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NOSTALGIA — BETWEEN FICTION AND (HYPER)REALITY

A CONVERSATION WITH KREŠIMIR PURGAR

Dario Vuger

Interview

VUGER: With this interview, we aim to outline a preliminary map of the phenomenon of nostalgia in the context of contemporary visual culture. You have been at the forefront of researching modern visual phenomena for some time now – establishing the Center for Visual Studies in Zagreb, leading various scientific projects, and editing volumes for prestigious publishers (such as The Palgrave Handbook of Image Studies, Iconology of Abstraction – digital images and the modern world, W.J.T. Mitchell's Image Theory – Living Pictures, Theorizing Images, *etc.), which are regarded as significant resources for the study of contemporary art theory, image theory, and media studies. Recalling our conversation during the* Nostalgia Movements *conference opening, could you briefly position the phenomenon in the context of contemporary artistic practices?*

PURGAR: First and foremost, we need to distinguish between nostalgia as an artistic or political tendency and nostalgia as a feeling inherent to modern humans. The Renaissance marks the period in human history where two different views on nostalgia intertwined, creating a dichotomy between the emotional and the rational – a dichotomy that has haunted us from the Renaissance to the so-called Anthropocene. The Renaissance can be considered the first institutionalized nostalgia because the mentioned dichotomy was based on an ancient understanding of nature as perfection, mimetic representations, proportional depictions of the human figure, "photographic" portraits such as those by Albrecht Dürer or Antonello da Messina (Fig. 1), and linear perspective as seen in Perugino's painting "Christ handing the keys to St. Peter" or Raphael's "The School of Athens" – this was the rational component of nostalgia. Within such a naturalistic scopic regime, the emotional component also found its mode of representation, based on Western Christianity and its iconography. The Western Christian variation of Jesus as a being with a dual nature, divine and human, allowed Renaissance nostalgia towards the ancient as natural and rational to blend with the divine-emotional. In the Renaissance, nature is no longer (only) the bucolic world of anthropomorphized gods but also the site of hyper-realistic suffering of God-Human, best exemplified in Andrea Mantegna's painting "Lamentation over the Dead Christ" (Fig. 2). The emotional power of this painting lies not in Mantegna's distinctive linear style but in the sense of a cinematic perspective, a radical observer's point-of-view shot, as if the camera (in this case, the painter) brought us closer to something we could never

Fig. 1. Antonello da Messina, *Portrait of a Man*, oil on poplar wood, cca 1475-76; National Gallery of London

approach in real life in that way. Thus, the symbiosis of the divine and human, the natural and the represented, is the birthplace of nostalgia. Contemporary nostalgia stems from a similar conflict of opposing yet intertwined principles, but in a value sense, it is different: the emotional,

Fig. 2. Andrea Mantegna, *Lamentation over the dead Christ*, tempera on canvas, 1470-7; Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan

i.e., the divine, has been replaced by the national, ideological, class, gender, etc., within capitalism as the rational and techno-scientific. As art has always done from the Renaissance to today, I believe that contemporary art too reflects these same aporias. As we can imagine, the situation today, at least in terms of art, is much more complicated. In other words, incentives for interventions in cultural memory have become highly instrumentalized. Every artistic act carrying a nostalgic subtext or hypertext is always tied to some allegedly personal trauma, political action, historical-educational sentiment, mourning for a better, more humane, fairer world. Looking at such art, we could almost conclude that the world was indeed better, more humane, and just than it is today. Of course, this is a short circuit of the emotional and rational structure of nostalgia. I will try to explain. What we could call iconoclastic nostalgia in the woke culture of the West seeks to rectify history by removing traces of what, according to an idealized version of a perfect world, does not fit the picture of the current or future perfection. In the United

Fig. 3. Jefferson Davis statue torn down in Richmond (Virginia), June 10, 2020; photo: Parker Michels-Boyce

tes, there has been a popular movement in recent years to remove Confederate monuments, i.e., memory of that part of American history that "enlightened" parts of American society want to disown today. One such example is the monument to Jefferson Davis, erected in 1911 in Richmond (VA) and demolished in 2020 (Fig. 3). However, the problem with iconoclastic nostalgia is that history inevitably has already happened, and in that case, all you can do is make access to memory more difficult. It will no longer be part of the society's memory spectacle but rather something deeply hidden in the archival catacombs. In Croatia, in that sense, we are a bit more advanced though. After the iconoclastic anti-nostalgia of the 1990s, when many monuments commemorating the part of the victims of World War II who ended up on the right side of history were destroyed, some of them have been restored recently. To avoid any confusion: the restoration of anti-fascist monuments should be supported because we cannot consider it a nostalgic revival simply because these monuments were erected in a specific historical context and commemorate the only consensually accepted mass crime in the history of humanity. In our country, another phenomenon is developing today, often associated with art, and that is iconophilic nostalgia, which parasitizes on anti-fascist monuments and places of suffering by recycling them as empty pictures, thereby detached from the histori-

cal causality of place, time, and ideology. Such artworks themselves do not possess the substance drawn from real historical monuments they visualize simply because, through the recycling of the memory place via media transfer and a change in form, they always lose what the original monument possesses – commemorative pathos of the place and the formal uniqueness of the original. Admittedly, something is gained: pseudo-nostalgic ideologized object as a modest contribution to the capitalist economy of "engaged art".

VUGER: *Moreover, it seems to me that this recent case – which is most clearly visible in the way we deal with monuments of the antifascist movement in the territory of the former Yugoslavia – produces, besides popular art with an engaged face, artifacts of everyday consumption, designer objects, and distinctive nostalgic embellishments of the living space precisely because, in our case, contemporary artistic tendencies and aesthetic principles have closely intertwined with the dominant political regime, thus creating a short circuit that is only now beginning to be observed separately, yet with its own set of contemporary issues. Monuments by Džamonja or Bakić could soon – even in necessary modifications to avoid any infringement of copyright – be found on the tables and shelves of enthusiasts of designer artifacts from bygone times (like replicas of ancient busts and temples…). The power of separation (inherent in the spectacular or cinematic mode of production) seems to have done an important job here, enabling the objects of a political, economic, and social era to be viewed almost as artifacts "found outside of history". Can we say that nostalgia in this regard could be approached archaeologically?*

PURGAR: I think that labeling this phenomenon as "archaeological" in a narrower sense would be somewhat unfair to archaeology as a discipline, and even if you are referring to all possible interpretations of Foucault's archaeology of knowledge, it would be an overstatement. Here, we are talking about mere commodification, not a conscious historical reflex, or even marginally conscious like nostalgia. However, in your question, I recognize the desire to shed light on another aspect of nostalgia: why it arises in the current time. The historical memory of the generation born between the two World Wars, people who created our recent past, is marked by two war traumas after which the world, despite everything, became a better place than it was in any previous period. In recent times – starting with the terrorist attack on the U.S. on September 11, 2001, and

an even more radical response from America, the occupation of Iraq, and the second Gulf War two years later, then the creation of the terrorist theocracy known as the Islamic State, followed by Russian aggression on Ukraine and the latest war of Israel against the terrorist group Hamas – the world no longer seems like a good place to live. When conversations about nuclear apocalypse became a common topic during a coffee break, instead of football or TikTok trivialities, what nostalgic illusion of security can one refer to? To the chaos in the 6th century after the fall of the Roman Empire, to the beginning of humanism in the mid-14th century when the Black Plague decimated a third of the European population, or perhaps to the Thirty Years' War in the 17th century? The timeframe of those periods upon which the contemporary figure of nostalgia could be formed seems severely narrowed. In our local context, it's even more challenging because we have been taught that the nations inhabiting the territories of the former Yugoslavia, except in deep history, have always been victims, confined in the dungeons of various occupying nations. And of the three Yugoslavias, only the second one was "good and just". So, after the Greater Serbia conquest wars in the territories of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, the space for politically correct nostalgia has been narrowed to just about forty years. Therefore, if we want to be in that nostalgia trend, we simply had no choice but to mourn the second half of the twentieth century. Going back to your question, our Croatian "archaeology of nostalgia" is still just an ideological construct. The artistic, and even commodification aspects of Bakić and Džamonja that you mention have nothing to do with it because these artists in their "second life" have not been either rediscovered, rehabilitated, nor reinterpreted in that nostalgic rearview – they are simply being reused.

VUGER: *The phenomenon itself seems to escape definition and tends to dissolve as soon as one points at it, but the fact remains that a new type of aesthesis has infiltrated our visual culture and thus became relevant to contemporary art production – a tendency to reimagine the past or to develop just such experiences that allow us to "re-live" the past in some commodified form or rather to experience the past as a product. And while these same tendencies have been around for some time now – in fashion, design, etc. – it is only now that they visually saturate our experience of the world to an extent that some would say we live in the "culture of nostalgia". Is this something that is also confirmed by your experience and research in visual studies?*

PURGAR: I think that no discipline exists without an inherent relationship with history – both general history and the history of its own or other disciplines. But, of course, not every area of human knowledge is equally susceptible to history, does not have equal "responsibility" for writing history, and therefore does not have equal predispositions to reimagine or commodify the past. When it comes to visual studies, it is essentially not a discipline but a worldview most interested in the ways images and visuality in general change meanings concerning technology, religion, art, communication, and other areas where images play a crucial role. What confuses the academic community most about visual studies is that it does not see in an image only the meaning predetermined by a completely predictable hermeneutic development, which is inherent in every humanistic discipline. Instead, it leaves the possibility of a much broader range of potential meanings. In principle, this works in such a way that humanistic disciplines recognize in images only those symptoms for which each of them is responsible – it's about the division of labor, a kind of epistemological contract that regulates what is allowed to know within disciplinary boundaries.

