issue of the perpetuation of individual or collective traumas on subsequent generations who did not directly go through those violent events and emotions. But these recent generations inherit the consequences of the perpetuation of these wounds to which they have access a posteriori due to: the family, the environment of formation, images, texts or stories transmitted orally (Hirsch, 2012, pp. 31-33). The following aspects of the types of use of memory that Joan Gibbons identifies at the level of contemporary artistic practices consist of: re-actualization of memory through the dimension of participatory art, artistic representation as a form of criticism addressing the way in which the process of knowing and storing data is organized in museums and archives and testing the limits of memory and reclaiming the theme of forgetting in the case of artists like Michael Landy or Becky Shaw (Gibbons, 2007, pp. 118, 141-157).

The theoretical reference to the classification of visual forms of appreciation and use of memory in contemporary artistic practices made by Joan Gibbons is not accidental and deserves to be discussed in the context of the present article. As we will see, Nemere Kerezsi's highly varied artistic approach results in the intersection of several conceptual and visual planes of memory transposition. Within different works, or even in the same work, for Nemere Kerezsi, several artistic formulas of memory integration similar to those examined by Gibbons can be found connected, such as: the autobiographical character, memory as a trace and its indexicality, the aspect of revision of the past and the one that finds itself involved in the artist's work process, in a practical sense – the archive.

## MEMORY AS A CREATIVE RESOURCE IN NEMERE KEREZSI'S ARTISTIC PROCESS

### ARTISTIC NARRATIVES IN THE WORKS RESULTING FROM PERSONAL MEMORIES

A first example where individual memory becomes a relevant factor in the elaboration of works for Nemere Kerezsi is *Three Shoes* (Figure 1). In the case of this work, what is specific in its relationship with memory as the source of the artistic act is the fact that it has a significant autobiographical character and stems from a personal memory of the artist. The artist starts from the memory of the workshop and shoe shop of his grandfather, who worked as a shoemaker. He takes as a prototype for the work the model of the wooden shoe made by his grandfather, which he displayed in the window of his shop as a commercial. With the reference of this wooden model, Nemere Kerezsi seeks to reproduce the memory of his grandfather and his workshop in the present through a sculptural reproduction that explores three types of materiality of that model: a wooden shoe (according to the original material used by his grandfather), one shoe of wax and one of bronze. It is quite clear that this work contains in itself an autobiographical nature being a way for the artist to establish "a personal post-mortem relationship" (György, 2022) with someone close to him from his past.

*Three Shoes* sums up the idea that one's individual existence and history takes on meaning after death to the extent that it is remembered by others. Also, in this work there are component parts that present a relationship of indexicality with memory. One indicator is the act of the artist to reproduce the original wooden model of the shoe created by the grandfather and frame it as a constituent part of his work to refer to the personal memory of the grandfather. Therefore, the sculptural elements present in Kereszi's work become a medium for accessing the memory of a loved one who marked the formation of his identity.



**Figure 1.** Nemere Kerezsi, *Three Shoes* (wood, wax, bronze), 2003, *Nemere Kerezsi: Thiemann-Etüde* exhibition, Quadro Gallery, Cluj-Napoca, 13th of May – 24th of June 2022.

Another relevant work in the context of the relationship between the indexicality of art and memory, from the artistic process of Nemere Kerezsi, is *Vertical Independent* (Figure 2).

For this work, the call to memory is necessary and produces a synthesis between the past moment, when the artist actually created the work, and the fact that, due to its ephemeral nature, the work no longer exists. Originally conceived by the artist when he was a student 23 years ago, the work itself consisted of extracting a piece of farmland from the garden of the University of Art in Budapest and exposing it vertically.

The piece of farmland was exposed by the artist in such a way that, through artificial human intervention on it, the piece of soil would gradually disappear. It was made as a work in progress, which lasted for 19 years, but very recently the piece of soil disappeared in a mysterious and unknown way. What remained of this "solution of individual freedom" (György, 2022) is only a photograph that was exhibited in the Quadro Gallery space.

This photo further points to the indexical relationship between art and memory, in Gibbons' terms. The photograph of the work is among the few remaining traces that can attest to the existence of the *Vertical Independent* work, both for the artist and for the public.



**Figure 2.** Nemere Kerezsi, *Vertical Independent* (soil), 2003, in progress till 2021, disappeared under unknown circumstances, *Nemere Kerezsi: Thiemann-Etüde* exhibition, Quadro Gallery, Cluj-Napoca, 13th of May – 24th of June 2022.

THE MEMORY AS A TOOL TO PASS FROM THE PERSONAL NARRATIVES TO HISTORICAL ONES

A series of works that gradually make the transition from the valorization of individual memory through art towards the collective one is *In the Apiary*. Also, in these artworks, the artist has as a reference point the memory of his grandfather who was a practicing beekeeper. The memory of assisting his grandfather at his apiary and also a dream from 2010 with Nemere Kerezsi's intervention in the apiary influenced the artist to create this series that captures man's intervention in nature. In his dream, he was placing different geometrical forms in the beehives, but, during that dream, before observing what the bees might do with the solid geometric forms, the artist woke up. After that, the memory of this dream continued to stay with him for a long time and that's how *In the Apiary* series appeared, made in very different artistic techniques (Nemere Kerezsi, 2015). Using shapes like square, triangle or pentagon, the artist wanted to create a cell grid which fitted the expectations and the characteristics of a bee's life in the hive.



**Figure 3.**
Nemere Kerezsi, The Hexagon Program
*In the apiary* series (wax, wood), 2011 – in progress,
*Nemere Kerezsi: Thiemann-Etüde* exhibition,
Quadro Gallery, Cluj-Napoca,
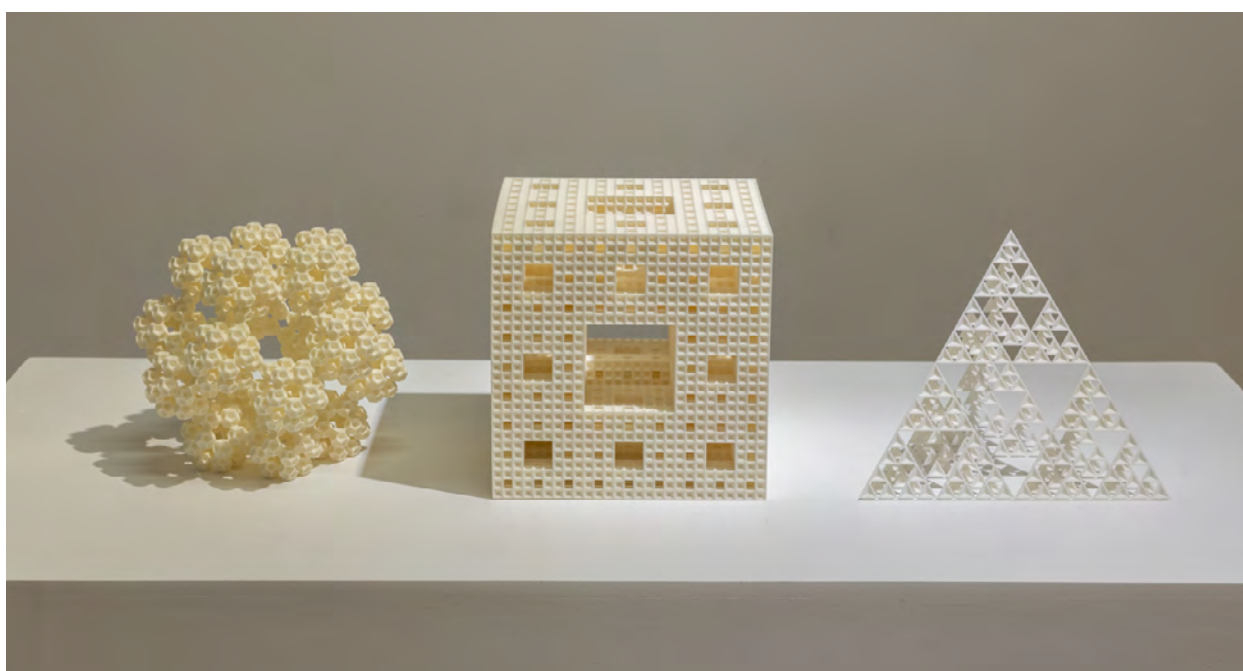13th of May – 24th of June 2022.



**Figure 4.** Nemere Kerezsi, The Hexagon Program – *In the apiary* series (3D printed plastic objects), 2011 – in progress, *Nemere Kerezsi: Thiemann-Etüde* exhibition, Quadro Gallery, Cluj-Napoca, 13th of May – 24th of June 2022.

After creating three types of 'cells' he placed them in the hive and the bees began to rebuild over their usual wax cells in a very organized manner (Figure 3), almost mathematically we could say. The final artworks that resulted practically unified Nemere Kerezsi's intervention with that of the bees. Other works from the *In the Apiary* series were also present in the exhibition: objects that reproduce cells created by the artist in 3D (Figure 4) and a video documenting the life of bees in the hive. The video also captured how the bees removed the drone from the hive (Figure 5).



**Figure 5.**
Nemere Kerezsi,
*Drone eviction* (video), 2016,
*Nemere Kerezsi: Thiemann-Etüde* exhibition,
Quadro Gallery, Cluj-Napoca,
13th of May – 24th of June 2022.

From the artificial intervention in the ecosystem and including the social structure of the life of bees, Nemere Kereszi goes to the intrusion of the camera into the ecosystem of ants. The artist creates a video in which he removes the gravestone of the German air scout Walter Thiemann (Figure 6), who died at the age of 26 in 1917 in the First World War after his plane crashed in the city of Brăila. After this gesture, the few minutes of the video capture the habitat built by the ants under the funerary monument, and how they and their cocoons completely disappear from the frame the moment they sense the presence of the human intruder (Figure 7).



**Figure 6.**
Nemere Kerezsi'
Thiemann-Etüde – *Side notes to a sentence, to the memory of an aerial scout and two cities* (Project), Thiemann grave (video), 2020-21, *Nemere Kerezsi: Thiemann-Etüde* exhibition, Quadro Gallery, Cluj-Napoca, 13th of May – 24th of June 2022.

Both the *In the Apiary* series and this video extrapolate from the artist's personal narrative to the shared Anthropocene narrative as they capture the effects of human involvement in the natural environment. Not only as a scientific paradigm, but also as a topic of thought, the Anthropocene demands an even wider adjustment of the actual perspective regarding our relationship with nature. The discussion about the human footprint in the geological structure and ecosystems of the Earth is becoming impossible to ignore nowadays, if we observe "human emergence as a great force of nature in the historical record of Earth" (Ellis, 2018). As mentioned in the curatorial text, through this video with Tiemann's grave, which is the core of the *Thiemann-Etüde* project, Nemere Kereszi captures with the video camera "the metaphor of intrusion" which, later on, he exploits in the context of social relations. The other works that make up the Thiemann study demonstrate that there is a constant intrusion of us into the lives of others. This intrusion is either directly through the way we connect and influence each other, or indirectly through our actions that have consequences on the natural and human socio-cultural environment.

The works that make up the rest of the *Thiemann-Etüde* art project are actually aerial photos with Brăila made by Thiemann himself and plans of the city of Brăila (located in Eastern Romania, on the left bank of the Danube), plus a second video of the city filmed by the artist with a drone in April of this year. The drone acquires a double meaning, that of "artistic and military tool" (György, 2022) when it captures, at night, illuminated frames from the border with Ukraine (Figure 8).

The entire process of the artist in this project creates a personalized map of the collective memory of the place through the way he revisits traces of the historical past and relates them to the current geo-political situation.

**Figure 7.**
Nemere Kerezsi,
*Thiemann-Etüde* (Project),
*Map of the city Brăila* (paper),
1917-1923, 60 x 44 cm;
Thiemann grave (video), 2020-21,
*Nemere Kerezsi: Thiemann-Etüde* exhibition, Quadro Gallery,
Cluj-Napoca, 13th of May – 24th
of June 2022.





**Figure 8.**
Nemere Kerezsi,
*Thiemann-Etüde* (Project), Brăila descendant (video), 2022,
*Nemere Kerezsi: Thiemann-Etüde* exhibition,
Quadro Gallery, Cluj-Napoca,
13th of May – 24th of June 2022.

A last series of works from the exhibition that enter the area of revisions of history, and even come close to the idea of postmemory, is *Caprices de Berlin*. According to Joan Gibbons, contemporary art uses memory to revise history when it: "maps a number of recovered social and political histories and puts them into the context of the current tendency to privilege memory over history" (Gibbons, 2007, p. 8). Then, in the particular case of this text, the question arises, how does *Caprices de Berlin* series manage to revise history and prioritize memory over it? With a meticulousness typical of a scientist, Nemere Kerezsi researches the various forms of appearance of the halo phenomenon in public space. For 9 months, with perseverance and patience, the artist visits the same monuments relevant to the historical past of the city of Berlin and seeks to capture with the camera the phenomenon of the halo. The final artistic result is more than simple research of the halo phenomenon. Part of the works of the *Caprices de Berlin* series joins in the same visual frame the photograph with the halo, immortalized by the artist, with the postcards of the symbolical and historical sites, taken before the respective places were affected by political conflicts (Figure 9).

Thus, through this hybridization of images that reveal the sensitive cultural-historical charge of the place, Nemere Kerezsi captures "historical trauma inflicted by the Nazis and Soviets in Berlin" (György, 2022). *Caprices de Berlin* project is more than 'imprinting' history. It is an a posteriori formula for accessing the collective consciousness through memory, which captures the need to heal a community in the face of past traumas. This series prioritizes memory over history as it reassembles history for new generations by appealing to postmemory. The ultimate stake of Nemere Kerezsi's artistic agenda, that of interconnecting people through art, of creating an alliance to remind us that we are not alone, is rendered through these series and works from the *Nemere Kerezsi: Thiemann-Etüde* exhibition that we analyzed, because it suggests the presence of a collective memory.

As Maurice Halbwachs, the father of collective memory studies, observed: "Our memories remain collective, however, and are recalled to us through others even though only we were participants in the events or saw the things concerned. In reality, we are never alone. Other men need not be physically present, since we always carry with us and in us a number of distinct persons" (Halbwachs, 1980, p. 23). As an addition to Halbwachs observation, we can argue that our collective memory is not only constructed through others, but it can be accessed together, in communities, when we relate as groups to events and symbols of the past.

Following the theoretical perspective suggested by Pierre Nora, collective memory can be accessed through "places of memory" or "sites of remembering" (Szpociński, 2016, p. 246) as other theorists have recently renamed them. Places of memory are those spaces "where memory crystallizes and secretes itself has occurred at a particular historical moment" (Nora, 1989, p. 7). Within "places of memory", memory and history are in an interdependent relationship. In order for these sites of memory not to be confused with sites and historical artefacts, as recommended by Nora, there must be present a 'will to remember'.

In addition to the intersection between memory and history, places of memory are defined by other three characteristics such as: the material, symbolic and functional aspects (Nora, 1989, pp. 18-19). The purely material aspect, whether it consists of the physical or the intangible form, assumes the empirical character of a 'place of memory' which can be: an artifact, a historical site, a cultural landmark, an institution, certain cultural and social practices or experiences etc. Instead, the functional side of a 'place of memory' consists in the ability of this place to become the object of a ritual. That is, through the common will, this place is systematically revisited and remodelled at the same time. Then, we have the symbolic content, that could be a strictly symbolic action, which because of the 'will to remember', it makes a focused appeal to memory to give it meaning.



**Figure 9.** Nemere Kerezsi, *The Hexagon Program – Caprices de Berlin* (site-specific photo series plus old postcards), 2012, *Nemere Kerezsi: Thiemann-Etüde* exhibition, Quadro Gallery, Cluj-Napoca, 13th of May – 24th of June 2022.

If there wouldn't be a will to remember, present especially through the last two components of the places of memory (the functional and the symbolic one), they would remain just simple historical dates or places. Nora takes the concrete material example of an archive and suggests that it becomes a place of memory only to the extent that "imagination invests it with a symbolic aura" (Nora, 1989, p. 19).

In the sense of Pierre Nora's definitions, we can say that the *Nemere Kerezsi: Thiemann-Etüde* exhibition presents 'traces' of how Nemere Kerezsi artistically exploits 'places of memory' and works with them in his creative process. A first example is the *Caprices de Berlin* series which presents, through the pictures of the historical sites, the perpetuation of the traumatic burden of these places, thus becoming symbols of postmemory and its constant re-actualization.

Then, a second frame of approaching the artist to the idea of 'place of memory' is through the video that gives the start and the conceptual direction of the *Thiemann-Etüde* project. This time, a funerary monument less valued within a collective socio-cultural context, that of the German soldier Walter Thiemann, is approached by the artist from an archaeological and anthropological perspective, as he seeks to collect and decipher the traces of a memory of place.

As Pierre Nora points out, memory of a place is, in fact, a neglected memory site less revisited and updated in the collective consciousness (Nora, 1989).

With the help of his artistic project *Thiemann-Etüde*, the artist 'reclaims' this funerary monument and brings it into the institutional framework of the gallery, in an artistic effort that bridges across personal narratives and historical (or universal) ones.

As these narratives become accessible to the public (in the context of the gallery), they can be seen as a place of shared memory (historical 'memory' of a place, personal memory of the artist and personal experiences of the public relating, one way or another, to the art). In other words, through his artistic contribution, Nemere Kerezsi reconverts the 'memory of the place' in 'a place of memory' with aesthetic, cultural and symbolic value for the spectator.