Take, for example, the most famous version of Caravaggio's *St. John the Baptist* from 1604, located in the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City (Fig. 4): this painting can be a "typical Caravaggio" because of the characteristic chiaroscuro technique; the adolescent figure of the saint can then be analyzed as a psychologically broken person who does not believe in his own mission on earth; we can focus on the ambivalent semiotic ensemble of the semi-nude body, red drapery, and dense darkness. The sexual aspect of the image can interest us again in various ways: as an alibi for depicting erotic content within religious mainstream but also as a reflection of the artist's own sexuality; we can recognize a phallic symbol in the left knee emerging from the darkness, but it is also a purely technical solution by which, in a very modern manner, the mere anatomy of the human body is defined by a reflector beam of directed light. So, what do we really see in that painting? We see what we want to see, i.e., what we are looking for in it and for which we are sure that some discipline will give us legitimacy. Visual studies approach its theoretical objects differently. It uses the methodology of different disciplines, and the results of the visual "anamnesis" are never known in advance. Visual studies approaches its theoretical objects with an extremely high level of tolerance for uncertainty. In contemporary jargon, it is easiest

Fig. 4. Caravaggio, *Saint John the Baptist in the Wilderness*, oil on canvas, 1604;
The Nelson Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City

to understand this today if we call it a *queer* approach to visual material, and that's why it will never, at least I hope, be "disciplined".
When you ask me about the relationship of visual studies to the culture of nostalgia, what is crucial is its queer position that prevents it from succumbing to the academic mechanism of disciplinary commodification. If such a non-discipline lacks its own ideology, strict procedures,

and is therefore not particularly popular, it cannot develop a nostalgic sentiment towards any aspect of culture, society, art, etc. Nostalgia as a current condition or a study of memory, ruin porn, Marxist demiurges, awakened interest in the non-aligned movement, and, entirely locally, the trendy revival of socialist culture in Croatia are all symptoms of fear of a new descent into war, ecological, or economic catastrophe. However rational and real these fears may be, they are, by the logic of the democratic order, necessarily ideologically directed; the problem is not whether the threat is real but who will be blamed if the catastrophe occurs. And it's always the *other*. I think it's good that visual studies, for the reasons I just mentioned, cannot be easily harnessed institutionally in ideological battles on the margins of science and art.

VUGER: The discourse established in visual studies through W.J.T. Mitchell talks about the power of images, their will towards some goal, etc. Can we consider nostalgia – outside of it being characterized as a defining emotion of our time by Grafton Tanner – a special kind of visual phenomena? Namely, what can visual studies offer us to critically engage with nostalgia?

PURGAR: Okay, I see that you insist on giving some meaning to visual studies in times that demand a cool head. Visual studies can only offer methods that would enable us to consider visual phenomena from perspectives that do not cling to pre-known answers. In the circumstances we find ourselves in, that *could* help, despite my generally pessimistic position. Because of their non-disciplinary queer status within the academic world, visual studies is capable of creating a methodological approach that I have called "theory on demand". This involves formulating a visual problem that we want to address, and then, like a puzzle, assembling theoretical tools that we believe can help us illuminate that problem. If we start from the premise that the object of nostalgic sentiment can be any produced thing or thought to which we have emotionally attached, whether it originated in the Paleolithic or is related to the trash aesthetics of vaporwave, then it is clear that we must focus on something paradigmatic; otherwise, the set of possible tools would be immeasurable and therefore unusable, or, as it happens, we would come to conclusions that were already known to us because we were looking exactly for them. I am currently laying the foundations for a project that would seek to identify what is common to all images from prehistory to the present because it

is quite obvious that they have changed very little until the advent of digital technology. If we can detect and convincingly explain that there are anthropological constants common to all images, then a completely new dimension of the relationship between past and present, old and new media, painting and film, artistic and technological visualizations opens up to us. Then we will find out that disciplines do not serve the production of knowledge but its organization, institutionalization, and limitation.

VUGER: My previous question aimed at a certain de-territorializing effect modern visual culture has on our experience of the world. Specifically, if "all that was immediately lived receded into representation" (a famous paraphrase by Guy Debord), we are invited to consider the following: modern images replace and augment our experience of the world on the fundamental level, replacing everywhere the real-time and real space of experience with images and synthetic visualizations of experiences (on a primitive level of a certain Total Recall *movie scenario). Can the overwhelming sense of nostalgia come from the mere fact that we are surrounded by experiences that are only evocative of the real but no longer there to give us a sense of here and now but rather – excuse my rhetoric here – being nowhere (now-here) in particular?*

PURGAR: Yes, certainly, that is something we are inevitably moving toward, but it has not happened yet. What you are talking about could be called radical nostalgia from today's perspective because it will no longer be motivated by the conflict between the emotional and the rational, which, as I mentioned at the beginning, is at the very foundation of Western culture from the New Age to the Anthropocene. Technology does not currently allow us complete penetration into machine-created otherness. In fact, the transformation of life experience into representation, as Debord notes, is not specific to the society of the spectacle but is the ability of humans of any era to turn something into an image. Ancient Egyptian depictions of harvest work on papyrus and Jackson Pollock's abstract painting reflect the anthropological given that leaves a trace of lived experience in the image in the same way. Considerations of styles, periods, artistic genius, the Hollywood star system, and the commodification of the past cannot reveal anything essentially significant about these representations, except that these cultural conventions prepare images for permanent recycling within their respective disciplines. Even visualizations we observe using virtual reality devices,

5. Balthasar Neumann, Basilica Vierzehnheiligen (near Lichtenfels, Bavaria, Germany), a view of the altar, 1743-1772; photo: Wikipedia, CC BY-SA 4.0

the so-called environmental images, are very similar to classical two-dimensional representations – of course, not in the context of art but within the concept of an image. It is just as easy to take off a VR headset to make the digitally produced illusion disappear as it is to lower one's gaze from the ceiling fresco by Andrea Pozzo in the church of Sant'Ignazio in Rome and return to the earthly reality from the glory of St. Ignatius of Loyola. The best early example of real physical immersion – and not just a two-dimensional *trompe-l'œil* as with Pozzo or neural simulacrum as with VR headset – is the interior of the Basilica Vierzehnheiligen by Balthasar Neumann from the second half of the 18th century (Fig. 5). Here, ceiling frescos virtually overlap and intertwine with stucco ornaments and three-dimensional interior design of the church. But, the real erasure of boundaries between two-dimensional representation, which we call an image, and three-dimensional artificial environment will come only when we are no longer aware of the illusion, when we experience the artificially created environment as entirely identical to what we now call reality. Until then, let's enjoy the self-imposed illusion

because what awaits us afterward probably won't be of our own choice.

VUGER: Hyperrealism in contemporary art can then also be considered in that respect symptomatic of this cultural shift (nostalgia for the real...).

PURGAR: I wouldn't say so, although your question assumes that such a conclusion would be possible. As a matter of fact, original hyperrealism, that of Richard Estes, Ralph Goings, Don Eddy, Chuck Close, and Robert Cottingham from the late 1960s and early 1970s, emerged in the United States during the height of neo-avant-garde, conceptual art, minimalism, and hard-edge painting. Therefore, art history interprets it as a regressive, today we would say "nostalgic", phenomenon in art, a mere sentiment for something irreversibly gone. For art historians, things ideally aligned in the case of hyperrealism because it seemed that the unfortunate teleology of art history, according to which everything has an inevitable course and final purpose, actually worked. Visual arts then entered the era of high-modernist self-awareness; abstraction and reduction were at their peak, and mimesis was finally and definitively abandoned. In such a context, of course, hyperrealism could only be disdainfully rejected as "nostalgia for the real". However, the discipline of art history once again showed that it is not capable of understanding contemporary art because it always expects art to develop, to show causality, the transmission of influence, or to break with the past, to make visible artists' geniality and skill, to adhere to connoisseurship and social spectacle. Unlike the neo-avant-garde and its radical concepts, hyperrealism had nothing of that (except skill), not even in traces; instead, it made a confusing and unexpected leap from the problem of form to the problem of media. I know that this seems entirely counterintuitive, but the essence of understanding hyperrealism is not in admiration of form or the artist's skill in imitation but in the fact that it radically places the problem of the painterly image, the relationship between photography and painting, and the intensity of reality in the image at the center of interest. Upon closer consideration, conceptual art by Joseph Kosuth and hyperrealism met at the same point in the theory of representation, although they started from different premises: works of conceptual art always offered more information than the artists, enthralled by proclaimed tautology, were willing to admit, while hyperrealistic paintings always offered less information than the photographs from which they were made. The artistic

and theoretical value of both of these directions is that they ask what an image really is, to what extent and in relation to what. Should I mention that it is entirely irrelevant to me that posing these questions was not the intention of the authors? Fortunately, for us observers, art is usually much more (or much less) than what its authors want it to be.

VUGER: *Could we, in that respect, consider "the culture of nostalgia" to be a part of a larger and certainly wider social (pictorial) development (iconic turn, society of the spectacle, etc.)?*

PURGAR: Well, of course, all of these are cultural and theoretical tropes, a kind of metalanguage we use to legitimize ourselves as humanistic scientists. How else could we converse and produce surplus meaning? I'm not saying this in an ironic tone, but I genuinely believe that the humanities will do the most for this world if they stop indulging in endless self-understanding as a path to truth, or worse, as the ultimate source of truth. Limiting disciplinary knowledge is the main obstacle to making the humanities truly relevant. So, the problem is not that we use tropes like the iconic turn, culture of nostalgia, or society of the spectacle, but the real question is how we do it. I think the entire humanities should become queer in a way that we will no longer be slaves to academic nomenclature and that we will no longer automatically turn our social, economic, gender, or any preferential or disciplinary position into theoretical argumentation. I don't know why it is so, but I have the impression that we simply do not want to discover the spaces of freedom that our academic metalanguage opens for us.

VUGER: *Maybe this is a problem of the abundance of academic resources and the overall quantification of the field which is becoming increasingly hard to navigate, and since anything can be made into a research subject closes in to a truly spectacular science, the one which, like a 1:1 map, covers the whole "territory". I can appreciate and fully endorse your attitude towards queer humanities – which is quite an engaging concept in itself – but the question remains if the quality of the research will inevitably become circumstantial and inessential to the principle of quantity. Wouldn't that turn even the researchers to the observers without any claim to "objective validity"? This is a departure from our main topic, but I think the problem does inform an attitude taken up here at least in suggesting a cautionary approach to the phenomena in question.*

6. Barnett Newman, *Cathedra*, 1951, oil on canvas; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; photo: Peter Tijhuis

PURGAR: I completely understand your doubt. Most of academic humanities likely share it, whether they are more focused on historical facts or engaged with urgent social issues. I am obliged to clarify my position, but before that, I have a rhetorical question: do we really believe that it is possible to assess the "objective value," for example, of a painting like *Cathedra* by Barnett Newman (Fig. 6) or films such as Harmony Korine's *Gummo*? I am not talking about the cult status of individual works, their (un)popularity, or market value, but about their "objective" value as works of art. All we can do objectively is give them a positivist dimension: determine when they were created, in what artistic, social, or political context; we can engage in the genealogy of styles and their branching, but even the potential diagnosis of the influence of one artist, director, or writer on another (which disciplinary histories particularly love), as you say, is circumstantial, and I would be even more radical and admit: claims of direct influence can be correct, but they can also be entirely arbitrary. Simply put, there is no way we can objectively establish the genealogy of influence, let alone whether such claims are meaningful; formal or ide-

ological similarities are not evidence, they are just an expression – of a critic, theorist, or the artist himself. Nevertheless, let's try with Barnett Newman. Besides a few undeniable facts about his paintings, such as format, technique, and possibly the year of creation, what eludes any interpretation of his paintings is what they mean, whether they represent something, and especially what is artistically valuable in them. The only thing we can do is describe in as much detail as possible what we see: colors, their intensity, formal relationships between lines and surfaces, etc. But if we do that, we haven't objectified the artistic value; instead, we have only translated visual experience into a textual or spoken statement. Claude Cernuschi, an excellent historian of modern and contemporary art, found in Barnett Newman's writings that this American artist referred to the German philosopher Martin Heidegger in some places. After that, he wrote a book called "Barnett Newman and Heideggerian Philosophy", in which he innovatively discussed how elements of Heidegger's philosophy are reflected in Newman's paintings. Do I even need to mention that traces of any articulated discourse, especially Heidegger's thought, cannot truly be seen in radically abstract paintings because these are two media that cannot be entirely translated into each other; there is always something that goes beyond the interpretation or something that fails to reach it. So, in terms of objective accuracy, Cernuschi's book is incorrect, indeed, it is entirely arbirary, but without such or some other interpretation, Newman's work would lack any cognitive substantiation, and therefore would be even less understandable, in consequence even less meaningful. Even if Newman gave his word that his paintings were inspired by Heidegger, we can never know if that is true, and even if it is true, who says that connecting with some other philosopher, writer, or musical work, minimalism by La Monte Young comes to mind, wouldn't yield even more interesting results?

Cernuschi at least found some kind of trace in Heidegger, and what about Donald Judd and the entire Land Art, especially in the light of ecological paranoia? I think for most modern and contemporary art, from Duchamp to today, we couldn't say anything worthwhile without incessant struggling for meaning; otherwise we would just be inventing ever new ekphrastic acrobatics, and that would be reducing visual art to literature. Cernuschi's book on Newman and Heidegger is a real example of what I consider good practice in visual studies and "theory on demand". In the end, it is just one of many intellectual offers; the truth is that there is no truth in art.

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VUGER: *You have stated (radically if not famously) on several occasions that contemporary art has left the domain of art history. Does that fact give us an opportunity to consider and critically engage contemporary artistic practices from the standpoint of popular culture? Does that development also bring us closer to considering contemporary art an accomplice in the overall "weaponization" of the past against our better judgment of our place in the world?*

PURGAR: Art is the most effective "soft weapon" that humankind has ever created. Of course, I am not referring to classical art and everything that art history declared its own domain until the beginning of the 20th century. I mean the moment when art ceased to serve cultic, religious, or instrumental purposes of any kind, or, as you reminded me, the moment when art abandoned the domain of this once glorious and powerful discipline. However, here I would not follow your suggestion. When it comes to contemporary art, we can replace the discipline of art history with any other discipline, but art itself, whether old or new, cannot be replaced by popular culture. The status of an artist or a work of art is not acquired through merits in a specific domain but through institutional or, to put it less elegantly, bureaucratic confirmation. We usually consider comics part of popular culture, but if they are exhibited in a museum, then they become works of art. The same goes for movies: they are usually in the domain of popular culture, but if they receive an award at a festival or gain some other kind of legitimation over time, then they become works of art. Unlike products of popular culture, which only become art under certain conditions, contemporary works of art in the narrow sense come into being by the very act of exhibition; they do not need to first gain popularity or any verification outside of what Arthur Danto calls the "art world". Although this still does not tell us anything about the value of these works of art, paradoxically, institutionalization is what makes art such an effective soft weapon. It doesn't need to be good or valuable; it is not necessary for anyone to understand it – it cannot be objectively evaluated or, even less, interpreted. Regardless of the fact that in the star system every work is turned into gold, art remains the ultimate space of freedom precisely because we cannot rationally evaluate it.

VUGER: *I would like to once again take a few steps back in our interview and – going even beyond the timeframe suggested in your first answer – ask you about W.J.T. Mitchell's early* The Last Dinosaur Book *and your thoughts about the suggested "reading" of the visual culture exposing the certain nostalgia for, literally, big narratives as the radicalization of "post-modern" attitudes towards profoundly cynical consumption of history as a product. One of my fairly simple examples would be the fascination with "old" consumer brands of foods, like wearing a Pepsi t-shirt but not drinking Pepsi because it is not good for you.*