THE CONCRETE TRANSPOSITION OF MEMORY: THE ARCHIVE AS AN ARTISTIC WORKING TOOL

A third degree in which the artist works with memory consists in the integration of the archive as part of the creative process. Following the intervention of the artist, the archive (this site of memory) takes on a new meaning, both for the artist and the public, as it becomes part of the artwork. It's just that, unlike the artistic uses of the archive exemplified by Joan Gibbons in her book, in the case of Nemere Kerezsi, the archive does not become a discursive-artistic form of institutional criticism. For Nemere Kerezsi, the archive becomes a method of artistic work to intersect personal memories with narratives that have a historical echo and are universally recognized.

In the early 2000s, art historian Hal Foster noted the effervescent and growing presence of 'an archival impulse' among contemporary artists. Foster uses this notion to describe the new figure of the artist as an archivist who integrates archival images, documents and texts as the essence of the elaboration of his works and organizes them in his own and alternative methods to the established ones of museum collections. Also, this archivist impulse of the artist is placed in the continuation of the model of the artist as curator (Foster, 2004, p. 5).

Foster's observation is not accidental, since in both types of approaches we have involved a process of selection and organization of materials. Both an archival impulse and an assumed curatorial behaviour of the artist emerge from the *Nemere Kerezsi: Thiemann-Etüde* exhibition at the Quadro Gallery. On the one hand, the artist himself is directly involved in the curatorial process, together with the gallerist Szekely Sebestyén György.

On the other hand, projects such as *In the Apiary*, *Thiemann-Etüde, Caprices de Berlin* or even *Vertical Independent* (whose existence is attested currently through a photograph of the work from the artist's personal archive) present at the core of their elaboration: archival photographs and plans (Fig. 10), illustrations from old beekeeping books (Fig. 11), postcards (Fig. 12), or the artist's notes on the side of the works which, over time, become an archive of the evolution of his own artistic approach.

In the particular case of Nemere Kerezsi, the archival impulse, which is visibly present in this exhibition, becomes a tool for updating the 'places of memory'. The use of the archive in the artistic process establishes a close relationship between memory and history. Therefore, in the artistic process of Nemere Kerezsi, the archive can be understood as a form of manifestation and attestation of memory, which becomes the very condition for history to exist and gain relevance in the present. Especially since, by using the archive as a working tool, the artist capitalizes on places with a cultural background, which may have been omitted in the context of history. Nevertheless, the archive is not only a mechanism for triggering history, but for memory it becomes, as Boris Groys claims: "a machine for the production of memories, a machine that fabricates history out of the material of non-collected reality" (Groys, 2012).

## CONCLUSIONS

Through this case study, I tried to emphasize the relevance of Nemere Kerezsi's particular artistic approach within the segment of contemporary art that places memory at the core of the creative process. Following the analysis of the works summing up Nemere Kerezsi's 20 years of professional activity in the field of visual arts, presented in the context of the *Nemere Kerezsi: Thiemann-Etüde* exhibition hosted at the Quadro Gallery (Cluj-Napoca), we can conclude that in his artistic process there is an almost intimate relationship between memory and the artistic paths to produce the artworks, which results in a final picture that, also, the spectator can keep in mind after leaving the exhibition. Following Joan Gibson's conceptualization on the ways that contemporary artists are integrating memory in their artworks, we have seen that in Nemere Kerezsi's case there is more than one implication of memory. In many cases of Nemere Kerezsi's projects and series of artworks, the memory image precedes the picture (the image plus the material support in which the work is made, according to W.J.T. Mitchell). But what makes the memory image valuable in the context of his works are the different creative modes of using memory to produce the artworks, similar to those described by Gibson: autobiography, indexicality, history revisions and postmemory and the archive. Even within the same work or series, there is an interweaving of these ways of artistic use of memory found today in contemporary art.

As we could observe, in works like *Three Shoes* or *Vertical Independent*, memory is creatively explored from autobiographical and indexical perspectives. Instead, the series *In the Apiary* starts from the autobiographical discourse of memories and dreams, in order to finally arrive at a universal discourse on the consequences of human intervention in the structure of the Earth, that animates the debates around the most recent geological period, the Anthropocene. Also, the traces of human intervention in the natural ecosystem of other beings (but also in the socio-anthropological one of the effects of interaction and living with other people) are a central theme in the *Tiemann Etude* project. The shared (post)memories and (post)experiences that produce human interconnection and, implicitly, the creation of communities capable of adopting an attitude of solidarity in the face of the results of history can be perceived within the *Caprices de Berlin* series. As it follows from the analysis of the works in the exhibition, memory, as a triggering element of the artistic act, appears in Nemere Kereszi's work by combining its two segments: individual and collective memory. On the one hand, we have the visual plan for the elaboration of some works starting from the personal memories of the artist and, on the other hand, we have the memory of places culturally 'contaminated' by collective narratives and history. The communication between the two planes present in Nemere Kerezsi's artistic approach allows him to elevate the personal narrative built on the memory of individual experiences to a broad historical narrative framework preserved and re-accessed through collective memory.

Also, an actual tool that helps to fulfil this artistic 'mission' of Nemere Kereszi is the use of the archive as part of the process of developing the works. For the artist, the archive is not a form of institutional criticism on the side of a politicized problem, as it was in Gibbon's example. The use of archive is rather a form of artistic discursive engagement regarding the need to create a common place where memory connects with history. Nemere Kerezsi's artistic career is relevant in terms of the different ways of visual manifestation of the memory-image relationship in contemporary art. The varied transposition of some of the artist's personal memories related to moments in life, places, which interweave with history or cultural paradigms characteristic (of the present) on a large scale, has the purpose to construct through art an awareness towards the community and a care for the presence of the Other, as a form of self-care.

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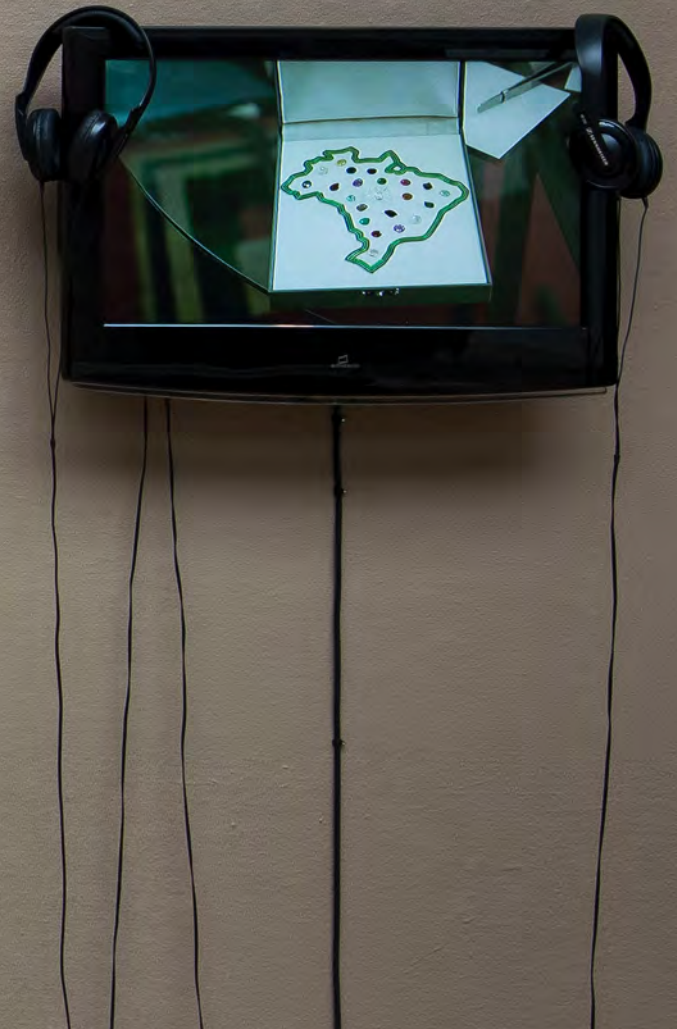
# PORTFOLIOS

PORTFOLIO

# STONES, WORDS, IMAGES

## A SCALE OF MEMORY AND TIME

Mabe Bethônico

Radu Lilea

## Mabe Bethônico

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Mabe Bethônico is artist and researcher, and her work has been exhibited extensively, e.g., in the 17th Biennale Architettura 2021 in Venice and in the 27th and 28th São Paulo Biennials. In 2005 and 2019 she participates in the Panorama da Arte Brasileira at Museum of Modern Art São Paulo. She has been member of World of Matter, an international group of artists and theoreticians investigating primary materials and the complex ecologies of which they are a part [http://www.worldofmatter.net/]. The project was exhibited at CUNY Graduate Center in New York, HMKV in Dortmund/Germany, Leonard and Bina Ellen Gallery at Concordia University in Montreal, Katherine E. Nash Gallery at the University of Minnesota, at Nottingham Contemporary, etc.
With an MA and PhD from the Royal College of Art, London, she presently teaches at HEAD–Genève and at ENSP – Arles. In 2013, her post-doctoral research *One Traveller after Another*, developed at the Museum of Ethnography of Geneva with support from CNPq, the National Research Council of Brazil, was awarded four Brazilian prizes.

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# STONES, WORDS, IMAGES
## A SCALE OF MEMORY AND TIME

**Abstract**

Cultural memory, as viewed by historian Alexander Etkind, influenced by the world of computers, from where he takes this blatant yet effective reference, is binary: there is a "soft memory" preserved mostly in texts, and a "hard memory" stored primarily in monuments (Etkind, 2013, p. 177). His perspective on how cultural memory crystallizes, functions and then moulds people's lives and communities was laid out in a study devoted to Soviet cultural heritage, particularly to those memorial practices engendered by an unburied past which always seems to be resurfacing. It is precisely this way of understanding memory, as an interconnected system whose parts can only work together, that can be further applied beyond the cultural space presented in Etkind's book.

This is, in fact, quite obvious in the works of Mabe Bethônico, a Brazilian visual artist which brought to my mind this insightful way of perceiving cultural memory. Her art projects explore and probe into the veins descending deep into both her country's past and the earth's belly – historical and geological veins that, under contemplation, take on more than just a literal meaning. They acquire, simultaneously, new metaphorical and universal interpretations, rendering the artist's work extremely relevant outside the immediate Brazilian context. Mabe Bethônico's artistic practice operates in this fuzzy elusive space, where soft and hard memory meet and converge. Her art successfully turns narratives around, fills voids and uncovers histories that have been silently living among us. The text below is based on an interview she kindly gave us. Nevertheless, for the sake of brevity and to observe the formality of the Portfolio section, we have turned the questions into themes. Therefore, this is the artist's 'curated' testimony that, in a different setting, would most likely have taken a different form.

**Keywords**

memory
image
word
archive
violence

**Figure 1.**
*Speaking of Mud*, 2019.
Details of Part 1,
cut newspaper pages
reporting the disaster
in Brumadinho,
happened in 2019.
Photo credit:
Nrishinro Mahe/ ZUM magazine

## ARTISTIC PRACTICE AND INTERNATIONAL BACKGROUND. BRAZIL SEEN FROM A DISTANCE. THE DIFFERENT SIDES OF A CAREER

I received a scholarship to study towards a master's degree abroad, when a postgraduate degree in art was offered in only one school in Brazil. The government was then investing in training, educating future researchers for setting up new programmes. There was a certain prejudice against the study of art at this level and I had professors who 'warned' me that doing a master's degree would distance me from art. I was interested in expanding and better articulating the questions I deal with in my work, as at the art school we were dealing with images in very reduced discourses. I spent much of my time at the Royal College of Art in London, attending lectures by artists and theoreticians; I observed practices and the way they were articulated in words. Growing up under a military dictatorship, my background did not allow distancing and asking questions. I even pursued a doctorate, always desiring to work with words.

Distancing from Brazil was very important. On the one hand, using a foreign language required me to be accurate in elaborating the issues and describing contexts. On the other hand, I was studying the history of the mineral industry and as England had a strong presence in extractive culture in Minas Gerais, I soon realized that it made sense to be there, researching documents from the colonial European experience. I had access to rare works on the history of mining and accounts from travellers in Minas Gerais and these studies are fundamental to all my work.

Although working abroad, questions that interest me end up relating to Brazilian issues. And pieces that were firstly addressed to a foreign culture, dealing with contents that may seem obvious to a Brazilian public, were revealed to be relevant in Brazil.



**Figure 2.** *The Collector* [1996]. Details of installation: twelve cardboard boxes [each measuring 47 × 34 × 6.5 cm], with newspaper clippings in polystyrene, envelopes and stamped/sorted paper folders; map of the collection and quotations. Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo Collection. Box IV, Destruction: Women and Destruction.

Historically, Brazilian artists had relations with the European artistic world and have been strongly influenced. Movements in the first half of the 20th century allowed different geopolitical issues – in many ways opposite – to shape various practices. But while aesthetics, mediums and strategies may be similar on both continents, we have seen artistic production in Brazil that addresses singularities. More recently, this became even more so, given the visibility of Afro-Brazilian and indigenous visual production. Both were absent in the visual art scene and their presence in the public sphere has allowed important debates, mirroring specificities and bringing to view the lasting colonial violence, for example.

The roles I take up as an artist, professor or curator are linked to one another; they mix and add up as means of conveying knowledge. Research is inherent to my work; it is its common thread. For example, invited to a solo exhibition at Galeria Celma Albuquerque in Belo Horizonte, I chose to place my work in relation to that of other artists; it was a collective exhibition, a curatorial exercise and a given context from where to articulate my practice.

## BRAZIL UP CLOSE. THE *CAATINGA*[1]

Translating Edgar Aubert de la Rüe's[2] book on the Brazilian *caatinga*[3], while living abroad, allowed me another approximation to Brazilian issues. It started in the most unlikely way, while I was looking for images of the Alps in the archives of the Swiss geologist at the Museum of Ethnography in Geneva. I found images of the *caatinga*, and dedicated to studying his mission in this region of the northeast of Brazil and his book about the place, published in the 1950s. I had never been to the *caatinga*, a region very present in the imagination of Brazilians and I ended up learning about it from a Swiss, in French, a language that I did not know. I translated the book word by word over a year of research, while also observing all of the author's scientific production.

Then, to better understand the author's perspective when describing this ecosystem that exists only in Brazil, it was important for me to also visit the *caatinga*, using the translated book as a guide. It is a descriptive book, in the scientific tradition of 'human geography': it shows ways of life on the territory, it describes the landscape and maps the mineral riches and exploitation possibilities, seeking the development of the region's economy.

The book reveals a colonial stance, but the travel to the region in 2016, after Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's government, led me to discover the transformation of the region: the *caatinga* of northeast Brazil did not reflect the misery of the past. The project resulted in photographic works, reading performances, installations, objects and other books. This was an experience of overlapping cultures, languages and places – Switzerland and the *caatinga*.

**Figure 3.** Mabe Bethônico. *How Mabe Bethônico travelled the caatinga region, in Switzerland, through the archives of traveller-author Edgar Aubert de la Rüe, and learned the French language from Brésil Aride (La vie dans la caatinga) in the process of translating this geological study of Northeast Brazil, which De la Rüe visited on a UNESCO mission to locate mineral deposits in 1953–4, consisting of a map of the mines with focus on human geography and photography, showing landscapes, occupations and lifeways in the Polígono das Secas (drought-stricken region).* Rio de Janeiro: Editora Capacete, 2014.

1.   A semi-arid region in northeastern Brazil entirely or partially extending into several Brazilian states (Alagoas, Bahia, Ceará, Minas Gerais, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Piauí, Rio Grande do Norte and Sergipe).

2.   Edgar Aubert de la Rüe (1901 – 1991), Swiss geographer, geologist and photographer.

3.   The original title: *Brésil aride: la vie dans la Caatinga*.

The *caatinga* is unknown even to Brazilians, who see it mainly from its aspects of poverty and drought. But systems of water distribution are many and the hinterland was transformed due to the Lula government's actions. Access by road was exceptional, we observed numerous industries, a different reality from that described in the 1950s as a slowly developing and miserable place with no economic alternatives. This image of a useless, infertile region has allowed the destruction of its ecosystem, by extraction and burning, despite it being the richest soil in the country. Today we find an agronomic industry that does not match the clichés, including vast watermelon plantations in the state of Ceará, an extremely dry region. But this industry extracts groundwater and pollutes it with the use of pesticides, while serving especially the international market. Besides that, sustainable activities are also in place and we found a region that had eradicated unemployment.



**Figure 4.**
The artist followed the route of the Swiss geologist Edgar Aubert de la Rüe in the northeast of Brazil and donated her book to libraries along the way. Part of the *One Traveller after Another* project. Photo: Joerg Bader.

**Figure 5.**
*One Traveller after Another.*
Partial view of installation at Marília Razuk Gallery, São Paulo, 2016. Photographs [variable sizes], projections, books, posters. Photo: Everton Ballardin.

## IMAGINING A CAREER IN THE PAST. ARTICULATING MEANINGS: THE ARTIST AS RESEARCHER AND STORYTELLER. ART DOES NOT RESULT IN IMAGE

In other times maybe I would have been a storyteller and my work would integrate even better into the social fabric! I have worked with lecture performances since at least 2002; being invited to lecture about my work, I used the situations of conferences or roundtables to create new works. I did not feel any tension when presenting in academic contexts or in exhibitions' parallel events because they were poetic contributions linked to the transmission of my work, as I was invited to speak. From 2014, with *Mais Perto que Cafundó*, I started to set up events for the presentation of spoken works, which were readings accompanied by image projection and sometimes music. Speech 'occupied the space' simultaneously with the projected photograph. I am interested in the process of transmission in a collective situation, within the tradition of storytelling or teaching. If the work is a pretext to bring people together in a situation of transmission, in a way I don't need the context defined as 'artistic', although it may push the boundaries within the art context.