PURGAR: Mitchell's book is an incredibly sharp portrayal of the development of visual culture in the 19th and 20th centuries through the observation of a relatively bizarre fascination with a period for which we have very modest material evidence – the era of dinosaurs. The book tells of an extreme form of pseudo-nostalgia, but its main theme is the past as a culturally produced narrative. Mitchell posed a much broader problem because he was interested in how nostalgia is created (and indeed produced) for something that is in every sense so detached from us while made familiar and close through popular literature, movies, picture books, children's figurines, amusement parks, and prize games. It's not about a cynical consumption of history but its production from scratch, so an extremely modern phenomenon of creating a craving for something entirely insubstantial. The example you give, the Pepsi t-shirt, is an excellent, hard-core indication of nostalgia in the era of the internet, radical political correctness, and cultural simulacrum. It is a typical example of proxy-experience, a false involvement through a material intermediary. In the 1970s, there was a commercial on Zagreb Television, I don't remember if it was for Pepsi-Cola or Coca-Cola, in which a group of cheerful young men and women played volleyball on a wooden raft gently sliding down a river. Let's compare such an experience, even if it was just an advertising exaggeration that no one really encountered, with TikTok challenges or the "excitements" offered to us as we surf virtual spaces on the internet. Recalling movies like Kathryn Bigelow's *Point Break* from 1991, which offered the illusion of real surfing on waves in Malibu along the coast of California or, even earlier, Bruce Brown's *The Endless Summer* from 1966 (Fig. 7), in which surfers search for that perfect wave along the coasts of Australia and New Zealand, Tahiti, Hawaii, Ghana, Nigeria, and South Africa, with what experience can we compare today? Today, we surf through *Transformers*, docu-fiction, survival
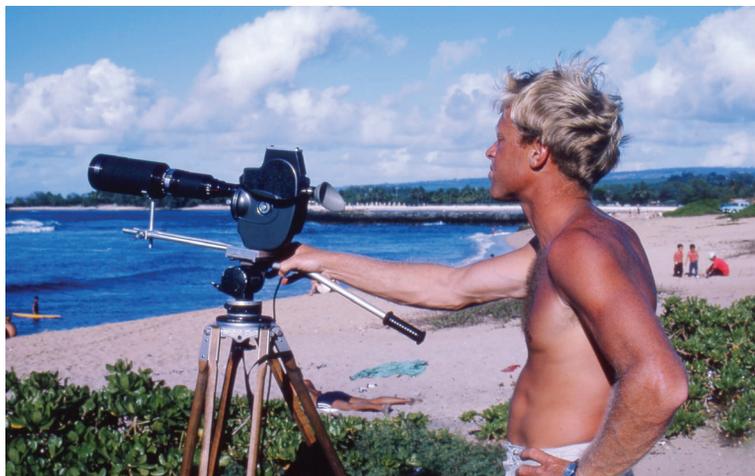
7. Bruce Brown, director and producer, during the shooting of the film *Endless Summer*, 1966.

tips in the rainforests of Borneo, and true crime. Somewhere between fiction, reality, and hyper-reality, staged reality has nested, a typical internet genre that forces us into a daily but futile search for authenticity because only lived experience can provide it. Therefore, preferring today "unadulterated fiction" does not mean living in contradiction – for me, it is a kind of moral obligation. I know, now I'm becoming nostalgic.

VUGER: This is excellently articulated, and at this pop-cultural moment, we completely agree. The fact that the "dream factory" has outgrown its possibilities and become a power apparatus with its own politics and economies of visibility (or, as Grafton Tanner puts it, the politics of nostalgia) is something that surpasses the frameworks of the spectacle theory into a superior structure that I often refer to as the culture of visualization. Slavoj Žižek aptly described this in his Pervert's Guide to Ideology, *a popular exploration of film and ideology, using the example of the movie* They Live, *where the positions of reality and illusion are turned upside down. We don't wear ideological glasses; rather, the nature of reality itself has become ideologically manufactured, visualized with a maximum 1:1 effect. Our "resistance" lies in counter-constructions of visibility, in glasses that not only reveal the state of things but, perhaps more importantly, hide our own view from the possibility that "images see where we look", when and which images become the object of our attention.*

PURGAR: I might disappoint you, but I think no "countervisuality" (borrowing the term from Nicholas Mirzoeff) is possible. Not because the dystopian future is inevitable but because it is already happening right now; it is the present and reality. Let's keep in mind that Carpenter's film *They Live* was made "way back" in 1988. Back then, we could still assume the existence of some invisible force controlling our lives, and we could believe that science would provide us with weapons against the invisible invader. In this particular film, it was assumed that there were mechanisms – in this case, glasses, so prosaically cool and trashy! – that would make the invisible reality visible. Today, resistance is impossible simply because we see our *conquistadores* very well and run towards them joyfully. For example, advertisements used to be in places we could isolate, but now, as we walk through the city, people dressed from head to toe in hyper-branded clothing come towards us, a walking textile tattoos. The endless lines in front of Apple stores every time a new version of the iPhone is released also testify to voluntary subjugation. Social networks have normalized visibility to such an extent that the various regulations concerning privacy, and the supposed ability to manage our own visibility offered to us by both corporations and national governments, are perhaps the most cynical form of nostalgia. The narrative goes that there is voluntary and imposed visibility. Perhaps it was like that in the era of analog media; if you wanted to deny your visibility, you would sometimes make a phone call from a public phone booth, something you even had to do so because, at least in my early youth, phones were not yet in every home. Today, smartphones are considered a fundamental human right and an essential need, like food, drinking water, and freedom. In the modern world, there is a consensual agreement on visibility. Both sides have voluntarily agreed to it.

However, there are some counter-strategies, but they are not aimed at depriving visibility but at diverting attention to other topics that should act as analgesic and enlightening; first, because they calm the anxiety produced by alleged collective guilt for social inequalities, and second, they point us to our human rights that we didn't even know existed. The impossibility of invisibility is what we got in exchange for the possibility of choosing endless identities – gender, internet, avatar, computer-filtered, artificially created. The tactical methods of woke culture in the west, which seemingly advocates extreme sensitivity towards the other and different, enable the acquisition of institutional forgiveness for par-

ticipating in strategic inequalities. It is forgotten that equal rights will never, by themselves, create equal opportunities, especially if we identify the two and then build political correctness on the attractive illusion of identity. Behind different personalities, there is always only one person.

VUGER: Could we, perhaps, dwell a little bit on the aesthetics and popular culture in the environment of nostalgia. Namely, when I think about movies like Blade Runner *with its somber aesthetic and moral outlook, there seems to be a certain design at play that sells us not only a certain vision of the future but a type of visualization of longing that is proper not to the imagined future but to the immanent present(ness) of our condition. The majority of the film is set in a rather dark, hyper-urban yet socially disengaged environment, and everything seems at the least extra-ordinary (sic). The reference material is clear; the environments of this dystopian imagination already really exist at the time of their cinematic visualization; they are just aesthetically augmented to provide us with a certain feeling. A similar point can be made about the aesthetics of American indie cinema, with* Gummo *being just one example (but also* Virgin Suicides, Clerks, Before Sunrise, Thumbsucker, *etc.), in which contemporary everyday life is directed in such a way that it produces (in a way) already implied, if not mentioned – but restated – "longing for the real", which is in itself not a radical theoretical conception but a very smart way to optimize visual commodities.*

PURGAR: It is very difficult for me to speak about films in the context of reality, especially those that have gained cult or even artistic status. They have unintentionally and often unwantedly transcended their own status from entertainment to artistic. This process is not without consequences; as I mentioned earlier, unlike art in a narrower sense, which acquires its status at one moment, works of popular culture can become art over a longer period of time. During this transition, various things happen: for example, we can project universal fears of one period onto a film, which may appear funny or even more frightening a few decades later, and yet, both reasons can be triggers for their transition to a new, more esteemed status. A good example of this is David Cameron's *Terminator*. I think American indie cinema gained popularity because it was intentionally different from the Hollywood dream factory; it was more real, certainly, but that reality was always romantically portrayed in films, at least in the examples you mention. Whether this is a consequence of

a reflexive desire for the real in American cinema or the optimization of reality as a consumable commodity, probably both; whether we will notice more the first or the latter again depends on whether we watch movies to see reality in them or look for an empty place in them that we would like to fill with our own meaning. In this context, the process of cultural commodification that happened with Italian neorealism is interesting. For example, Vittorio De Sica's film *Ladri di biciclette* from 1948 shows the cruel reality, poverty, and hardship in Italy after World War II. The film quickly became a work of art, in part because the magazine Sight and Sound included it in the list of the best films of all time as early as 1952. In my opinion, an equally well, if not better-made, comedy like Ettore Scola's *Brutti, sporchi e cattivi* from 1991 (Fig. 8) never reached the status of De Sica's film because Scola shifted the expected convention of neorealist drama into naturalistic comedy. As a paradigmatic popular-cultural genre, *Brutti, sporchi e cattivi* could not achieve the status of *Ladri di biciclette*, although it portrays reality in a much more dramatic way – no longer as material poverty and ethical dilemmas arising from it in the earlier film, but now as a very bitter fact that poverty can have much more complex, institutional sources, even during the period of the so-called Italian economic miracle from the 1960s to the 1980s. How the extended family of Giacinto Mazzatella, the *pater familias*, lives in Scola's film, we can easily connect with the reasons why millions of immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa and Afghanistan are flocking to Europe today. Although neorealist, the harshness of *Ladri di biciclette* can evoke a nostalgic sentiment in us because it speaks of a period when the creation of a better world began. On the other hand, precisely because it is much closer to our time, while watching *Brutti, sporchi e cattivi*, we are left only with bitterness because we know perfectly well that in a such world not everyone can participate with equal dignity, regardless of the identities one perform.

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VUGER: *I remember that during the conference talk, we discussed the phenomena of nostalgia first – and somewhat spontaneously – as an element of architecture (and) design. This was perhaps our initial foray into the immediate vicinity of nostalgia, making it an appropriate place to conclude our*

8. Ettore Scola, *Brutti, sporchi e cattivi*, screenshots from movie, 1991, 115 min;
cinematography: Dario De Palma

discussion with just a few remarks on this matter. From the buildings them-selves to spaces and dwellings viewed from the inside, the way we embrace and understand certain designs as "homey" and "warm" or "distanced" and "cold" also has something to do with our sense of belonging to a certain tem-poral and spatial context, which can be constructed. Moreover, postmodern architecture and design seem to have internalized this way of thinking on the level of "style" and proper aesthetic outlook, in which fragments of bygone architectural eras play new roles in the visual (de)construction of our every-day life in real (material) space and time.