**Figure 6.** *Extraordinary Mineral Stories.* Performance at 20th Videobrasil Festival of Contemporary Art, 2017. Photo: Everton Ballardin.

In some of my projects, long texts to be read by the public are usually distributed in the form of handouts or journals; a part of the exhibition is taken home to be read. The public is used to the curatorial texts of contemporary exhibitions and my work does not demand much more. As for the spoken pieces, the duration of a performance normally does not exceed 30 minutes; this is already a work that contains more than a hundred projected images and the text is the result of many months of research.

Being previously recorded and presented in a loop, in these situations the public is not invited to take part in a dialogue. The duration of the performances was never an issue, the audience is engaged from beginning to end. On the other hand, it is difficult to measure the audience's engagement with the video recording that is shown after the initial live event. And if it is a fact that the works demand immersion time, such an investment should be inherent to any work of art.

I am interested in engaging with the contexts where I work, e.g., to elaborate on a certain geopolitical or institutional issue, linked to the places where I am invited to collaborate.

This requires research and somewhat lengthy processes that will lead to visuals and texts that will come together in narration. This does not end in a single object or image and requires the public to associate parts and curiosity to delve into the issues. We are led to passivity in the face of the images we consume on a large scale and with high speed, but artists work with different temporalities, in layers, articulating meanings beyond appeal and immediate seduction.

**Figure 7.**
*Mineral Invisibility.*
Installation: 26 posters, 90 x 60 cm each, photographs, video, text by Anselm Jappe, reports from the Ministry of Labour and Employment. Partial view of exhibition World of Matter, HMKV, Dortmunder U, Germany, 2014. Curated by Inke Arns. Photo: Hannes Voidich.

## THE MANY RICHES OF MINAS GERAIS. LANDSCAPES DEVOID OF MEMORY. NARRATING THE SILENCE

My interest in minerals comes from my origins; Minas Gerais is a state that bears the name of fields of mining. Its territory is marked by colonial extraction perpetuated by large companies with the support of governments, under the pretext of the region's 'vocation' – an understanding that the region is made for extraction. Thus, this place is characterized by its own destruction, because its geology provides multiple ores, while its exploitation marks the mentality, the spirit, the history of the place. What is striking is that this same constitutive activity is kept away from public debate, which does not engage in criticism. Added to this is the absence of memory, the disregard for a past marked by slavery and the current existence of other forms of violence against workers and affected communities, victims of exported profits. It was precisely this framework that I wanted to elaborate projects from, identifying the absence of discourse, visibility, and history regarding the mining industry in Minas Gerais. As an artist, it made sense to make the discursive absence noticeable; I am interested in narrating this absence, showing traces, pointing out the silence. My work developed at a slow pace, with limited sources and references, while the subject of mountains (and their disappearance) is almost taboo, as if it is such an obvious topic that it does not need to be formulated.

The 'mineiro'[4] chooses not to look at the mountains, adapting to the context without strength or desire to protest against what is the aforementioned vocation. In recent years, this has changed thanks to awakening voices fighting against mining. Militants who, by the way, suffer death threats. Minas Gerais is a rotting land, where destruction is hidden behind curtains of trees planted around huge craters. Pollution is not just visual, industrial violence reaches the groundwater, causes dust storms, consumes water on a large scale to transport, wash and stock ore – and the destruction is not reversed. The local communities do not receive benefits or compensation. I wanted to understand this context and I continue to unfold my work as a means to highlight its issues.



**Figure 8.** *Women in the Mines of All Kinds.* Installation view at Kunsthal Aarhus, 2015 at Dump! Multispecies Making and Unmaking, curated by Elaine Gan, Steven Lam and Sarah Lookofsky. Photo: Axel Schütt.



**Figure 9.** Christmas party of women from the Conceição Mine, Itabira, Minas Gerais. This is the only moment of the year when there are no women in its operation area; they conduct the largest machines of Brazilian industry. Photo: Mabe Bethônico.

Although the reach of visual arts seems limited, not always reaching a large audience in Brazil, artists make social reality noticeable. Elaborating on ecological issues, criticizing the perpetuation of the colonial mentality that allows the exploitative violence to take place, the artist responds to an urgency. Different questions are at the core of my practice and there is a will to generate debate. As for changes, they are made possible through collective action; it is difficult to assess the 'efficiency' of an artist's work, but I believe in the reverberation of works that bring people together to reflect or to denounce, putting events in historical context, contributing to other practices of other people, artists or not, adding up to other actions and discourses. I believe in a kind of learning and influence network, enabled by artworks or made possible by the practice of teaching.

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4.   A resident of Minas Gerais, and also "miner" in Portuguese.

## THE STONESTATEMENT EDITIONS PROJECT

This project derives from a relatively straightforward question: "Can an affective connection between people and the elements composing life of a given place generate a sense of protection and care, enough to lead a resistance against its destruction?" And: "Is the mineiro's critical disengagement from the problems caused by mining (an industry that drains life and compromises the future of the next generations) not due to the loss of a deep and complex relationship with the place?".

Responding to the question "How will we live together?", addressed by curators of the 2021 Venice Biennale of Architecture, I speculate about how we could live (differently) in relation to stones. Stones are seen as the very opposite of life, yet geology is not static, and minerals interact with everything else – they are part of living interactions.

My proposal included building a publishing house that is a platform inviting to collectively constitute knowledge, as a place from where to ask questions, dedicated to debates about non-extractive relationships.

The books announced are not published (yet), they contain an aspiration. Due to the postponement of the biennial, we managed to produce one of the volumes, with the participation of 26 collaborators. StoneStatements Editions is a work-project developed as an advertising campaign that is fictional, it is a potential publisher that announces provocations (statements) and also an invitation to collective action.



**Figure 10.** *StoneStatements Editions.* General view of installation at the 17th edition of Venice Biennale of Architecture, 2021. Logo: Gisa Bustamante. Photo: Rodrigo Martins.



**Figure 11.** *Conscious Rocks.* Book cover in collaboration with NASK – Nadja Zimmermann and Skander Najar. Photo: Atelier Mabe Bethônico.

## A COMPLICATED AFFAIR: BRAZIL AND ITS MUSEUMS AND ARCHIVES

Brazil is a country with a short memory, we have few archives and no incentive to study them. The neglect of the past allows material destruction to take place, such as the 2018 fire at the National Museum of Brazil, in Rio de Janeiro, or the destruction of heritage in general, due to the lack of maintenance of collections, as much as the carelessness and destruction of forests, cultures and knowledge. This is how the ignorance of historical facts, such as the violence (and even the existence) of the military dictatorship, is facilitated – a historical fact denied, for example, by the Jair Bolsonaro's government. Archives are proof of this dictatorship, as much as people's testimonies. A museum is a place to store and make different exhibits available, it guards residues that allow us to understand history, through them we review facts, thoughts, beliefs etc. It is actually a matter of belonging and the public does not always see it as such, as museums close themselves in their rooms. The challenging task of a museum is to open itself up and get rid of this vault-for-storing-goods feature, as if it was not part of the present.

Brazil has always been a 'developing country'. This is why administrations destroy forests: their disappearance is seen as an indicator of growth. New constructions overlap with other structures at a constant pace, on the paved land. For making way for the 'new', space is opened by destroying the 'old'. The 'old' is represented by ecosystems and the cultural past and this mentality sees preservation as an impediment to 'progress', which is a very problematic word, one that is emblazoned on our national flag.

## UN-ROMANTICIZING THE DOCUMENT

An archive contains elements for questioning and argumentation, it does not give answers and has no value in itself if not activated. We have a real problem with memory today, starting with the illusion of storing archives on disks as backup. We generate and store information on an enormous scale and corporations profit from our data – this is the way we now understand how to generate value from knowledge about humanity. It was the absence of archives that led me to them, and they are very important for understanding the present.

For me, documents are instruments, I do not romanticize them.

If art is considered to be part of history, the question of the archive will live on.

**Figure 12.** *Wanda Svevo Archive Campaign.*
General view of installation at the pavillion Bienal de São Paulo, the 27th edition of the São Paulo Biennial. Curated by Jochen Volz, Lisette Lagnado & others. Photo: Roberta Dabdab.

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PORTFOLIO

# MYTHS OR MEMORIES

## A VIVID INTERPRETATION THROUGH ILLUSTRATION

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Prodromos Manou was born in Piraeus, Greece. Studied graphic design at T.E.I. Athens. He received a postgraduate degree on Marketing and Smart Packaging from the UNiWA. Since March 2019, he has been a PhD candidate.

He works as a graphic designer, specialising in printed designs and electronic applications of visual communication. His work varies from designing book covers, records covers and posters, starting off with a major music record label, the PolyGram Records. His work consists of collaborations with large hotels. In the last 20 years he designed the interior of two museums (The Folklore Museum of Maroussi and the Special Operations Museum in Goudi). He attended engraving and iconography seminars with teachers such as V. Haro, G. Gourzi, A. Komianou, V. Tsalamata and hagiography lessons with G. Kordis. He loves to carve wooden mahogany walking sticks, enriching his large collection.

Since 2019 he has been illustrating books for Arteon publications. In February 2022, he participated in a painting exhibition at the Greek-French Association with the theme "Touching Holiness". Since 2001 he has been teaching Graphic Design & Multimedia at the Department of Graphic Design and Visual Communication in UNIWA, he is in charge for graduate theses and is part of the Design Research Lab of the University of Western Attica.

# MYTHS OR MEMORIES

## A VIVID INTERPRETATION THROUGH ILLUSTRATION

### Abstract

        In the old times, not so old and distant as we think now, the elders also known as 'the moonstruck' would gather after a long day at work around a fire, a hearth, and as they removed the weariness of the whole day, they would invite the younger members of the family and would share their memories.

Stories of their past, stories they heard of or seen with their own eyes, stories they witnessed and stories they only listened to. Stories so old, from memories faded, forgotten, narratives of incidents changed, that connect with events leading to legends, and folk tales. Tales born from tradition and memory.

A very old memory, with a plot easy to understand and usually local - a place near the place of those storytellers. Those entertainers of the not so far away world, would produce images in the minds of their audience, colours and forms as they were responsible for keeping that legend and memory alive. The result of that storytelling around the fire was thousands of images.

Then the images would turn to words from that young audience that would grow older and become those elder near the fireplace. It was their time to disseminate the images in the heads of the next generation, and keep those memories alive.

Strong memories with no roots, no beginning, but a circular movement of narration. From one generation to the other, those mythical stories may have developed from historical events and maybe events that had happened to someone, brave enough to share them later. Then, he would alter them, change them or even add extravagance or imagination to draw curiosity and admiration. Concerning the source of a myth and legend stories, it is a grey area. What we know is that old memories would grow and transform – every time the fable is told - to something elusive that only caused awe. The purpose of the book I illustrated is to remind us of such places, places lived in the minds of storytellers, in the minds of those 'image generators'.

The intentional use of traditional techniques and colours of these illustrations proves the need to connect our new world with the invisible world of tradition and myth. The ill-favoured stiff forms of creatures, in most cases with a scowling disturbing face of a man-animal allegation, is the depiction of that folk story once more. A depiction, this time on paper, using egg-tempera and a more medieval aesthetic that is to affiliate those dark ages when myths and scary stories thrived. Those fictitious beings are also infused with the digital overdeveloped world of the cinema and electronic games. Those images are not unknown to us, they are different but this generation has a main sphere of forms and images already created, already as an extrinsic memory. Daring forms that stand out and are familiar with that strange knowledge of knowing what a creature looks like.

These paintings were firstly created with charcoal and then using pigments, so the mythical places and beings came to life. The visual artwork was emphasized later with digital means, something that proves the need of the human eye to see the realism and extravagance - an obvious need for this specific book. A strange familiar knowledge of those creatures is the result of this modern world that has already prolonged their place – from tradition and folk stories to our new needs and ways of entertainment. Those creatures are our unexceptional– and yet so unusual – protagonists in this modern world. The creatures can connect with the memories of the past and the imagination of the present but the medium of illustration is the first most direct way of transformation. It is the way that the human mind works fully, because it uses its own power to create the details of a verbal world.

These illustrations, a direct translation of the word of mouth, deriving from memory, history and human fantasy, are necessary in this world and own a task to provoke the viewers' precious imagination and put the mind to 'work'. A mind active with impulses from technology and digital art, open to be reminded of the source of tradition.

The illustrated characters are as follows:

Vrahnas is an evil spirit who comes in our nightmares, whose ultimate purpose is to strangle us when we are asleep. His power is in his nightcap, so whoever manages to pull it from him, Vrahnas becomes his slave (Figure 1).

Giants are both male and female, very tall and strong creatures who can even pull out whole mountains and who build their castles with huge boulders (Figure 2).

The three-eyed giant is the Cyclops of ancient times. He usually cooks and eats human flesh, often stranded sailors (Figure 3).

Goblins are humans that have been born on the twelve days after Christmas and an ill fate has fallen upon them. In order to protect a child from becoming a goblin, he is fastened from his wrist to his mother's with a rope of garlic (Figure 4).

Goblin with stick is lame, hunchbacked and trembling. The winged witch goblin is an old, mean, ugly witch and her eyes are of different color. Both of them intend only harm to humans, using magic potions (Figures 5-6). The last goblins (Figures 7-10):

Peridromos is an unstoppable eater, never sharing his food.
Mandrakoukos is hiding behind the fences and at night he goes out, teasing on passing women. His nose is like soft dough.
Malaperdas is polluting the food while still being cooked and finally Paganos, also called the First, The Big One, is the Head of the Goblins.

Figure 1. 'Vrahnas'
Egg tempera painting
and digital processing
© 2022 Prodromos Manou

**Figure 2.** 'Greek Giant' – Egg tempera painting
© 2022 Prodromos Manou

**Figure 3.** 'Three-eyed pirate' – Egg tempera painting
© 2022 Prodromos Manou



**Figure 4.**
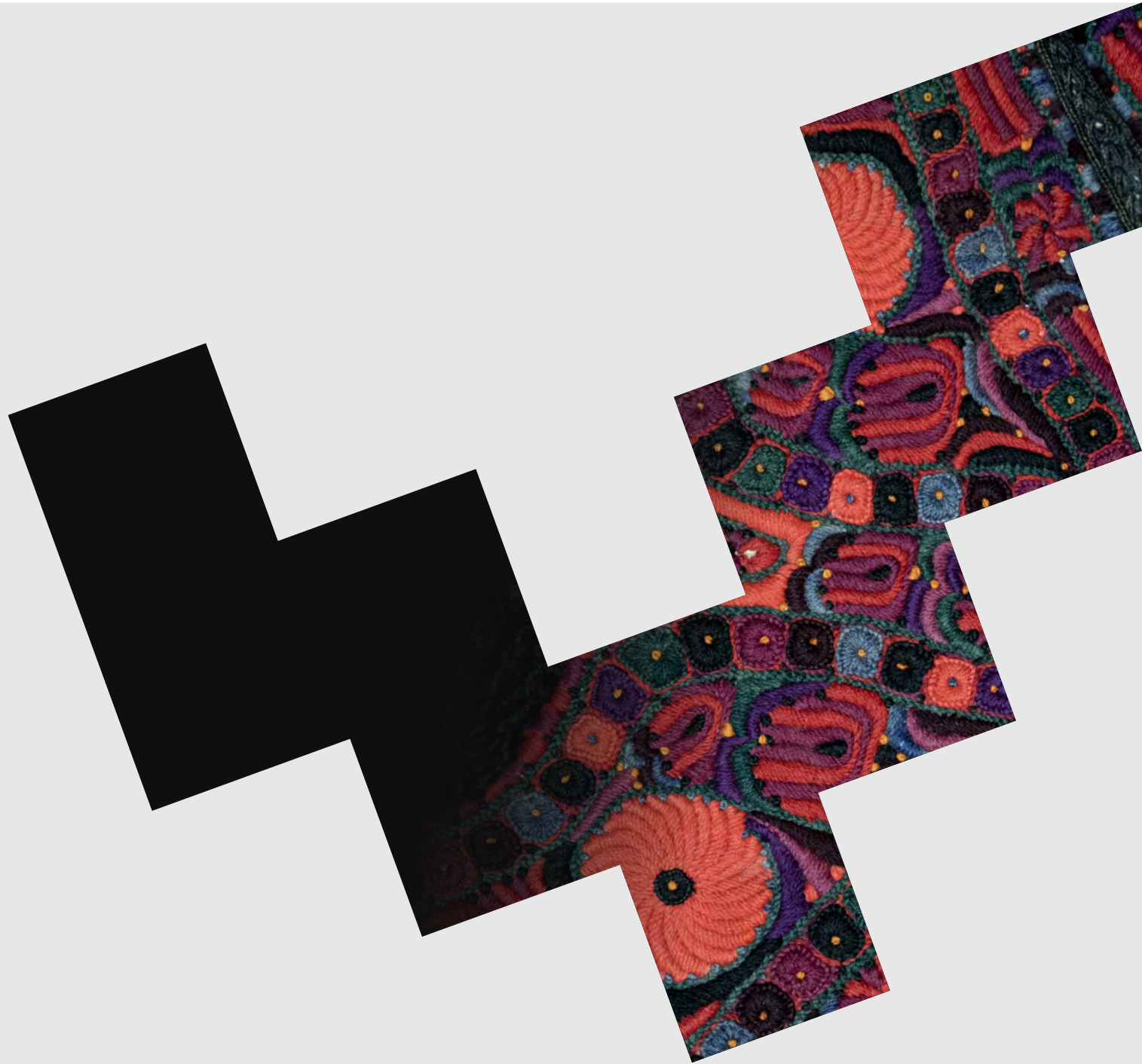'Goblins'
Egg tempera painting
© 2022 Prodromos Manou

**Figure 7.** 'Goblins'
(up, left) **Peridromos,** (up, right) **Mandrakoukos,**
(down, left) **Malaperdas,** (dowbn, right) **Paganos'**
Egg tempera painting
© 2022 Prodromos Manou

# REVITALIZATION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY USING SIGNS-SYMBOLS

## (CASE STUDY: VĂDASTRA VILLAGE)

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Cornelia Moțăianu, born in Bucharest, Romania, is a visual artist, graphic designer and web designer. In 1999 she graduated from the National University of Arts Bucharest, with a B.A. in Graphic Design.