PURGAR: In the time when postmodern culture was in vogue, much ink was spilled explaining how it led to a reversal in the modernist idea of progress. This shift was most easily observed, especially in architec-ture, where its metaphorical nature was in such an obvious opposition to the modernist minimalism of form. But there are many more factors at play; it's not just about nostalgia, even though some painterly styles of the 1980s, such as transavantgarde, may initially seem to have a nos-talgic component. It's not enough for something to resemble the past to carry a nostalgic scent; I think the awareness of a specific object is crucial for the nostalgic sentiment, what we actually crave and how that desired object transforms into a contemporary narrative. Using the ideas of Jean-François Lyotard, a pioneer of the theoretical discourse on postmodernity, it's easy to notice that, for this philosopher, it's about the breakdown of trust in knowledge, not about the figure of nostalgia. In his seminal work *La condition postmoderne* from 1979, he clearly states, "Most people have lost the nostalgia for the lost narrative. It in no way follows that they are reduced to barbarity. What saves them from it is their knowledge that legitimation can only spring from their own lin-guistic practice and communicational interaction". Therefore, it might be more about the loss of the possibility for nostalgia and the imagina-tion that stems from it, transforming a powerful human feeling into mere form, linguistic practices, and communication. I think postmo-dernity has much more to do with the development of liberal capitalism and instrumentalized society than with feelings. I admit that resisting the emotional and symbolic component of postmodern art is not easy, but I don't believe that Hans Hollein, Richard Rogers, James Stirling, or any other architect wanted to depict their specific relationship to any object of desire.

VUGER: *For a proper closure, I would maybe just ask you one more fairly trivial question, or rather a recommendation... Namely, are there some books, works (from art or popular culture), or practices that you found to be crucial in determining your "worldview"? What would be the source material for one to get closer to your point of view within the vast horizons of contemporary everyday life? It is something I tend to ask in many of my conversations, and this is perhaps even more important here since we aim to put this interview in a book that should ultimately act as a sourcebook not only for nostalgia studies but for the development of certain attitudes towards contemporary visual culture as a whole.*

PURGAR: I'm not fond of talking about myself and my preferences beyond what can be inferred from my texts, books, and usual academic CVs, which I believe reveal quite a bit, as does this conversation. Well, I think my "worldview" has been defined by those scientific books that did not reveal the "truth" to me but allowed me to build my proposals for discussion on them – those that are open enough, allowing me to build upon them without feeling the constant pressure to explain what the author intended. Perhaps because it is the first book through which I understood how I want to observe art, movies, read books, and, generally, look around, and because it still defines my approach to interpreting the phenomena of visual culture, Omar Calabrese's *L'età neobarocca* holds an important place. I came across that book entirely by chance in 1988 when, during a scholarship in my third year of Art History and Italian studies, I wandered the narrow streets on the outskirts of the historic center of Florence. In a small bookstore, I found this book published just a year earlier. I tried to write my graduate thesis in art history following the model of this book. Of course, I couldn't follow the combination of methodological rigor and the postmodern, anything-goes ethos of the Italian author (in my case, the emphasis was, as expected, on anything goes), but at that moment, I understood what Mladen Machiedo, my then professor of contemporary Italian literature, meant when he revealed to us students that the secret to good research in the humanities is if we manage to connect our discipline with something outside it. I then interpreted it to myself in such a way that the principle must be functioning vice versa too – that we should allow other disciplines or entirely different cultural or scientific phenomena to disrupt our "parent" discipline. From today's perspective, Calabrese's book may

seem outdated because the cases he describes are strongly tied to spe-cific examples of visual art, architecture, popular culture, and science of the 1980s. Still, his symptomatic linking of individual examples and their interpretation within the culture paradigmatic of that time rema-ins an inspiration for me.

Among the films that define my personal *weltanschauung* and do not fall into the category of nostalgic sentiment, I can single out *Django Unchained* by Quentin Tarantino. What earned this film a cult and, con-sequently, artistic status for me is Tarantino's complete deconstruction of the genre and thematic determinants of the American Western. The movie further questions racial and gender stereotypes beyond cultural mainstream, providing a postcolonial critique wrapped in pop-cultural packaging. It involves a shift in the dynamics between the ruling and the subordinate, portraying Americans as the bad guys and Germans as moral pillars. Moreover, the role Tarantino assigns to fashion as a crucial ally to the main character in defining his self-awareness elevates this film to supreme entertainment and a boundless source of inspiration for critical thinking. Personally, I experienced it as a stimulus to trans-cend various boundaries of academic disciplining and to create a space for intellectual freedom in general.

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Abstract:

The question of the relationship between art and knowledge and whether and in what sense art can be regarded as a form of knowledge has been addressed from different perspectives but it still does not have secure grounds in contemporary aesthetics. The argument involves rather skeptical attitudes – from Plato to Kant and throughout the dominance of positivist tradition in Western philosophy in the first half of the 20th century – as well as cognitivist approaches, such as James O. Young's view of art as a source of knowledge, which has the capacity to provide both propositional and practical knowledge. The "linguistic turn" in contemporary thought and the ensued iconization of language in western culture led to the identification of cognitive potential with discourse, resulting in inequitable disregard of sensory awareness and turning the human experiences and cognition into the product of language. The submission of iconicity to semantics and reducing the pictorial to interpretable text without sensory significance led to the questioning of the cognitive aspect of visuality.

The hermeneutical perspective, drawing upon Michael Polanyi's view of all knowledge as established in relation to tacit thought, considers art as embodying tacit knowledge and emphasizes the importance of the inherent inexhaustibility of meaning in art that can contribute to the inquiry. Recognizing that knowledge is not always reducible to language, such perspective liberates knowledge from the dominance of the propositional and provides further insights for the phenomenology of art as a creative practice.

CAN ART PROVIDE KNOWLEDGE?
ON THE COGNITIVE VALUE OF IMAGES

No doubt that the ways of representation in arts are fundamentally different from those in the sciences and both realms contribute to knowledge in radically different ways. However, while the ways to explicate how art can enhance the faculty of judgment and practical knowledge might be relatively obvious in literary works, the question of how visual works can provide the same kinds of knowledge is more ambiguous. Consequently, the question of epistemic potential of visual representation is even more challenging.

Image as a system constructed according to the immanent laws with its own iconic sense - which determines its difference from reality as well as from discourse – challenges perception, because a conceptual, abstract tendency of perception is incompatible with a sensual particularity of the image (Boehm). At the same time, it allows a multiplicity of experience made possible by simultaneity inherent in the image provided that we understand the act of seeing as comprising simultaneity and consecutiveness as well as the unconscious, pre-conceptual processes. It is the expressive potential of the pictorial and the specificity of art as an experiential and perceptual modality embodying representational meanings that distinguishes it as a distinctive form of knowledge. In an endeavor to defy the approach of semiotics and the epistemology of science that insist on amodality of knowledge and its dependence on discursive context, this paper rejects the reducibility of knowledge to language and embraces the approach that advocates „disestablishing the view of cognition as dominantly and aggressively linguistic" (Stafford).

Keywords: Visual art; pictorial representation; art and knowledge; aesthetic cognitivism

Before delving into the complex relationship between art and knowledge, I shall make a methodological remark. The question poses a broad intellectual scope encompassing a diverse array of discourses and entailing multiple philosophical and psychological perspectives. Consequently, it is essential to underscore the limitation of this endeavor, as providing an exhaustive account of the epistemology of art would be a formidable task in this confined space. This paper will focus on elucidating the complexity of the issue, accentuating key aspects, and providing general observations and perspectives without technical scrutiny of the particulars.

The question of whether and in what sense art can be regarded as a form of knowledge has been addressed from different perspectives but it still does not have secure grounds in contemporary aesthetics. The argument involves rather skeptical attitudes – from Plato to Kant and throughout the dominance of positivist tradition in Western philosophy in the first half of the 20th century – as well as cognitivist approaches, such as James O. Young's view of art as a source of knowledge which has the capacity to provide both propositional and practical knowledge.

The root of the core complexities within the presented discourse lies in the very intricacies inherent in the concepts of knowledge and cognition. With the aim of illuminating the complications and reimagining the epistemological dimensions of art and artistic encounter, I will concentrate on what I perceive as the critical tasks within the presented discourse. This involves challenging the perspectives of semiotics and the epistemology of science that insist on amodality of knowledge and its reliance on discourse, thus rejecting the reducibility of knowledge to language. Furthermore, while acknowledging the subtle boundaries between different aspects of cognition and rejecting a sharp segregation between the intellectual and the artistic or the epistemic and the aesthetic realms, I intend to illustrate the importance of recognizing the integrity of aesthetic experience as a cognitive process.