With over 27 years of experience in advertising, Cornelia collaborates with local and international advertising agencies as a Senior Art Director, developing creative concepts for advertising campaigns, packaging, and corporate and brand identity.

She also created the layout for several books of art and book covers.

Cornelia is currently researching communication through signs-symbols for her doctoral studies at the National University of Arts in Bucharest, where she is also an Assistant Professor at the Design Department. Since 2016 she has taught the Desktop Publishing seminar at the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Studies at the University of Bucharest. Cornelia has been a member of the Romanian Association of Visual Artists, Design Branch, Bucharest since 2006.

# REVITALIZATION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY USING SIGNS-SYMBOLS
## (CASE STUDY: VĂDASTRA VILLAGE)

**Abstract**

The preoccupation of many scholars to save the Romanian cultural heritage has been a constant topic. Architects, archaeologists, historians, art historians, and designers compete to preserve the image of the past and the spiritual richness of tradition with the help of various modern technological tools. Visual design is increasingly used in cultural projects.

This project of visual design, of revitalizing the cultural identity of a village, wants, not only to bring unknown information about the culture of a place, but is also an invitation to preserve the fascinating value of the identity of the traditional society, represented by the crafts and folk customs that have survived until today.

By synthesizing the essence of traditional patterns inherited from the past, an intuitive system of visual identity represented by signs has resulted, which introduced the interested public to the cultural and historical atmosphere of the researched region.

These signs become symbolic representations of the village's tangible and intangible heritage. A sign-symbol was created for each element of the local tradition, which will be part of the infographic that will concisely present certain cultural processes.

**Keywords**

revitalization
cultural heritage
identity
signs-symbols
infographics

## INTRODUCTION

My research as a visual communication professional is based on communication through signs in order to reveal the identity of a place with huge historical baggage and forgotten traditional crafts, namely, the Romanian village. Today, many of the historical places, crafts, or traditional costumes are increasingly neglected or forgotten, since modern culture is replacing the spiritual richness of the Romanian village identity.
Still one can notice that a community's identity is Tradition, that is, a collective consciousness based on Memory and Image. And this Tradition, if not continued, will disappear.

In this perspective, this portfolio will present a visual design project to revitalize the cultural identity in the consciousness of a contemporary village community, namely the village of Vădastra.
Vădastra is a village located in the Oltenia region of South-Eastern Romania. Throughout this territory, an exquisite culture flourished during the Middle Neolithic period (5000-4500 B.C.).
But the term "Vădastra culture" defines a larger cultural tradition that existed between the rivers Olt and Jiu, including the south-eastern area of Romania and north-eastern Bulgaria (Logofătu, 2007, p. 8). The Vădastra culture was discovered at the beginning of Romanian archaeology (the second half of the nineteenth century); the first discoveries were made in 1871 in the Măgura Cetate area (Logofătu, 2007, pp. 20-28).

The Vădastra culture is known for its exuberant ceramic art, whose decorative patterns are still present today on a few pieces of ceramics and folk clothing, such as leather coats.



**Figure 1.**
Leather coat made by
the furrier Dumitru
(Mitrel) Liceanu.
© 2022 Cornelia Moțăianu



**Figure 2.**
Ceramic vases made by
ceramist Ion Cococi.
© 2022 Cornelia Moțăianu

## THE VĂDASTRA PROJECT

For this project, I started to develop a package of cultural information which includes the identity of the place, the community identity and that of the individual people, and all these identities will synthesize the cultural tradition of the Vădastra village. This sum of identities will be visually transposed into a contemporary representation, using an instrument of contemporary technology of visual communication, namely, the infographic.

An infographic (short for graphical information) is a type of image that combines data with design, helping the transmitter to communicate a concise and clear message to the receiver.
These messages that define an infographic contain complex information that can be consumed quickly and easily understood by the receiver (see Smiciklas, 2012, p. 3). The project contains many types of infographics: the process of making the object, the reuse of the object in the contemporary environment, social actions (traditional events) etc. All these infographics will describe and create an identity package for the recovery of the cultural identity of the Vădastra village.

In this perspective, for the Vădastra project, I have created the term infodigital graph which describes the cultural information represented by graphic signs, accessed through digital technology. The next step was to create symbol signs with which to build interactive infographics in the following stage.
It is known that a visual identity can have a recognizable sign. Starting from the decorative elements of the Vădastra culture, I have created a sign-symbol, which can be present on all the communication materials of the village (i.e., standard materials, panels, websites of local institutions etc.) as well as on all objects made by local craftsmen-artists, along with their signature.

Inspired by the ornamental motifs of the Vădastra prehistoric ceramics, of the coats made in the village generations ago and of the fabric's representative of folk culture, I designed a decorative pattern out of identical squares in a meander form, which suggestively creates the letter 'V'.

**Figure 3.**
Vădastra logo.
The sign-symbol was created starting from a piece of vessel from the Vădastra culture.
Prehistoric ceramics photo and graphic illustrations
© 2022 Cornelia Moțăianu
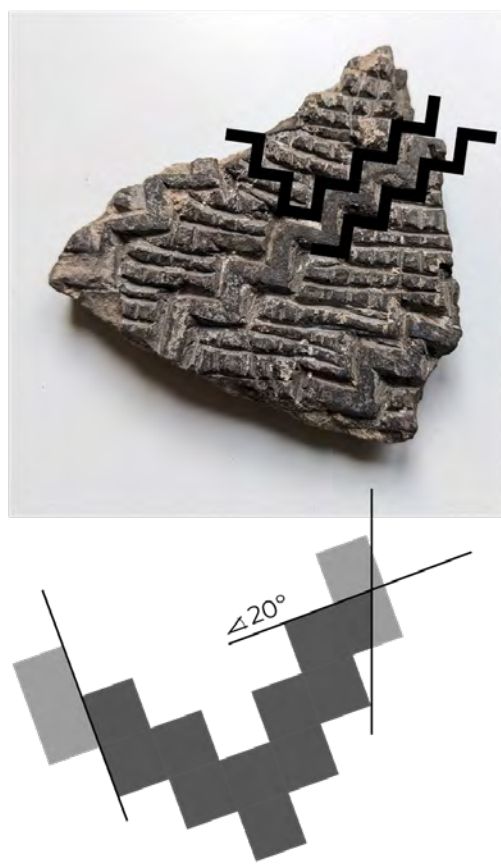
I used in the creation of the symbols only black and white colours, these being specific to the Vădastra prehistoric ceramics whose black incised surfaces were filled with white calcium.

Following the documentation about the crafts and significant local cultural activities (see Logofătu, 2007, pp. 97-107), and after talking with villagers, I have gathered information about the specific categories that define the material and intangible heritage of this village, which helped me design the signs-symbols for three of the most important crafts that define the identity of the Vădastra village's material culture: ceramics, decorated leather coats, and textiles.



**LEATHER COATS**     **TEXTILES**     **CERAMICS**
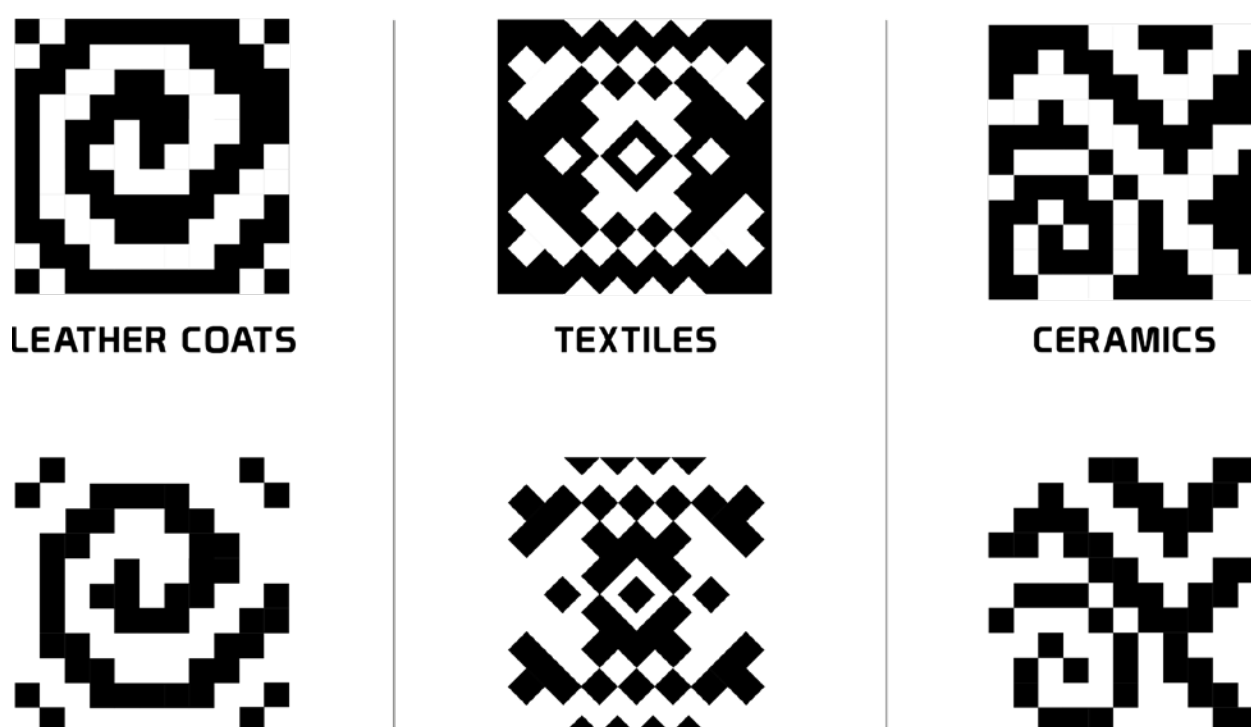
**Figure 4.**
Signs-symbols for crafts (decorated leather coats, textiles, ceramics). Graphic illustrations © 2022 Cornelia Moțăianu

The geometric shape used to create these signs is the square, and its angular geometry and the lack of curved lines or circular shapes are intentional and justified, because, in the current digital technology, any image is made up of pixels.
Digital technologies use pixels to display images on the screens of various devices such as TVs, computers, tablets, and smartphones, including digital cameras, and in this way tradition and modernity will be put together and cohabit peacefully.

A final objective of this project is to help to develop participatory tourism by organizing local cultural events, open to the public, with the help of the Vădastra City Hall and local craftsmen. The tourist can visit the houses of craftsmen, being able to actively participate in the technological processes of making traditional objects.
The houses of local craftsmen open to visitors will be signposted by panels containing a specific sign-symbol of the craft presented.

**Figure 5.**
Outdoor information panel. Craft:
Decorated leather coats.
Graphic illustration © 2022 Cornelia Moțăianu



**Figure 6.**
Outdoor information panel.
Craft: Weaving and Sewing.
Graphic illustration © 2022 Cornelia Moțăianu



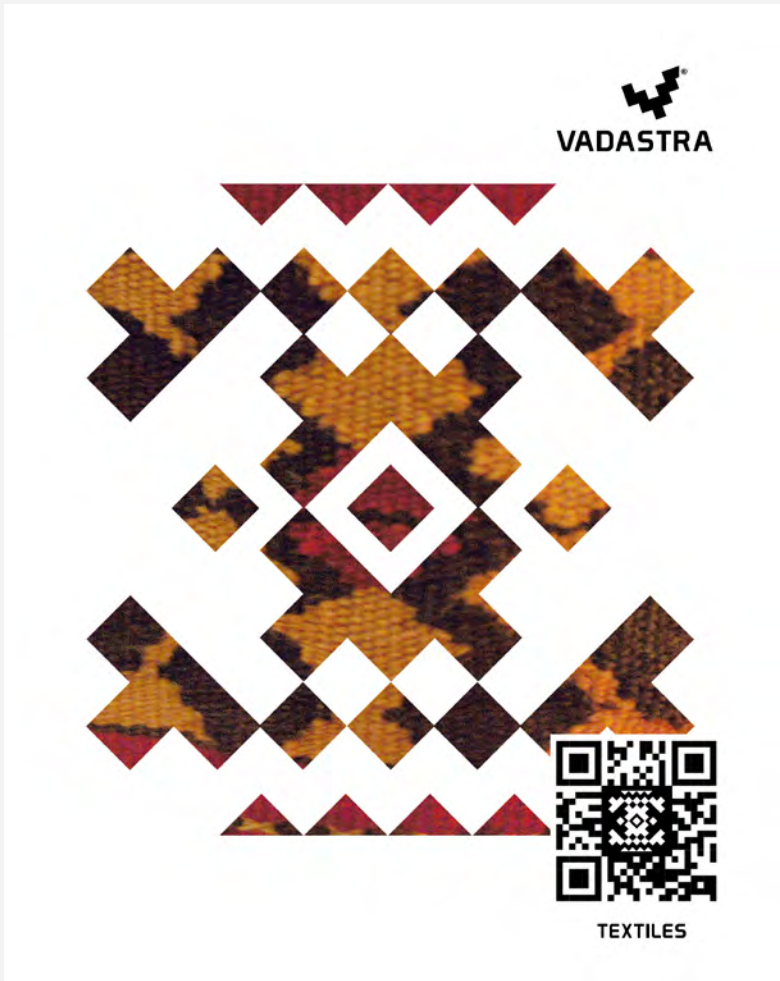**Figure 7.**
Personalized QR codes for craft categories.
Graphic illustration © 2022 Cornelia Moțăianu

**Figure 8.**
Outdoor information panel.
Craft: Pottery.
Graphic illustration © 2022 Cornelia Moțăianu



**Figure 9.**
Dissemination. Outdoor information panel.
Graphic illustration © 2022 Cornelia Moțăianu

Additionally, the panels will contain QR codes, which will lead to a website dedicated to the Vădastra Cultural Heritage, which will provide the visitor with supplementary information about the traditional local crafts, such as filmed interviews, practical demonstrations, cultural events, and exhibitions.

For me, the Present represents the New and the Past represents the Memory. The visual design could connect the Past and the Present, thus keeping alive the cultural memory of the authentic Romanian village. Through this project of revitalizing the identity of Vădastra village, I want to change the outdated perception of the Romanian village, bringing to light the traditional crafts of the place and turning them into true sources of inspiration for the next generations.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**PORTFOLIO**

# PARTICIPATORY ACTIONS, PARTICIPATORY ART, AND RURAL LIFE IN THE POST-INDUSTRIAL CITY OF ASPROPYRGOS

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She organizes the AMOLI International Programme on Participatory art and rural life, multiculturalism and resilience in the post-industrial environments, conducting educational activities, international research workshops, community celebrations and creating an international network. Her work has been presented internationally. She has taught "Performance" at an academic level (eighteen years). She has worked as a representative of the European League Institutes of the Arts in Greece, organizing meetings on Research and Innovative teaching methods.

# PARTICIPATORY ACTIONS, PARTICIPATORY ART, AND RURAL LIFE IN THE POST-INDUSTRIAL CITY OF ASPROPYRGOS

## Abstract

This portfolio is a presentation of the research and artistic practice used by the artist and performed through participatory art works in collaboration with the rural Arvanitic community of the post-industrial city of Aspropyrgos.

Aspropyrgos, a Greek city located 18 km west of Athens, and historically a rural town, in the middle of the 20th century  went through a harsh industrial development and is now experiencing its post-industrial phase. In the last decades, the intense migration flow has shaped the multicultural character of the city, and at the same time, a shrinking of the rural Arvanitic community has been noticed, its language getting endangered.

As an example of research and artistic practice, the international interdisciplinary programme "Amoli - Art and Culture: a collective project in the rural, post-industrial, multicultural community of Aspropyrgos" is presented ("amoli" is the Aspropyrgos farmers' term for the furrow that irrigates the agricultural crops).

The "Amoli" project highlights the power of participatory art as it creates interdisciplinary visual works presented in rural spaces, transforming them into spaces of contemporary art. This process brings to the fore questions concerning the international community, such as the value of arable land and food, experiential artistic practices, the connection of modern man with nature, the sustainability of the farming community and the resilience of the cultural heritage of rural communities in post-industrial cities.

The portfolio presents three projects carried out in three different time periods (2016, 2019 and 2020) as examples of research and artistic practice showing the course of the "Amoli" programme. The three projects consist of narratives, the participation of the public in agricultural work, participatory meals, walking routes, experiential practices, video projections, installations and performances, creating a proper communication environment for the participants, as well as a sense of collectivity.