The first clarification that needs to be established pertains to the conceptual underpinnings of knowledge. Firstly, a distinction must be drawn between knowledge and information. Not all that qualifies as knowledge is propositional or counts as information; there is also knowledge of how to do something or practical knowledge. Furthermore, we must differentiate between verbal knowledge and experiential knowledge – the latter being particularly relevant within the context of aesthetic experience –

as well as between the empirical realm of scientific knowledge and the intangible dimensions of artistic domain and aesthetic comprehension. Another important remark within the presented context relates to a seemingly evident but not always unequivocal observation that the areas of inquiry into which arts and sciences provide insight are different and complementary. It is a mistake to compare knowledge obtained through art with knowledge obtained through sciences and to seek equivalents for scientific attributes in the artistic realm. Both fields contribute to knowledge by enhancing our understanding in radically different ways. In our inquiry, knowledge is comprehended as encompassing understanding and entailing not only a conceptual aspect but also a kind of sensitive awareness connected with perception or experiential knowledge – knowledge of (as well as through) our inner experiences. And when we consider learning from art and cognitive engagement, we imply the broad concept of cognition as involving not only intellectual but sensory and non-conceptual aspects as well.

The necessity for the above elucidations arises from the preceding philosophical underpinning of contemporary Western culture. The "linguistic turn" in contemporary thought and the ensuing iconization of language led to the identification of cognitive potential with discourse, resulting in inequitable disregard of sensory awareness. From Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralism to Jacques Derrida's deconstruction, structuralist and post-structuralist theories brought about human experiences and cognition taking a back seat to the dominance of discourse, turning them into the product of language. The subordination of iconicity to semantics and reducing the pictorial to interpretable text without sensory significance led to the questioning of the cognitive aspect of visuality, necessitating alternative views of "intelligence of sight" and the need to "disestablish the view of cognition as dominantly and aggressively linguistic" (Stafford 1996, 7). Elliot Eisner goes even further and "blames" Plato for shaping our traditional approaches to the conception of knowledge, claiming that the model that Plato's ideas have provided has impacted our conception of intelligence and of rationality itself, and hence, they should have provided the model that has shaped our conception of science (Eisner 2007, 4).

However, even before the views about the foundations of knowledge rooted in positivism and scientism were called into question by developments in the hermeneutic tradition, and before the shifts in philosophical

method marked as the "visual turn" and "interpretive turn" took place, Michael Polanyi had stated that we know more than we can tell (Polanyi 1966, 4). This statement illuminates the inherent limitations of language in encompassing the entirety of human understanding, thus challenging the dominant paradigm of rationality. This is a profound philosophical insight that goes beyond explicit knowledge and recognizes that knowledge is not always reducible to language. The hermeneutical perspective, drawing upon Polanyi's view of all knowledge as established in relation to tacit thought, considers art as embodying tacit knowledge and emphasizes the importance of the inherent inexhaustibility of meaning in art that can contribute to the inquiry. By acknowledging its diverse forms and sources, it liberates knowledge from the dominance of the propositional and provides further insights into the phenomenology of art as a creative practice. Encompassing a broad range of implicit, experiential, and intuitive knowledge that is not conceptually explicable, this notion of tacit holds art as a creative process embodying implicit non-discursive knowledge to which artworks owe their expressive power and ability to evoke emotions. This perspective suggests that art has the capacity to show what we cannot say and aligns with Ludwig Wittgenstein's assertion that "what can be shown cannot be said" (Wittgenstein 2010, 45). The placement of art and aesthetic experience beyond the realm of intelligible and the claim that they cannot be fully articulated by conceptual analysis allude to the importance, and perhaps the primacy of implicit knowledge, i.e. our immediate experience and non-conceptual cognition in artistic understanding.

The perspective which embraces the irreducibility of aesthetic experience to discourse and acknowledges the significance of embodied experience in our understanding necessarily entails the capability of art to evoke a pre-reflective, non-discursive understanding. This inherent capacity art can manifest in diverse ways across various artworks and unfolds peculiarly within the pictorial medium. In Gottfried Boehm's *Hermeneutik des Bildes,* the capacity of visual medium to elicit a pre-conceptual form of comprehension is ascribed to the particularity of the visual language as a field of "iconic difference". According to Boehm, image as a system constructed according to the immanent laws with its own iconic sense – which determines its difference from reality as well as from discourse – challenges perception, because a conceptual, abstract tendency of perception is incompatible with a sensual particu-

larity of the image (as cited in Bryl 1995, 96). This distinctiveness of the pictorial medium brings the conceptual aspect of perception to a halt forcing it to move back to the pre-conceptual stage (ibid.).

Hence, it is the pictorial identity and the pictorial potency of the artwork that enables activating deeper meanings and triggering profound interpretations in the viewer. This brings us to another fundamental elucidation that in the context of the cognitive potential of art, particularly, concerning pictorial representation, it is essential to acknowledge a work of art as a field of meaning creation and to prioritize its significance as a realm where meaning is generated, rather than perceive it primarily as a visual material conveying information. Simultaneously, we must not overlook its essential dimension as an artwork, thereby recognizing its artistic integrity as well as the aspect of pure visuality.

Undoubtedly, a picture can be a valuable source of information serving as a document or a testimony (a sketch or a photograph); it can function as a historical artifact, or as a pictorial scheme capable of concisely communicating a vast array of information or providing a laconic visualization of ethical and aesthetic systems within a specific time and place. However, in such cases, a picture does not necessarily represent in the interpretive sense; rather, it primarily functions as a mere illustrative testimony. A work of art has a cognitive value as a representation, which enhances and enriches our understanding of the world and ourselves. In the case of visual arts, it is specifically the employment of pictorial expression that distinguishes artwork as a distinctive form of knowledge. Unlike Plato who viewed art as a distorted picture of reality taking us further away from it and considered art misleading precisely due to it being a representation, James.O.Young argues that the cognitive value of artworks depends on their being representations (Young 2001, 34). Moreover, he restricts *arthood* to works with a cognitive function claiming that only works of art that are important sources of knowledge have a high total aesthetic value (ibid., 127). Other aesthetic cognitivists are not so radical in this respect. According to Berys Gaut, the aesthetic value of a work is partly determined by its cognitive value, and even without having cognitive significance the artwork can have other aesthetic merits (Gaut 2006, 123). Similarly, Gordon Graham believes that some works are valuable only for their aesthetic or hedonic value (Graham 2005, 58). But what makes a work of art cognitively significant? And how exactly does it perform this function? Even those who are skeptical of the cogni-

tive potential of art agree that art can cause certain states in the audience by arousing emotions or provoking thoughts and has an ability to provide deep insights into human nature in general. The point where complication arises is when a dichotomy between the cognitive and the aesthetic or the cognitive and the emotive is discerned and when the cognitive potential of art is established against its truth value.

The source of the entanglement related to the division between cognitive and emotive aspects of aesthetic encounter lies in a disregard for the integrity of the experiences integral to artistic contemplation. This misleading differentiation is reflected in Nelson Goodman's statement in *Languages of Art* where he writes: "On the one side, we put sensation, perception, inference, conjecture, all nerveless inspection and investigation, fact and truth; on the other, pleasure, pain, interest, satisfaction, disappointment, all brainless affective response, liking, and loathing. This pretty effectively keeps us from seeing that in aesthetic experience the emotions function cognitively. The work of art is apprehended through the feelings as well as through the senses" (Goodman 1968, 247-48). Therefore, it is essential to acknowledge art as a tactile, sensory modality and comprehend the image as a sensory experience. The sensual and the sensually perceptible – from textures and sensations to emotional states – can be portrayed by visual means; abstract concepts can similarly be captured and visualized through color, texture, or light, evoking aural experiences. Some great works even grasp and convey the ontological depth of human condition (Martin Heidegger's analysis of Van Gogh's painting of a pair of peasant shoes could serve as a profound exemplification of how a work of art can be the disclosure of truth of being (Heidegger 2008, 158-162). Aesthetic appreciation is unattainable in conceptual contemplation, without engaging sensory and affective aspects of our perception. Mikel Dufrenne tried to show the importance of feeling in our responses to art and describe a distinct kind of sensibility realized in aesthetic experience. He introduced the concept of "affective a priori"[1] claiming that affective aspects, such as emotions, moods, and sensations, which are part of our pre-reflective experience, play a fundamental role in shaping our aesthetic judgments and responses. Dufrenne considers

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1 Building upon Kant's notion of a priori knowledge (which is independent of empirical content and is innate and universal), this concept implies that our knowledge of the expressiveness of aesthetic objects is not derived from empirical generalizations, but is rather "immediately immanent in feeling".

the source of a form of knowledge we gain in aesthetic experience to be feeling or affectivity which he understands as a mode of perception: "feeling is simply another direction which perception can take...feeling, in which perception is realized, is not emotion. It is knowledge. Feeling is...a capacity of receptivity, a sensibility to a certain world, and an aptitude for perceiving that world" (Cothey 1990, 81). Therefore, the root of the problem lies within unjust neglect of the cognitive significance of the emotive and affective aspects of the aesthetic response. If we recognize these as cognitive modes of perception, the cognitive potential of art would no longer be questionable; as it is beyond doubt that representation is perceptual and art is primarily a perceptive modality. The second moment that has given rise to controversy pertains to the question of the truth value of artworks. More precisely, complications arise when the concept of truth is conceived in propositional terms. A cognitivist approach entails that a work of art as a sensual representation unites two integral features – the truth and the aesthetic aspect. In Hegelian terms, whereas philosophy is a conceptual grasp of the truth, art presents the truth by means of sensuous images. This implies that truth can be expressed in non-propositional form. However, it is essential to recognize not only various forms in which truth can manifest beyond traditional propositions but also a different mode of truth. The truth as an aim of cognition is categorized as scientific truth which is propositional and empirically verifiable and poetic or artistic truth which, because works of art are works of imagination, cannot be subject to external reference and empirical verification. The only such test that it can be submitted to is testing it against our own experience. Hence, while propositional truth is established based on objective criteria and in relation to actual facts, artistic truth does not necessarily need to correspond with what is objectively true. The artist's perspective cannot be true or false; it can only be such in relation to its own artistic aim. Therefore, artistic truth is not established in relation to propositional truth, but on the contrary, it concerns its own truth. Aristotle, whose ideas can be considered the earliest cognitivist account of art, maintains that art is capable of capturing and portraying universal truths stating that "poetry is something more philosophical and more worthy of serious attention than history; for while poetry is concerned with universal truths, history treats of particular facts" (Aristotle 1965, 43-44). However, it would be incorrect to assume that cognitive theory attributes

the utmost importance to the meaning and truth embodied in a work of art. In fact, cognitive theory does not establish itself in terms of truth and this is an essential point to make. Neither Goodman nor Graham speaks of art in terms of truth; Graham even emphasizes that cognitivist theory should be regarded as a claim about understanding rather than truth. However, even though he rejects Douglas Morgan's criticism against the cognitivist theory[2] precisely by replacing the concept of truth with understanding, for Peter Lamarque this very claim is an indication of the slipperiness of the concept of artistic cognitivism. While Lamarque does not deny that works of art can convey truth and impart knowledge, he rejects that truth is an artistic value (Lamarque 2006, 127).

The viewpoint that it is not a prerequisite for an artwork to have cognitive merits for it to be aesthetically valuable and that some works are to be valued for their beauty or capacity to give pleasure is not entirely unquestionable. Needless to say, there are values other than truth, and pleasure and beauty are among them; but without an aim behind our aesthetic cognition, is not the experience of beauty aestheticism, and experiencing pleasure hedonism? Precisely because Graham draws a distinction between the cognitive and the aesthetic, Lamarque calls his cognitivism "half-hearted".

While Lamarque's claim against aesthetic cognitivism can be rejected by acknowledging that he understands truth strictly in propositional terms, he is perhaps right when he remarks that cognitivists "tread a difficult line between, on the one hand wanting to keep a conception of truth sufficiently like that employed by philosophers or scientists to give weight to the idea of cognitive value, and, on the other, seeking to secure something special about the truth achievement of the arts" (ibid., 129).[3] Nonetheless, it seems that the underlying source of the problem is again, a distinct separation of the epistemological and aesthetic aspects of art. The simplest way to show that such demarcation is not justifiable is to look at the examples of literary works where their interdependence is most evident. It is obvious how an exquisitely written literary work with several aesthetic merits would lose its artistic value if it conveyed unethical messages or was a meaningless narrative. To provide

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2 In his essay 'Must Art Tell the Truth?' (1969) Morgan develops an argument, which implies that 'cognitive significance' must be spelled out in terms of true propositions.

3 This problem extends further to the contemporary humanities in general, which strives to rival the exact and applied sciences in their aspiration for the same extent of verifiability.

the example from visual art, let us once again refer to Van Gogh's painting: if the depicted object in the painting (a pair of peasant shoes, in this case) only had aesthetic and hedonic value – meaning if it were merely pretty or beautifully rendered – the painting would hold only decorative significance. It would lack the capacity to unveil ontological truth and the existential depth of the human condition. Hence, it is evident that the two aspects are necessarily interdependent. If a work of art holds a high degree of aesthetic significance, it will inherently possess cognitive value and vice versa.

Both literature and visual arts employ illustrative representation based on mimetic expression, achieved not only through the mimesis of form but also by evoking appropriate experiences. An abstract painting can evoke specific emotions and non-visual experiences through the use of combinations of lines and colors. Precisely because the viewer grasps the similarities between the experience of actual objects and the depicted image and instinctively forges pertinent connections, the aesthetic experience unfolds.

If we agree that only cognitively significant works of art can possess aesthetic value, then we can assert that cognitive value of the artwork defines its aesthetic, and consequently, hedonic value. From this, it follows that there always is a cognitive aim behind aesthetic enjoyment. No doubt, we experience pleasure when we contemplate a beautiful painting but unlike enjoyment derived from sensations where the sensation is an aim in itself and an object of enjoyment, aesthetic pleasure is a far more complex experience. While it is obvious that aesthetic pleasure can, in some cases, be related to sensations, it is also clear that aesthetic enjoyment can be derived from seeing beauty and harmony in natural artifacts or art, or beauty of mathematical proof. In such cases, it consists in experiencing some type of internal sense which is integral to experiencing beauty. In the process of contemplating beauty realized in art, we gain access to our inner states which become evoked and resonate with external stimuli. In other words, we perceive something as beautiful because our senses recognize the harmony and proportion that exists within the object of perception. This act of recognition and appreciation is a cognitive act, as in this process, we uncover the unfolding inner experience which grants access to a previously concealed dimension of being. If experiencing beauty and pleasure (both cognitive and aesthetic) is a human requirement and if there is a cognitive aim

behind aesthetic enjoyment, also if (as Kant argued (Kant 1994, 98) the satisfaction which determines the judgment of taste is "disinterested" and aesthetic experience has no aim external to itself, then the only candidate for such internal aim is self-knowledge and self-realization. Just as drawing rigid boundaries between the epistemological and aesthetic aspects of the artwork would be misleading, so too a sharp differentiation between art and intellectual inquiry would be limiting – clearly, not suggesting that they are identical. The first claim, as we just showed, can be substantiated by observing the peculiarity of the process of aesthetic experience and the logic of the artwork itself. As for the latter, aside from the phenomenological aspect, the argument rests on the way art functions. While art does not present an argument, by providing a perspective it can have an impact on our perception. Through directing our perception, and hence, our mind, artworks illuminate our experience of a particular issue and can prompt us to conceptual thought. In this sense, and more importantly, also because of its specificity as experiential and perceptual modality embodying representational meanings, art is a form of knowledge, as "sensual experience, as an aspect of mind, is not a matter of passive seeing and hearing but of active looking and listening" (Graham 2005, 64).

While a work of art can undoubtedly influence our perception and enhance our understanding, the means of representation in art are different from those employed in other forms of inquiry. As has already been mentioned above, it is the representative power of the work that enhances understanding and establishes the artwork as a source of knowledge. To delve deeper into how art fulfills its cognitive function, further exploration of art as representation is essential. Distinguishing the sort of representation employed in the arts from the representation employed in the sciences is crucial due to prevalent misconceptions and problematic implications that arise when art is regarded as a semantic representation. Semiotic theories of representation tend to focus on generating meaning through a system of signification and on interpretative aspects of representational meaning in art rather than the direct perceptual experience. Such an approach undermines the importance of sensory experiences and the aesthetic dimension of the artwork and neglects to recognize art as "constitutive, not merely illustrative, of basic mental operations, such as intuiting, inferring, associating, hallucinating, feeling arousal, and categorizing" (Stafford 2007, 2).

To demonstrate the inaccuracy of considering the language of art as a semantic signification and to highlight the distinct nature of visual language governed by its unique logic, it is necessary to elucidate the substantial differences between the discursive and the pictorial realms. One of the key distinctions concerns the interrelation between representation and representational meaning. Unlike semantic representation which is strictly conventional (a propositional statement is defined by a finite set of linguistic elements and rules), visual conventions are considerably more general. While a specific statement can be expressed in different ways using different interchangeable words, without undergoing any alterations in its underlying meaning, modification of formal elements in illustrative representation will change its representational meaning. Furthermore, propositional meaning is contingent on specific linguistic conventions that establish particular sequential interrelations (changing the sequence of words in a sentence would lead to a loss of its meaning). Conversely, visual representation does not adhere to a finite set of pictorial components with fixed meanings; Instead, various objects can be depicted using the same visual conventions (e.g., lines and colors), and a specific object can be represented in multiple ways. In response to semiotic theories which hold that representational meaning depends upon pictorial structure, Richard Wollheim even notes that "in the relevant, or combinatory sense, pictures lack structure" (Wollheim 1998, 218). What is implied here is the impossibility of functional categorization of the picture according to the importance of the parts in relation to the whole. In his theory of representation, to describe the way a viewer perceives images as representing something other than what is explicitly depicted Wollheim introduces the concept of 'seeing-in' – a special perceptual skill, which is prior, both logically and historically, to representation. The phenomenology of a respective experience (where it manifests itself) implies being visually aware at once of the pictorial surface and what it represents – the feature he calls "twofoldness" (ibid., 221), identified with two simultaneous perceptions, as opposed to two alternating perceptions suggested in Gombrich's account (as cited in Wollheim 1998, 221).[4] This simultaneity – which distinguishes the nature of the pictorial from the linear logic of text – is a fundamental

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[4] Later, Wollheim reconceived the term and understood it as a single experience with two aspects – configurational and recognitional (Wollheim 1998, 221).

feature of image perception and, as an "accumulated possibility" inherent in the image (which involves the dynamics between the parts and the whole), allows a multiplicity of experience and even simultaneity of diverse experiences.