"Amoli" is an ongoing programme. One of its main concerns is to build up the community's trust to interdisciplinary processes, thus aiming at its active participation, as well as at the acquisition of participatory knowledge of those involved.

Finally, it attempts to connect the locality with the international dynamics of the communities' development.

## Keywords

participatory art
performances
post-industrial
cultural heritage
rural life
community
connection
multiculturalism

## DESCRIPTION OF ACTIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME "AMOLI"

The programme started in 2016 and is still evolving. First of all, I should mention that I was born in Aspropyrgos to parents who were farmers and breeders and my mother has Arvanitic[1] roots. I myself was raised in the rural society of the city, but at a relatively young age I left Aspropyrgos to study and live abroad.

The "Amoli" project was a response to an inner call I felt to rediscover the rural landscape of my hometown and highlight it, since a large part of it had already become industrial and post-industrial. My purpose was to rebuild the ties with the rural landscape through an artistic, participatory, experiential and interdisciplinary process. Moreover, I intend to highlight the intangible cultural heritage of the rural, Arvanitic community and to underline the importance of its survival as it is connected to the rural landscape.

## A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE CITY

Aspropyrgos is a complex city with a catalytic presence in the country's economy through industrial and post-industrial development, which maintains its agricultural activity and has a strong multiculturalism as well. To me the agricultural activity of the city served as an inspiration, it was the place of the 'agricultural' goddess Demeter who had left her priesthood and together with the farmers of the plain started to cultivate the seeds. Known as the granary of Attica, the plain of Aspropyrgos has never stopped being cultivated since ancient times until today. The harsh industrial development that the city experienced in the 1950s, its transformation from agricultural into industrial and the transition from the economic crisis of the last decades to its post-industrial phase are reflected in the damaged landscape of the area. However, today the local farmers through the necessary certifications have checked the suitability of the soil and thus they can defend the cultivation of their land. Finally, the intense immigration activity, in different periods of time, has turned Aspropyrgos into a multicultural city consisting of twelve nationalities. The course of Aspropyrgos functions as a micrograph of the course of Europe, a continent that experienced at different speeds the stages of agriculture, industrial development and the post-industrial phase, while today it is suffering from the economic crisis and the migration flow.

## THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME "AMOLI"

The international programme "Amoli", both through its research process and through its artistic, participatory actions, displays a series of elements that go beyond regionalism and concern the whole of Europe. The rural landscape and its relationship with rural, industrial and post-industrial Europe as a past but also as a present, dynamic space is common ground for all of us and the questions that emerge through research and artistic practice are critical:

– What is the relationship of the European citizen today with food?

– How is the farmer's right to cultivate the land in an agricultural-industrial-post-industrial place ensured?

– How can the community come closer through growing food, shared meals and participatory art activities?

– What is the relationship of modern man with his body, and how does he rediscover theventvironment with the vehicle of art?

– What happens to the future of spoken languages and local dialects (such as the Arvanitic language that prevailed in the city until 1940), since today a piece of memory and intangiblevcultural heritage is being lost with them?

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1. Arvanites have come from Northern Epirus (south Albania today) and gradually settled since the 15th century in the wider area of Attica. They were engaged in animal breeding and agriculture. They maintain close endogamic relationships and develop a distinct culture based on their language – dialect (Arvanitic), manners and customs (songs, dances and clothing). See more: Economou, A. (2007) Nature. Technology and Society in the Mountain Communities of Kithairon, Odysseus.

As an attempt to start a dialogue with local authorities, higher institutions and communities regarding the above questions, a three – day international workshop was held at the Cultural Centre of Aspropyrgos, in 2019 entitled: Art & Agriculture, Industry, Multiculturalism.[2]

The research questions continue to this day as sources of inspiration, providing food for thought, creative dialogue and artistic experimentation. The main place of creation is the landscape and communities of Aspropyrgos (here I am focusing on the rural, Arvanite community) where participative experiential events, walking routes, visual exhibitions, narratives and open educational programmes, discussions and international workshops  take place. Aspropyrgos becomes an occasion to approach, through creative practices, a local element that gets universal, thus highlighting thoughts and concerns related to international trends in a world that is constantly evolving and influencing each other.

The portfolio presents the development of the "Amoli" programme, focusing on three projects:

> 2016: POST-INDUSTRIAL RURAL PATHS OF ASPROPYRGOS;
> 2019: RURAL IMPRINTS OF ASPROPYRGOS I – THE ARVANITIC CULTURE;
> 2020: RURAL IMPRINTS OF ASPROPYRGOS II – THE ARVANITIC CULTURE.

## THE DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME "AMOLI"

### THE SYNTHESIS METHODOLOGY OF THE WORKS

The methodology of the composition of the works was through a specific practice that I have developed. This includes solitary walks in the landscape, where, in contemplation, I organically synthesize the action of the project. It is not a mental, but an experiential process, as I allow the body through breath and senses to create a relationship with the landscape and also create a relationship with the people it meets in it. It is an organic process in which the body experientially absorbs information and translates it into participatory action.

### THE PARTICIPATION OF THE FEMALE FARMERS OF THE ARVANITIC COMMUNITY OF ASPROPYRGOS IN THE COMPOSITION OF THE WORKS

The meetings with the Arvanitic women farmers in order to participate in the project took place in the fields; there we discussed our experiences, our everyday life and our anxieties. I gave an expanded skeleton of possible action but the action was created in the rural landscape organically, thus the farmer women sang about the beauty of nature, love, friendship and death, combined with their experience in the fields of that particular landscape. This, in conjunction with my own inner call to re-read the landscape and people's relationships, created the framework to emerge and select the organic elements that constituted the action of the works.

### 2016
### PROJECT TITLE: POST-INDUSTRIAL RURAL PATHS OF ASPROPYRGOS
TYPE: EXPERIENTIAL, PARTICIPATORY ACTION / PARTICIPATORY PERFORMANCE
LOCATION: ASPROPYRGOS FARMS

### Description of the project

A group of twenty spectators (participants) took part in a walking route that took place in the rural area of Agia Marina in Aspropyrgos. The artist waited for the participants at the chapel of Agia Marina (patron of the rural area of Aspropyrgos) and led them to the fields of the area. During the route, the artist used an improvisational monologue, inspired by the landscape and its constant transformation, having as aim to familiarize the group with the rural landscape and feel its power and beauty Aspropyrgos (Figure 1).

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2.    Syn+ergasia art platform, International Workshop Art & Agriculture, Industry, multiculturalism.
       Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jIoEFUivOTI

They then ended up in a field where they met Arvanitic women farmers, who worked singing Arvanitic songs dedicated to nature, life and death. There the group participated in agricultural work by collecting vegetables from the estate, together with the women farmers (Figures 2, 3, and 4). The group then partook in a silent meditative meal consisting of field-fresh vegetables and local produce.

During the meal the artist introduces the participants to the alchemical power of food, the energy and power of the earth and the union of people during the meal.

The project concludes with the screening of a documentary about 100 years of rural life in Aspropyrgos, with testimonies of old and new farmers of the region bringing evidence, memory concerning the Arvanitic culture and anxiety for the future of rural life in the region. The documentary is shown in a warehouse, near the courtyard of the church of Agia Marina where the meal took place.

### In conclusion

In 2016, the "Post-industrial, rural paths" project was the start of the "Amoli" programme, which continues to this day.

– The project highlighted the rural landscape and agricultural cultivation of the post-industrial city of Aspropyrgos, as well as the dangers it faces since it gradually shrinks through the expansion of the city's commercial zone.

– The artist redefines the function of the traditional rural warehouse, turning it into a contemporary art space.

– The relationship of the women farmers with the spectators (participants): the group of women farmers in the action welcomed the participants by singing, giving a sense of hospitality to their place. In that action, there was no particular verbal communication about the problems of the place, but a warm welcome and a substantial acquaintance with the community and its culture.

– The feeling of the participants shared with us at the end of the evening, that they did not know that Aspropyrgos had agricultural land and cultivation; they only had the image of an industrial city. They also admired the women's songs, although they did not know what they meant, while at the meditative meal they felt the power of food and gathering.



**Figure 1.** The walking route in the fields, 2016. Photo © Voula Androni (Archive Emilia Bouriti).



**Figure 2.** The Arvanitic women farmers, 2016. Photo © Voula Androni (Archive Emilia Bouriti).

**Figure 3.** (left) and **Figure 4.** (right) Participatory agricultural work, 2016. Photo © Voula Androni (Archive Emilia Bouriti).

**2019**
**PROJECT TITLE: RURAL IMPRINTS OF ASPROPYRGOS I – THE ARVANITIC CULTURE**
TYPE: EXPERIENTIAL, PARTICIPATORY ACTION / PARTICIPATORY PERFORMANCE
LOCATION: ASPROPYRGOS FARM

### Description of the project

The project was carried out in the rural area of Agia Marina in Aspropyrgos. There, as has been said, there is a small chapel dedicated to Agia Marina. On the day of the action, the chapel was open, and the participants could visit it. A group of Arvanitic women farmers welcomed the participants, spoke to them about the history of the city and invited them on a walking tour (Figure 5).

Then, singing Arvanitic songs that glorified the beauty of nature and human relationships, the participants were led to a farm where they watched a performance by the artist (Figure 6), who dragged sacks full of seeds on a specific construction. The symbolism of the performance was twofold as the artist emphasized through her action the 'burdens' that a man must carry as he walks through life, as well as the toil of agricultural work. Then the participants participated with the women farmers and the artist in a task of sorting out various seeds (Figure 7). Alongside the work, the entire group of participants shared personal moments of their lives and referred to the connection they have with the rural places they were born in or are connected to.

Afterwards, the women farmers cooked outdoors and distributed the food to the participants (Figure 8). The meal was accompanied by narrations of old metaphysical stories about Aspropyrgos that the women farmers had heard as children (Figure 9). The project concluded with the participants visiting an art exhibition held in a nearby agricultural warehouse including photographs of the women farmers as children, teenagers and brides (Figure 10).

### In conclusion

– The project presented to the participants the rural landscape of the post-industrial city, unknown to many.

– It created a safe condition where the community and participants came into closer communication with each other as they shared personal information about their lives and their relationship with their place, thus creating bridges of true communication and the sense of community.

– Finally, artistically I felt that the conditions were more appropriate to present in this work, a dialogue between individual performance and participatory process.

**Figure 5.** The walking route, 2019.
Photo © Voula Androni (Archive Emilia Bouriti).



**Figure 6.** The performance of the artist, 2019. Photo © Voula Androni (Archive Emilia Bouriti).









**Figure 7.** (up left) – The participatory work, 2019.
**Figure 8.** (up right) – Arvanitic women cooking, 2019.
**Figure 9.** (down) – The narrations of old metaphysical
stories, 2019.
Photo © Voula Androni (Archive Emilia Bouriti).

**Figure 10.**
The Arvanitic woman farmer,
Fani Papada, 1963.Photo
© Voula Androni
(Archive Emilia Bouriti).

**2020**
**PROJECT TITLE: AGRICULTURAL IMPRINTS OF ASPROPYRGOS II – THE ARVANITIC CULTURE**
TYPE: EXPERIENTIAL, PARTICIPATORY ACTION / PARTICIPATORY PERFORMANCE
LOCATION: ASPROPYRGOS FARM

**Description of the project**

The project started from the city with a walking route (Figure 11), and ended at a farm in Aspropyrgos, next to the chapel of Agia Marina, where a participatory action and an outdoor video projection of the participatory project "Agricultural Imprints of Aspropyrgos, 2019" would be held which was about what the community had carried out the previous year.

On that day it was the feast of Agia Marina and the chapel was celebrating, it was full of believers and a small festival was taking place. One of the aims of the project was to bring the humble festival into dialogue with participatory and visual art. At the beginning of the participatory project and while the service in the chapel was over, the participants of the project lit candles on the soil of the neighboring farm, making a wish to Agia Marina. The believers who had come to the chapel also took part in the action.

Then a group of Arvanitic women farmers, who were sitting on chairs along the farm, sang Arvanitic farm songs while in parallel the artist lit a series of lamps on the ground, signaling in this way that the action had a ritualistic character, such as respect for the power of the earth and in the metaphysical anguish of man for divine protection (Figure 12).

Then, at the request of the women farmers, they sang the church hymn in Agia Marina. The oldest woman farmer spoke about the miracles and the history of the chapel, as well as the important role that the chapel had played in the lives of the farmers. Then she mentioned the coronavirus pandemic, highlighting the issue of individual responsibility and man's relationship with the divine as a determinant of health and well-being (Figure 13).

The evening ended with the outdoor video projection of the project "Agricultural Imprints of Aspropyrgos, 2019" (Figures 14 and 15).

**In conclusion**

 – The project provided important elements in the anthropological reading of the community, in relation to its rural, Arvanitic culture and religious belief.

– A new element was that the walking route included, in addition to the rural environment, a part of the urban and commercial (mostly logistics) environment.

– A bridge of communication was created between a religious event such as the small church festival with a visual participatory project.

– The meeting and joint action between the believers and the participants of the project broadened the physiognomy of the audience's identity and created the sense of communication between the participants.

– The Arvanitic women farmers showed great courage as they presented themselves to a large part of their fellow villagers who had come to attend the church service and then came to the participatory project. With their attitude, the Arvanitic women farmers showed their love and support for the "Amoli" programme.

– My artistic experience expanded as I organized a large and complex participatory project that embraced not only the participants of the project, but also the believers from the festival of Agia Marina.

**Figure 11.** The walking route, 2020. Photo © Orestis Ilias (Archive Emilia Bouriti).



**Figure 12.** (up left) – The participatory performance, 2020.
**Figure 13.** (up right) – Arvanitic women farmers speaking about their culture, 2020.
**Figure 14.** (down left) – The projection of the video in the open air, 2020.
**Figure 15.** (down rignt) – The participatory event in the field, 2020.
            Photos © Voula Androni (Archive Emilia Bouriti).

**In conclusion, the results of the three projects and the benefit of the community were:**

– They mobilized the rural Arvanitic community to actively participate in participatory action by promoting and defending their culture and their intangible cultural heritage acquiring, as I observed, a sense of pride for their place.

– They introduced the community to contemporary art through the elements of participation, the participatory meditation meal, the walking route, the video projections, the installations in the rural area of their city.

– The community had a positive contact with the interdisciplinary team formed from farmers, artists (visual artists, cameramen, photographers etc.), educators and the general public and actively participated in it.

In closing, I point out that participatory projects in the way they work in the international programme "Amoli" evolve over time. My portfolio report started in 2016 and ends in 2020. Today, in 2023, the "Amoli" project has taken on even greater dimensions, delving into the relationship of participatory art with the rural, Arvanitic community, its sustainability and resilience, as well as the participatory knowledge that emerges and develops all of us who participate in the "Amoli" programme.

For more information about the actions of the international programme "Amoli" please visit: https://synergasia.wixsite.com/synergasia.
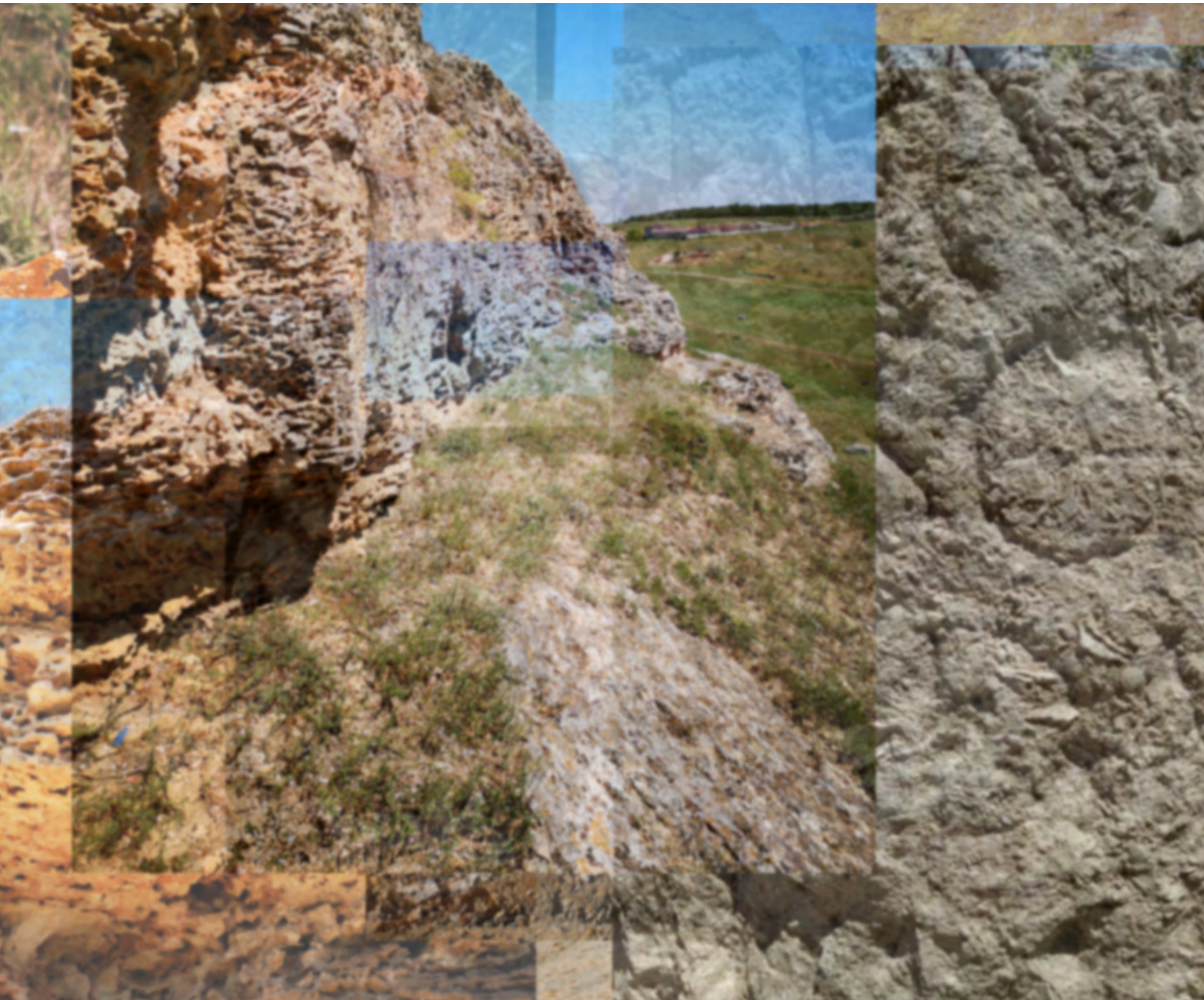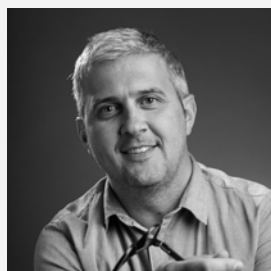
PORTFOLIO

# M[EMOR]YTH

## IMAGERY & TÉKHNĒ TRACING
## THE MEMORY OF TRAVELLED PLACES

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He combines his research activity with the pedagogical one. Since 2008 he has been an Assistant Professor at the Design Department at the National University of Arts where he has been involved in various teaching and research activities. Currently, he uses digital technologies and participates in art experiments in the virtual space.

# M[EMOR]YTH

## IMAGERY & TÉKHNĒ TRACING THE MEMORY
## OF TRAVELLED PLACES

**Abstract**

**Keywords**

spatial memory
real/digital
imaginary space
digital research
image & myth.

The visual experiment proposed by my portfolio is the result of current technologies integrated into the creative process.

Using mobile devices, I capture static or video images, I record sounds. I can locate and set a multitude of technical parameters of the collected multimedia material; I can precisely locate the place where I take them. In the experiment, which I called "open work", I used all the technology-mediated information to create an application that would infinitely assemble the digital material input in order to create collages or fragments of physical space through digital memory.

Anyone can input the digital materials obtained in the same location in the application, each contribution is a personal vision of the place.

This portfolio is one of the many artistic outcomes of the experiment.

Journeys are always a valuable source of archiving. Either in the register of personal memory, subject to ongoing stratification and degradation, often revisited in multiple variations of the same story but with blurred details, like a palimpsest of personal experiences; or in a more faithful, more mechanized register of recollection through image storage technologies.

We are constantly gathering material of our passing through places. We travel through hundreds of remnants of our various travel experiences, trying to relive that time, that place, to remember that reality. That is how I relived the fact-finding visit I made to Dobrogea in 2020 as part of my PhD research. Today I can accurately set the latitude and longitude of the place, I can indicate with great accuracy the day, hour and minute of each archived photograph, the colour profile, the aperture, the exposure.

I am looking for specific textures, specific materiality. A documentary visit implies a purpose, an idea in the wake of which you try to discover something relevant to your research. The geography of the place hijacks my presence. I remember that it was very hot although the wind was blowing. I recorded this on video. But I don't remember why I felt the need to archive this...



**Figure 1.**
A texture of a rock, possible
a former reef.
© 2020 Razvan Clondir



**Figure 2.**
"Wind" / Capture from video recording.
Wind was a constant companion
during the documentation trip.
© 2020 Razvan Clondir

There were spaces between the chosen photographic poses. I was not alone, I was with three other people, colleagues from the Doctoral Studies Department. I know this space was populated with conversations, but again I do not remember any of these, only my visual memory recorded another presence that the arid and curved vicinity of the place demanded me to archive.

The documentation must remind me of everything the body experienced on this journey: images, sounds, hapticity. As the reality of this space is constantly evading and reformulating, I am thinking of a way to re-assemble it in order to obtain as many "sequences" as possible, to activate my memory of these places. All the materials I have collected, all the archives of this place, all the questions about which frame to choose and why to store it find their place in the very technology I have chosen and with which I have created, exhibited, memorized. The memory of digital storage media, is that technological appendage without which oblivion can be laid over a complex human experience.

The space we travel through has its own time defined by tectonics. Our time here was defined by the purpose of this journey although slowly, imperceptibly we enter the other time: symbolic. Suddenly everything becomes an island in the middle of a torrid air, like a sea. We were treading on the remains of a feast that would have lasted a year of our lives. It was then that I realized I had crossed over into the mythological realm. I began to cry out in my dream: "Circe, where are you hiding?"



**Figure 3.** "Presence". Any human presence become dominated by surroundings. © 2020 Razvan Clondir



**Figure 4.**
"Leftovers from the celebration"
If Circe had found us, another year
would have passed...
© 2020 Razvan Clondir

Although I control the landmarks of the journey, in my memory the distances are intertwined, there are walls from the shore that I bring in the middle of a mythical sea.
I remember their coolness, their support, but I've forgotten what I did here for seven years.

I have completely lost track of time in my attempt at reminiscence, the documentation visit now seems to have been longer. I have also forgotten Calypso.



**Figure 5.**
Walls".
The only cold place
I could found.
© 2020 Razvan Clondir



**Figure 6.**
"Iron ring" / Escaping Calypso.
© 2020 Razvan Clondir

*But I haven't forgotten the smell of goat.*
*The rough texture of the thick thread beneath the belly of the herd, the only escape we had left between the two worlds.*

*Only then did I see it as Polyphemus saw it.*
*It was there, immaterial, in my documentation of materiality and textures.*

**Figure 7.**
"Becaming Odysseus." / Capture from video.
© 2020 Razvan Clondir



**Figure 8.** "Reassembled memory" / Experiment result screenshot from collective-art.ro. The application mixes photographic images, video, and audio recordings into a multi-layered digital collage. Each layer has a certain degree of transparency so you can see what's underneath. By losing transparency each layer can be highlighted.

I felt it in the salty breeze of that hot day in Dobrogea, when we were returning to the ship Argo with the other comrades... We let the arbitrariness of an artificial environment populate the affective imagery of the journey to Dobrogea. I gave it everything that impressed and moved me on this visit[1]. As time and space blended, so did technology continually reassemble visual and sound archives to re-compose the state of that time in human memory. I have developed this application in the virtual space to replay, over time, the memory of the space we visited.
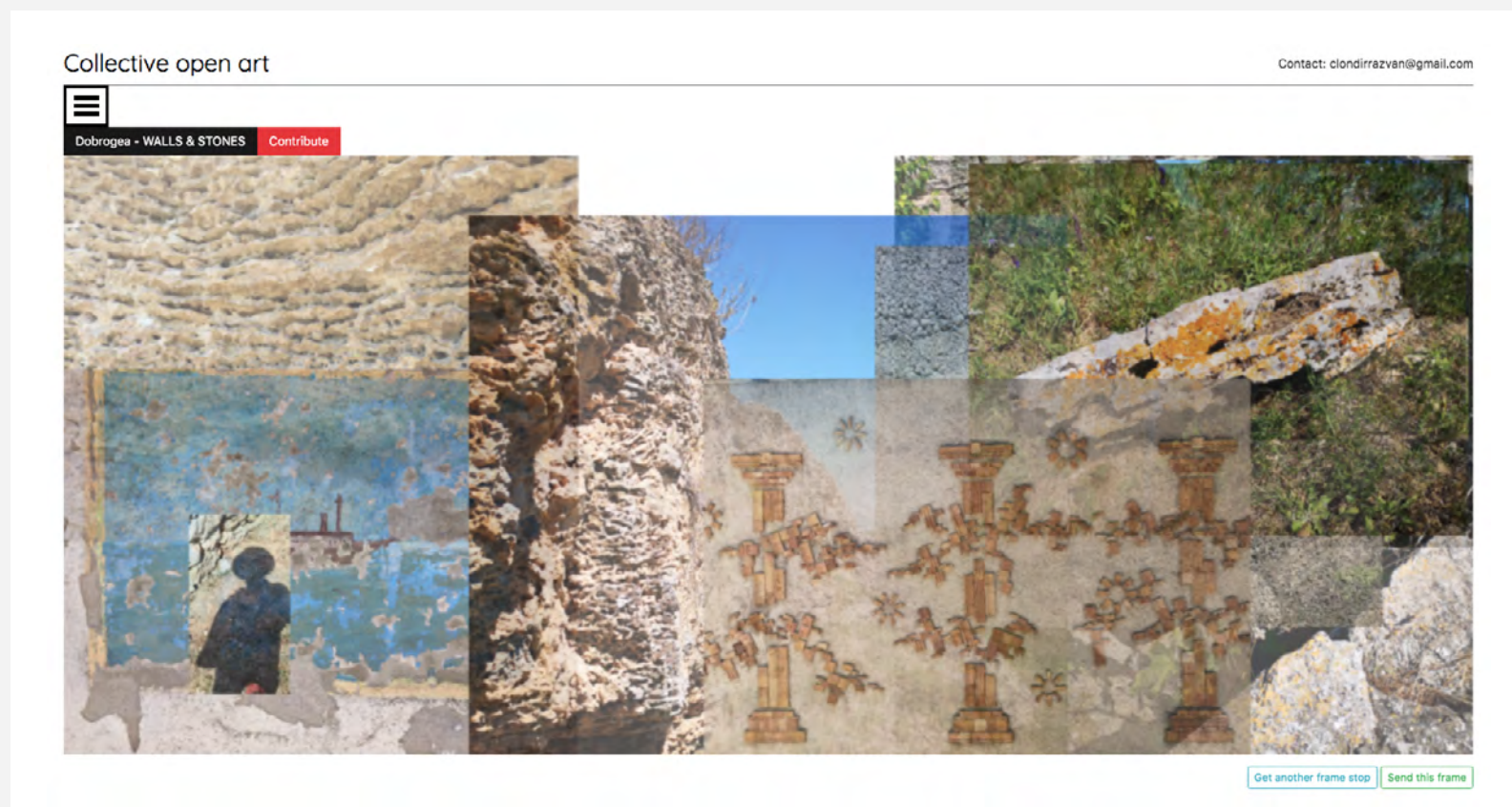


**Figure 9.** "Reassembled memory" / Experiment result screenshot from collective-art.ro. Each "sequence" is unique, unrepeatable and can be sent as a stand-alone capture in social media.



It is an experiment, a performance mediated through technology, in which I tried to fasten the emotional characteristics of the memory of a place. An odyssey told with contemporary narrative means, an exercise of transfer between real and imaginary, between facts and myths, a new kind of "orality" through which the story of the place can travel further, to another time of my own, an appendix of memory.

**Figure 10.** "Reassembled memory" / Experiment result screenshot from collective-art.ro. The character of each sequence mimics the unique mode of the documentary visit experience, its ephemerality, even if it is archived. The result is an evocation of a place, a mood, emotions, which can be transmitted timelessly through technology.

1. The application collective-art.ro is an artistic experiment, part of the doctoral research investigating the boundary between digital media, open artwork via the Internet and crowdsourcing.

# SL METAVERSE: MEDIA ANTHROPOLOGY

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His interest in interactive communication, social innovation and virtual worlds has led him to publish different articles in national and international journals, carry out collaborative workshops in institutions and a large number of academic communications in congresses. In parallel, through his alter ego Kenneth Russo, his artistic production is on the edge of irony, and seeks a critical interaction of the viewer through formats such as painting, video, installations, mobile applications or collaborative actions.

His work has been exhibited at Arts Santa Mònica (Barcelona), CCCB (Barcelona), Bòlit Center d'Art Contemporani (Girona), Museu de l'Empordà, University of Lapland (Rovaniemi), FIB Art (Benicàssim), Off-Arco (Madrid), Loop Festival, Espacio Enter (Canarias/Berlin) or the Godia Foundation (Barcelona).

# SL METAVERSE: MEDIA ANTHROPOLOGY

## Abstract

The metaverse that Neal Stephenson conceptualized in Snow Crash is much the same as the one that has evolved in recent years to accommodate networked virtual platforms.

In anthropology these spaces are known as meta-places: a remix of information. Proposals like Second Life (SL), Fortnite or The Sims are already a name in the history of virtual universes, while worlds like The Sandbox, Decentraland or Axie exemplify contemporary decentralized organizations through their blockchain technology.

The following contribution of ethnographic graphic story, experiential captures of virtual non-places, wants to document processes of appearance and disappearance through the image. Meanings, symbolisms, self-referentialities, ephemeral landscapes, mimesis of realities, dystopias or info-communicational disfigurements are some of the realities that hide behind each virtual creation or virtual island.

Capturing these experiences in the first person over these years means approaching the logic and synergies of these meta-places. Specifically, the visual material shown is linked to the virtual world of Second Life. This metaverse constitutes one of the platforms most explored by the author, and currently retains its interaction design devised in 2003.
Possibly Second Life, and its virtual peripheries, have given life to the burbclaves (isolated sites) and their social niches that Stephenson described to us, but also to a way of understanding the world inside and outside the interface.
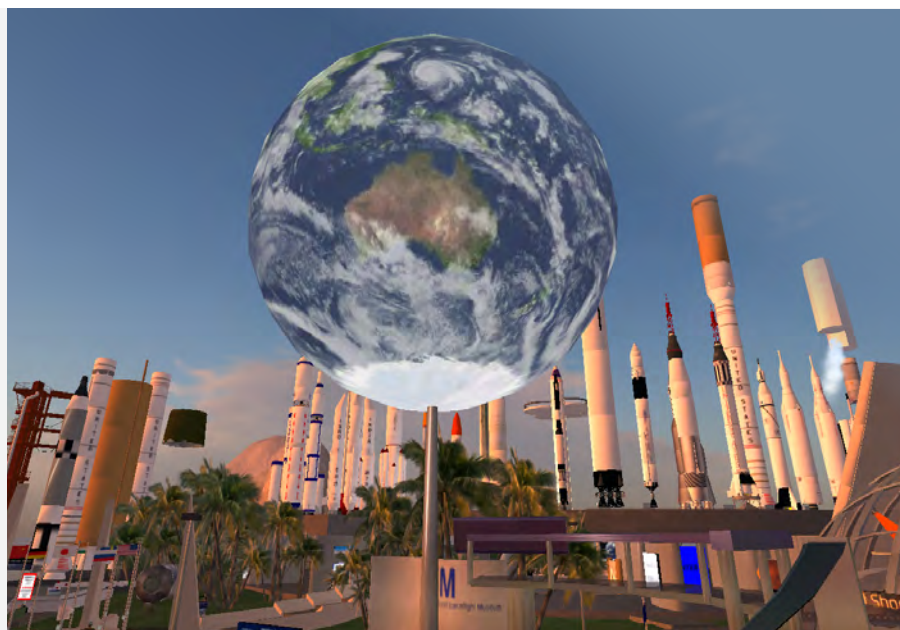
## Keywords

metaverse
Second Life
media anthropology
meta-places
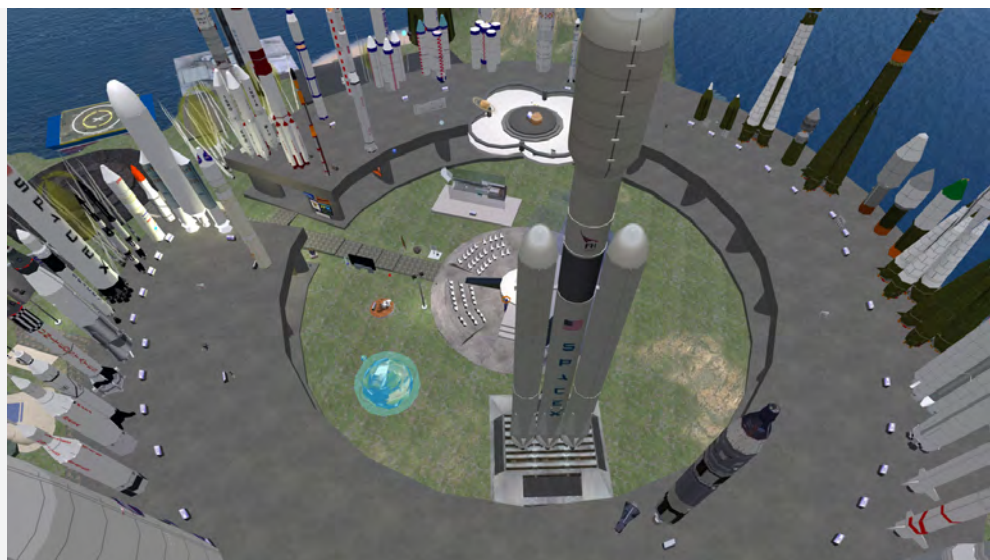virtual world

**Figure 1.**
International Spaceflight Museum – Spaceport Alpha 01.
Author: russruss Kidd.

Snapshot [29/08/2012], Owner: Spaceflight Museum Planning
Group; Claimed: Aug 21, 2007; Area: 55520 m2; Traffic: 453. Owner
description: *Machinimatographers welcome. Contact Kat Lemieux
for info. Rockets and spacecraft from the past, present and future.
Ride a rocket into space and explore the planets! SciLands member.
Volunteer created & maintained, donation supported. Not NASA.*
Available at: http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Spaceport%20
Alpha/124/152/23 (Accessed 29 August 2012).

The metaverse concept is not new. Neal Stephenson introduced this idea in his novel Snow Crash (1992), drawing inspiration from William Gibson's cyberspace: a parallel universe. Now this notion is becoming a reality that little by little is taking more relevance in our lives and our relationships mediated by interfaces. Although the popularity of this concept has currently been catapulted with the commercial commitment of Mark Zuckerberg opening augmented or virtual reality experiences, virtual worlds and massively multiplayer online role-playing game platforms have accompanied us on the Internet since some years. Perhaps two or three decades seem like a short time, but the time-experience relationship acquires another dimension in these virtual environments, the speed at which they are transformed can be dizzying from individual and collective experiences that crystallize in dynamic spaces. An environment where the image becomes the identity of its users and the small places contain visual memory and ephemeral interactions. The virtual is not opposed to the real, and the metaverses, characterized according to Edward Castronova (2001) by their persistence, corporeality and interaction, are a treasure of media anthropology in which to discover a varied production of meanings and critical sense. Throughout these years, curiosity about the possibilities of the metaverse and its evolution has led me to experiment in a unique virtual world: Second Life (SL). This virtual world developed by Linden Lab (2003) and created by Philip Rosedale as an evolution of his first proposal Linden World (1991) meant my immersion in a virtual artistic production lab, in which after many weeks living and coexisting with its avatars, I was led to carry out the Culdesac Island project. This artistic project, extensively documented and based on the collective exploration of cultural and critical activity in a virtual medium, had its maturity phase between 2010 and 2012. Once the economic resources to maintain it ran out, that is, when the contracted servers stopped working, it simply disappeared. Gone are all their avatars, all their prims, all their learning spaces, lol conversations, sandboxes, machinima sets, replicable poses, and gorgeous algorithms. For this reason, every time that even today I connect to SL, I am fascinated to see how new destinations are generated, to be able to remember interesting places struck down and to visit certain spaces that curiously persist to attract young avatars to deposit their experiences in the bitmaps that texture an imaginary changing collective. Each path that my virtual body makes on the chameleon map of the metaverse may be the last record that my memory retains; some fleeting images that create a substratum of values throughout my investigations.
I am interested in this reality perceived in fragments of symbolic polygons and documenting it as a media anthropology, like a reporter who watches the world around him fade away while waiting for the birth of another reality created by the synergies of the SL system and its users.

The purpose of these snapshots, a portfolio of virtual selfies, is to capture an instant of information, which brings us closer to a way of understanding space, of SL thinking, of a symbolic connection between the real world and the second life. A repertoire of unpublished images between the current sims and those of 15 years ago. The history of SL may not be understood without images, and its images are the reflection of the history of the producers of the SL metaverse.

**Figure 2.**
**International Spaceflight Museum** – Spaceport Alpha 02. Author: russruss Kidd.

Snapshot [31/08/2022]; Owner: Spaceflight Museum Planning Group; Claimed: Aug 21, 2007; Area: 55520 m2; Traffic: 45. Available at: http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Spaceport%20Alpha/244/129/94 (Accessed 31 August 2022).



**Figure 3.**
**Paris Couture** – Paris 1900 01. Author: russruss Kidd.

Snapshot [30/08/2022]; Owner: Admicile-Grp; Claimed: Apr 03, 2014; Area: 30400 m2; Traffic: 100. Owner description: *France Paris 1900, designers, Ferris Wheel, haute couture, jazz, Machine galerie, artistes, french creator, Samaritaine, no sex, no nudity, attractions, Le louvre.* Available at: http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Paris%20 Couture/40/184/22 (Accessed 30 August 2022).



**Figure 4.**
Avatar Performance – saut dans la vie.
Author: russruss Kidd.

Still frame [44'30"] Culdesac Island Documental: https://vimeo.com/kennethrusso/culdesac; SLplace: Paris Eiffel ~~ Paris 1900; Claimed: Apr 10. 2011; Owner: Admicile-Grp; Area: 59888 m2; Traffic: 604; Available at: http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Paris%20Eiffel/25/105/24 (Accessed 25 October 2012).

**Figure 5a.** London 1940 - the Blitz 01.
Author: russruss Kidd.

Snapshot [31/08/2022]; Owner: Time Portal Group; Claimed: Aug 23, 2014; Area: 9744 m2; Traffic: 45. Owner description: *Visit London in 1940, shop, dance, drink during the Blitz, when the sirens go, go underground. NO nazi stuff allowed, rp or otherwise. We ban on sight. 1940s war ww2 shopping club swing music vintage retro history 1940's london underground 1940s London.*
Available at: http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Time%20Portal/33/77/3996 (Accessed 31 August 2022).



**Figure 5b.** London 1940 – the Blitz 02.
Author: russruss Kidd.

Snapshot [31/08/2022]; Owner: Time Portal Group; Claimed: Aug 23, 2014; Area: 9744 m2; Traffic: 45.
Available at: http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Time%20Portal/33/77/3996 (Accessed 31 August 2022).
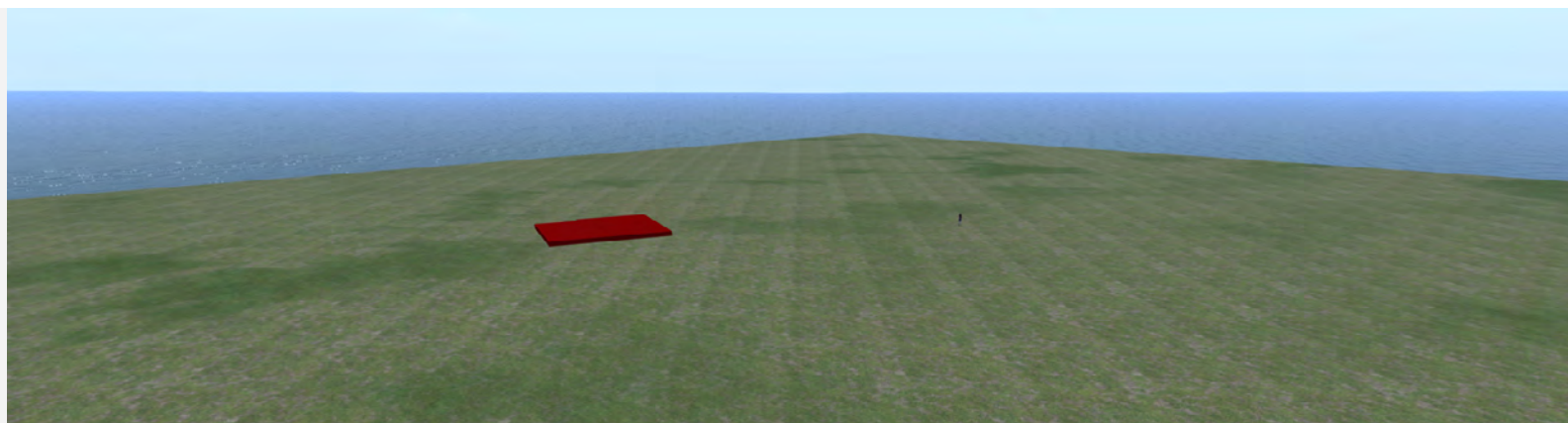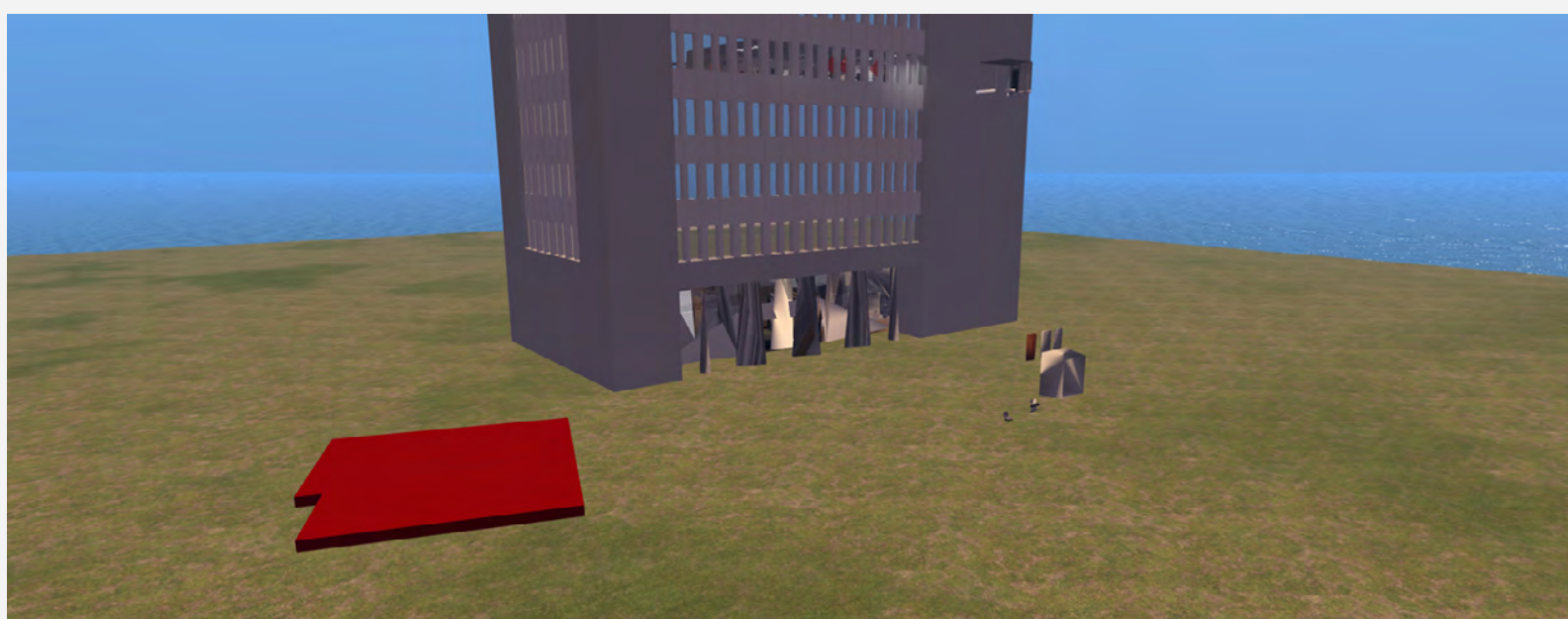
**Figure 6a.** Brooklyn Law School 01.
Author: russruss Kidd.

Snapshot [31/08/2022]; Owner: Brooklyn Law School group; Claimed: Oct 26, 2020; Area: 65536 m2; Traffic: 96; No owner description. Available at: http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Brooklyn%20Law%20School/128/128/23 (Accessed 31 August 2022).



**Figure 6b.** Brooklyn Law School 02.
Author: russruss Kidd.

Snapshot [13/01/2023]; Owner: Brooklyn Law School group; Claimed: Oct 26, 2020; Area: 65536 m2; Traffic: 96. No owner description. Available at: http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Brooklyn%20Law%20School/128/128/23 (Accessed 13 January 2023).
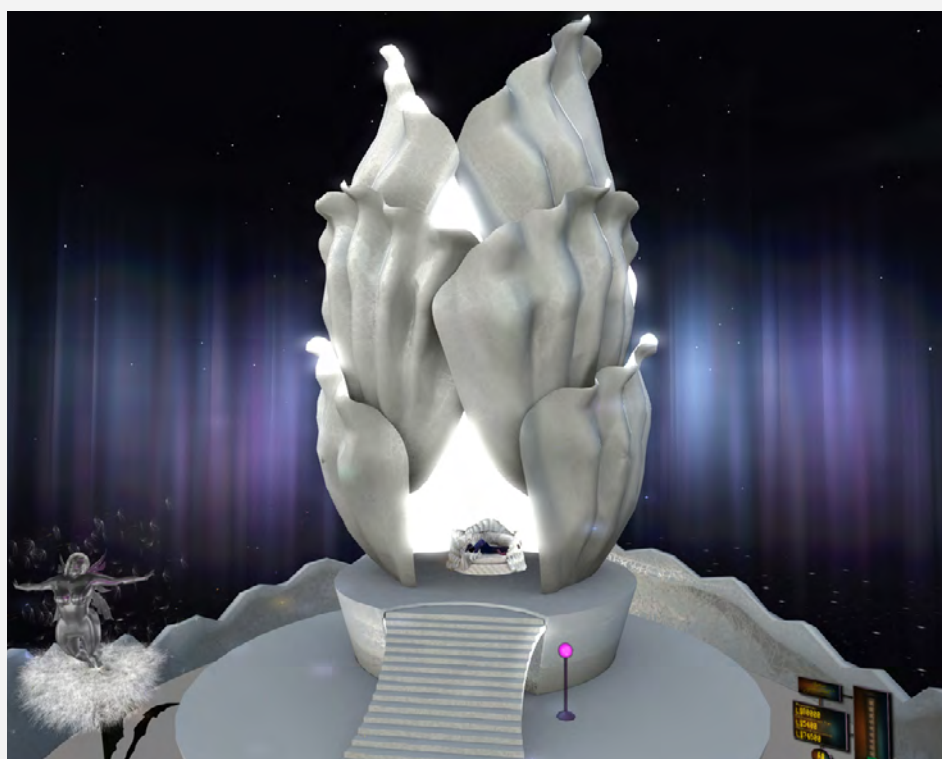


**Figure 7.**
Inspire Space Park 01.
Author: russruss Kidd.

Snapshot [13/01/2023]; Owner: Virtual Life Media group; Claimed: Mar 04, 2021; Area: 6848 m2; Traffic: 7047. Owner description: *Meditate in a cosmic sci-fi natural outer space galaxy built by talented SL artists. Blast off into the heavens, a universe of magic! Float amidst the stars & planets, listen to soothing ambient tunes. Affordable land rentals! Moon base homes too!* Available at: http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/ Shinda/111/179/3749 (Accessed 13 January 2023).
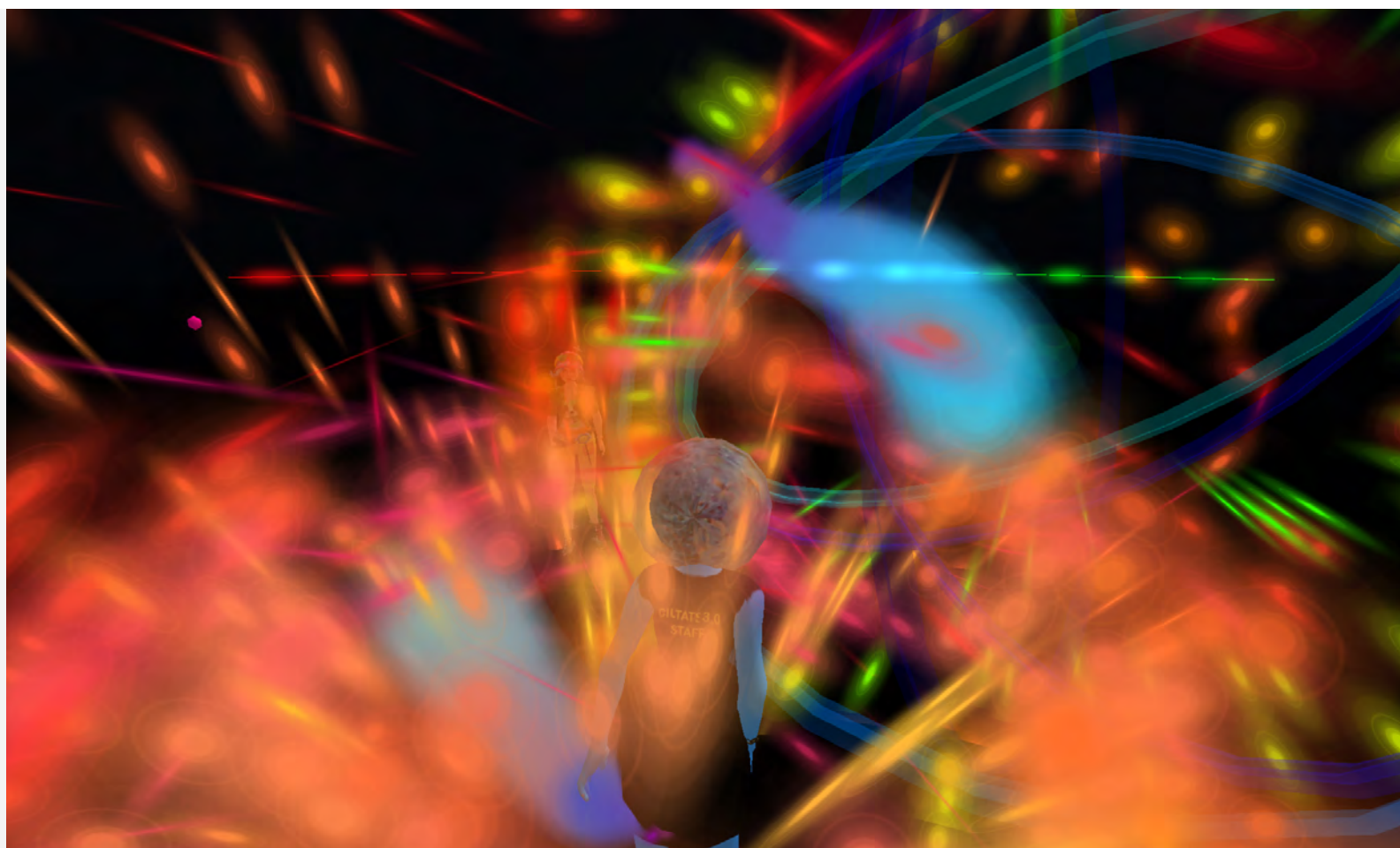
**Figure 8a.** Culdesac Island Sanbox event 01.
Author: russruss Kidd.

Snapshot [24/04/2010]; taken from the blog: https://kr2010.wordpress.com; disabled URL: http://slurl.com/secondlife/CULDESAC/194/204/21.



**Figure 8b.** Culdesac Island- Avatar tower 01.
Author: russruss Kidd.

Snapshot [25/05/2010]; taken from the blog: https://kr2010.wordpress.com; disabled URL: http://slurl.com/secondlife/CULDESAC/194/204/21 (Accessed 3 February 2010).

**Figure 9.** Gallery AI 01.
Author: russruss Kidd.

Snapshot [31/08/2022]; Owner: Danish Visions; Claimed: Feb 01 2011; Area: 4096 m2; Traffic: 100.
Owner description: *A place for art exhibitions and home of a contemporary art collection. In the grounds is a beautiful architectural exhibition building and an open air exhibition of art installations. Founder Betty Tureaud.* Available at: http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Danish%20Visions/172/224/27 (Accessed 25 August 2022).



**Figure 10.** LGBTQ History Museum and Cultural Center 01.
Author: russruss Kidd.

Snapshot [31/08/2022]; Owner: Museum Land Group; Claimed: Aug 02, 2022; Area: 3440 m2; Traffic: 13; Owner description: *The LGBTQ History Museum aims to be a creative and educational space for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender history and culture. We currently have a number of exhibits including: LGBT Activism, Influential People, and HIV/AIDS.* Available at: http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Dalton/76/205/30 (Accessed 31 August 2022).

**Figure 11.** The Far Away, Dreamworld North 01.
Author: russruss Kidd.

Snapshot [30/08/2022]; Owner: The Far Away by AM Radio; Claimed: Apr 12, 2013; Area: 12288 m2; Traffic: 1760.
Owner description: *Wheat fields by AM Radio.*
Available at: http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Dreamworld%20North/239/142/22 (Accessed 30 August 2022).



**Figure 12.** Rieri Town in Tokyo 01.
Author: russruss Kidd.

Snapshot [31/08/2022]; Owner: Eripom Moonwall; Claimed: Feb 14, 2008; Area: 32768 m2; Traffic: 388,
Owner description: *SSOC - Rieri Town in Tokyo, a realistic town, contemporary of Japan. /\*Windlight Sky @ 900m to 1095m: "Midnight"\*/.*
Available at: http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/SSOC/73/183/28 (Accessed 31 August 2022).
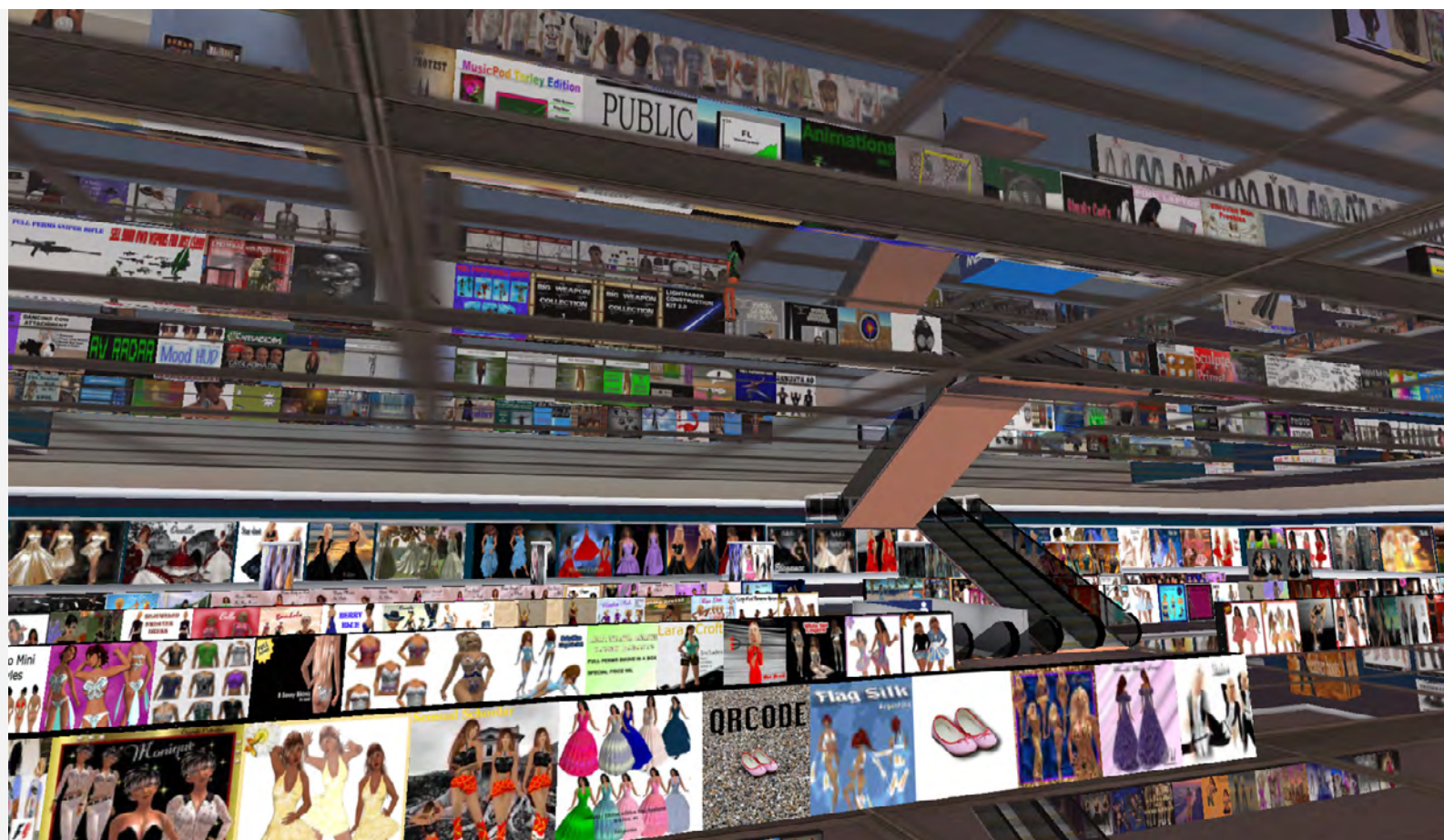
**Figure 13.** SL unknow market; snapshot [07/06/2012. Author: russruss Kidd.
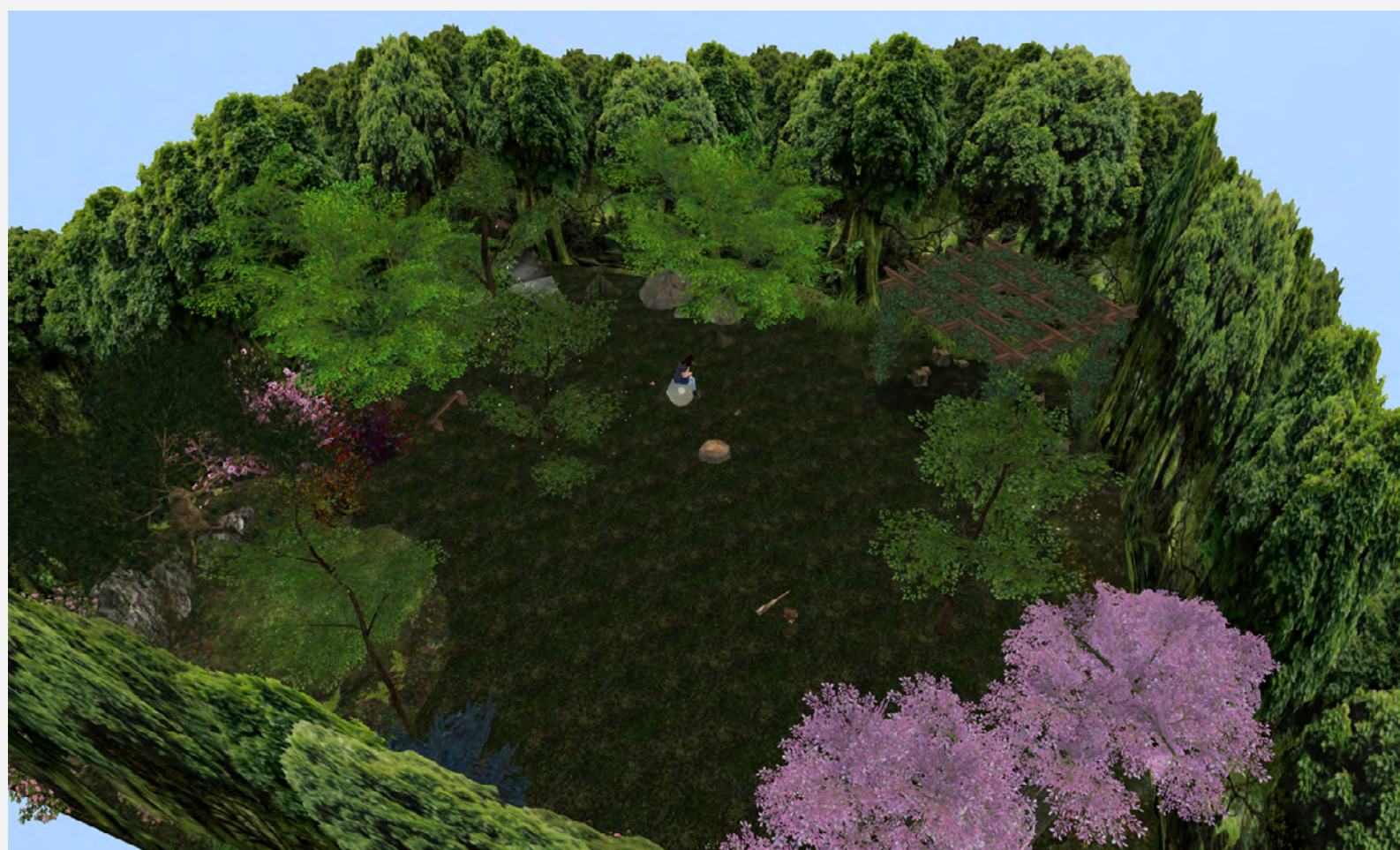


**Figure 14.** Land of Fantasy, Carmine 01.
Author: russruss Kidd.

Snapshot [13/01/2023]; Owner: Dee n Kay; Claimed: Mar 05, 2019; Area: 1024 m2; Traffic: 17. Owner description: *Just a relaxed place with a fantasy nature feel, Feel free to wander around.*
Available at: http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Carmine/113/146/1607 (Accessed 13 January 2023).

**Figure 15.** Alphatribe 01.
Author: russruss Kidd.

Snapshot [13/01/2023]; Owner: Alpha Auer; Claimed: Jun 20, 2012; Area: 65520 m2; Traffic: 2879. Owner description: */*Windlight Sky: Sky @ 3000m to 3500m: "[TOR] BIG SUN - Impires" Sky @ 950m to 1050m: "Wastes_Midnight" */.*
Available at: http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/alphatribe/118/136/54 (Accessed 13 January 2023).



**Figure 16.** Tip Jars & Tip Boards 01.

Snapshot [30/08/2022]; Owner: Emerging Media group; Claimed: Jan 31, 2020; Area: 1952 m2; Traffic: 95; Owner description: *Tip Jars in Club & Personal models by .: Emerging Media :. Unique Mesh Tip jars. All feature multiple appearance & function options. Club tip jars add percent splits & employee log-in. Customizable Tip Boards with multiple button types. DJ tip jar.*
Available at: http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Pandora/111/71/68 (Accessed 10 January 2023).

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PORTFOLIO

# REPRESENTING THE PAST THROUGH THE MAGIC OF MINIATURES

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Andrei Mențeanu is a visual artist, film set designer and historical model maker with over 20 years of experience in the film and miniature film industry. Since 2020, Andrei has been a PhD student in Visual Arts at the National University of Art Bucharest. After graduating from the National University of Art Bucharest in 2000 with a specialization in Film and Theatre Set Design, Andrei started his professional career in theatre, cinema and historical reconstruction by making film miniatures. Over the years he has developed the concept of dioramas as a special effect in cinema and has been working since 2007 on numerous historical reconstructions made with the help of models. Andrei is currently working at the National University of Art in Bucharest on a historical reconstruction of the Second World War period to demonstrate the cultural and educational importance that the three-dimensional world of miniatures can convey to the public.

# REPRESENTING THE PAST THROUGH THE MAGIC OF MINIATURES

**Keywords**

miniatures

history

memory

magic

spectator

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The visual magic of the miniature world allows the depiction of the past using a combination of advanced contemporary, as well as classical technologies. For the viewer to be transported back in time, the miniature must be a hyper-realistic representation that acts on the viewer's memory and imagination.

A miniature, appreciable in size, in which the scenes turn out to be drawn from the reality of the past, constitutes an extremely effective method of actualizing a tragic episode of history. And since miniatures can transform reality into art, they are, simultaneously, artistic compositions.



**Figure 1.**
Ruined building. World War II, March 1943.
Miniature scale 1/16.
Photo: Andrei Mențeanu

Human memory is limited or often completely lost and the two-dimensional images of vintage photographs or documentary films in national archives are not sufficient, nor carefully researched by individuals, to ensure that the terrible acts of war are not repeated. The cruel and brutal images of battles, the destroyed historical architecture, the burned nature and above all, the millions of human lives lost, are aspects that have been preserved in photographs and documentary films but still cannot be sufficiently envisaged by modern citizens.

Partially erased or time-damaged photographs or the surreal movement of characters in old war films are not enough to convey the atmosphere of the period.

Moreover, the direct or indirect witnesses of those terrible and tragic moments in the lifespan of mankind are no longer with us and cannot tell us about the horrors they witnessed. Even cinematography reconstructions using the latest digital technology fail to achieve their original purpose, which is to sound a strong alarm about what the horror of war can mean.

However, photographic images can be used as valuable documentary material and can represent a precious research background for a model artist who builds dioramas with correctly scaled-down miniatures. The construction of historical miniatures requires a lot of time and attention to all the specific details, the aim of the model artist ultimately being to introduce the three-dimensional historical image of the conflagration into the viewer's mind.

The desire of the model artist is to reconstruct the past through a correct scientific realisation of the three-dimensional details that acts on the spectator's imagination and lets it come alive right in front of him. The scale model allows the viewer's imagination to expand and develop, facilitating his understanding of the representation of the past in a hyper-realistic manner.

The illustrations accompanying the text present a series of photographs of cinematic miniatures depicting historical re-enactments from the Second World War period.

The architecture of the urban landscape where the bloody battles took place was accurately respected for every street and building. The magic of the scale models is filtered through artistic compositions and cinematic frames, and the audience is invited into the small film set of history, where the miniatures can transport them in time and space through magical effects. An important catalyst, something that can trigger reactions in those around us that are in line with those of the model artist, is the concept of the miniature trompe l'oeil, a perspective effect that can be realised as a special effect in a cinema or museum space.



**Figure 2.** Ruined buildings. World War II, March 1943. Miniature scale 1/35. Photo: Andrei Menţeanu

Scenographic and technical means, such as light, smoke and seasonal effects, architectural elements, design of war machines, uniforms of combatants and design of street or interior ambience, all constitute important aspects in the construction of historical miniatures, which the model artist can also skillfully exploit. All of these are achieved through plastic and other material effects, providing real historical images that can remain firmly imprinted in the memory of the viewer. At the same time, and equally important, are the various materials from which these miniatures are made.

There are, no doubt, many museums, and memorials of the two world wars in which images are presented yearly, to develop the mental process of individual or collective memory.

However, the impression and reproduction of human sensations and feelings in the face of three-dimensional history made with the construction of miniatures, are considerably enhanced.



**Figure 3.** Ruined church and village. World War II, March 1943. The model is made of several types of building materials. Scale 1/35. Photo: Andrei Menţeanu



**Figure 4.** World War II, March 1943. Different types of materials can be seen in the ruined village. Scale 1/35. Photo: Andrei Menţeanu



**Figure 5.** A tank taken out of service in front of a complex building. World War II, March 1943. Miniature scale 1/35. Photo: Andrei Menţeanu

**Figure 6.**
A tank taken out of service.
World War II, March 1943.
Miniature scale 1/35.
Photo: Andrei Mențeanu



**Figure 7.** Ruined building. World War II, March 1943. Miniature scale 1/16. Photo: Andrei Mențeanu



**Figure 8.** Ruined building, details. World War II, March 1943. Miniature to scale 1/16. Photo: Andrei Mențeanu



**Figure 9.** Photographing miniatures using an artificial light. Miniature scale 1/35. Photo: Andrei Mențeanu

**Figure 10.** Photographing miniatures using natural daylight. Scale 1/35. Photo: Andrei Mențeanu



**Figure 11.** Photographing the miniatures, scale 1/35. Photo: Andrei Mențeanu

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"I feel that there is no such thing as ultimate forgetting; traces once impressed upon the memory are indestructible."

(Thomas de Quincey)