The relation between consecutiveness and simultaneity of the image in which the seeing is performed is essential in determining and understanding the sensual emergence of meaning and relates to the apprehension of an artwork as a whole, as a unity of meaning and pure visuality. Aesthetic appreciation is achieved in the act of seeing and dwelling in a work as a whole. As soon as we begin to elucidate the particulars of a complex entity such as a work of art through close scrutiny and conceptualization, essential meanings slip away and the wholeness of the entity is destroyed. As "It is not by looking at things, but by dwelling in them, that we understand their joint meaning" (Polanyi 1966, 18). *Indwelling* is the most appropriate interpetaion of the artwork.

In recent psychological research, useful empirical evidence is provided for the claims of aesthetic cognitivism. Regarding simultaneity as a distinctive feature of image identity and image perception, as Semir Zeki has shown, despite each pictorial element being processed by a different micropart of the visual brain, all layers are reflected in consciousness at the same time (Stafford 2007, 36). When contemplating a painting as a complex representational system, the viewer not only absorbs information and follows the compositional logic of the image but also translates unconscious impulses and sensations into a conscious response. Recent studies in neuroaesthetics suggest a correlation between aesthetic experiences and cognitive engagement and provide compelling observations of how the brain processes and responds to aesthetic stimuli. With regard to art's cognitive function, findings in the field of neuroimaging studies are particularly interesting: neuroscientific research using the techniques such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) has shown that engaging with aesthetic stimuli causes the activation of certain brain regions associated with cognitive processing.[5]

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5 The following are a few examples of studies in neuroaesthetics which suggest correlation between aesthetic experiences and cognitive engagement: "Impact of Contour on Aesthetic Judgments and Approach-Avoidance Decisions in Architecture" by Vartanian, O et al.; "A Model of Aesthetic Appreciation and Aesthetic Judgments" by Leder, H et al.; "Neural Correlates of Beauty" by Kawabata, H., & Zeki, S.

While psychological, behavioral, and critical responses to art may vary depending on the viewer, artistic engagement is not a unilateral process that excludes the reverse trajectory. By presenting a point of view and a perspective, works of art guide us to new cognitive states. And as we direct our mental and sensory projection toward an artwork, we simultaneously view the world through its lens. As Barbara Stafford argues "sophisticated sensory modalities of art are phenomenological and epistemological structures that simultaneously help us differentiate as well as construct aspects of our experience" (Stafford 1996. 3).

This brings us to the point which is essential to our inquiry and which pertains to the significant contribution art makes to knowledge by providing a unique perspective. It is precisely this particular moment which sets apart aesthetic enjoyment derived from art and that derived from natural artifacts. If the sole purpose of aesthetic enjoyment were merely to experience pleasure then appreciating the beauty in art and experiencing the beauty of natural artifacts would be indistinguishable. However, what we seek in engaging with art is the artist's viewpoint, the possibility of interaction, and acquiring a fresh perspective, which reveals what might otherwise have gone unnoticed and offers new ways to interpret the world. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, employing the full expressive potential that the pictorial has to offer is essential, as it is the iconic sense of the visual medium that determines its identity as a unique entity. Devoid of this essential constituent, the nuanced aspects of the artistic encounter become absent, thereby depriving the observer of the profound subtleties that imbue aesthetic experience.

Conceptual art stands as an illustration of how the diminishing significance (in some cases, even complete elimination) of the visual and material elements can limit art's potency when it becomes a mere statement. Henry Flynt's declaration of the concept art as a kind of art of which the material is language (Flynt 1963) entailed the view of art as a discursive entity intertwined with science, mathematics, and logic. The view of art as a research method parallel to the methodologies of natural and social sciences, which should be engaged in the study of art itself as a method of inquiry transforms art from a subject of interpretation to an object of investigation concerning the nature of art itself. The absence of the material object i.e. the transformation of the signifier into conceptual information replaced the dialectical encounter with the artwork with social-economic and political critique.

W. J. T. Mitchel categorizes self-referential imagery as "metapictures" (Mitchell 1994), images that are not merely representations of something but reflect on their own nature, the nature of pictorial representation itself. While the notion of images as self-theorizing entities might seem to challenge the conventions of representation, one can argue that the self-reflexivity and self-consciousness of such pictures can sometimes lead to a repetition and a reproduction of traditional norms rather than challenging them,[6] or that the notion of imaging formulating its own questions and generating its own answers undermines the sensory experience of the artwork.

To return to the artworks which primarily use semantic representation (in fact, self-referential images could be counted among them) they rely upon additional discourse to be interpretable and becoming acquainted with the discourse rather than the immediate artistic experience is a necessary component of their apprehension. While such images can offer a perspective and an insight, in the condition of the absence of pictorial significance within a work of art, one might question whether language could serve as a more effective means to convey the meaning. Indeed, to explore the complex relationship between representation and reality, or to address the question of the limitations of representation, one would rather consider reading Plato's work than contemplate Magritte's "The Treachery of Images" or Kosuth's "One and Three Chairs". The idea of self-referentiality of an image and the notion of art as a form of intellectual inquiry is rooted in conceptualism which in turn, was inspired by the activation of linguistic theories in Anglo-American analytical philosophy as well as in structuralist and post-structuralist continental philosophy. Contemporary artistic practices that regard art as a form of research, including practice-led research or practice-based research and arts-informed research also share connections with the approaches discussed above, particularly the philosophical legacy of conceptual art.

Nonetheless, if we acknowledge that creative aesthetic knowledge is more basic than conceptual knowledge and recognize the primacy of the non-discursive structure of consciousness, then it follows that art can reveal deeper truths about human nature. Kant's separation of cogni-

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6 See Rosalind E. Krauss's "The Originality of the Avant-Garde" in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Krauss 1985).

tion (which, in his view, can only be conceptual (Kant 1998, 133) from imagination (which relates to sensory intuitions (ibid., 256-57) allows for a distinct mode of aesthetic perception where the faculties of imagination and understanding precede conceptual thought; they are freed from the conceptual constraints and allow an immediate contemplative engagement with the aesthetic object. If we accommodate the idea that aesthetic experience involves non-conceptual aspects of apprehension and that direct knowledge gained through art is primarily perceptual, while also rejecting Kant's view that all cognition is conceptual, many complications will be resolved.

As a final point of our inquiry, I draw upon the statement by Michael Brötje, the founder of the existential-hermeneutical science of art, which, in my view, aptly underscores the distinctiveness of art as a unique form of knowledge. "It is absolutely out of question – remarks Brötje – to treat the history of art as an aesthetic commentary paralleling the general history of humankind. Through art, humankind writes "another history" – the history of constantly renewed self-assurance as to what is ultimate and unconditioned" (Bryl 1995, 102-103). Transcending the confines of discursive and propositional limitations and recognizing diverse forms and origins of knowledge enables us to rise above the binary division between the epistemic and the aesthetic. This recognition allows us to acknowledge the inherent integrity of human nature and aesthetic apprehension, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of artistic experience as a distinctive source of knowledge and a pathway to self-understanding and self-realization.

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Abstract:

The enormous variety of forms and uses of phenomena called 'image' has so far prevented the formation of a universally accepted concept of the image. It is even questionable whether a unified concept of the image encompassing all relevant phenomena is possible or whether the 'image' is not rather a historically changeable collective name of phenomena grouped by family resemblances. the image seems to occur in almost all cultures; for this reason alone, any study of the image should be differentiated not only historically, but also interculturally. But this is not always the case; therefore in this essay a certain Eurocentric bias in Western concepts of the 'image' is critically discussed. Firstly, it will be presented how 'image' is defined in certain mainstream discussions of image studies. Secondly it will be shown that there are Eurocentric blind spots in these discourses. The range of objects considered as images are restricted and thereby especially non-European types of images are excluded. Three of them will be mentioned: the tattoo, the mask and calligraphy and what their difference to hegemonic western notions of the image as separated from the body, to-be-looked-at and non-performative entails. Tattooing, calligraphy, the mask and much more could become the subject of research projects and courses. The problem with such research and teaching that reaches beyond the European horizon is twofold: *First,* simply not everything can be done; researchers and teachers must reduce the variety of possible objects. This cannot and should not lead to the exclusion of

THE NOTION OF 'IMAGE' AND EUROCENTRISM[1]

non-European phenomena, but not everything can be included – complete inclusion is impossible. Therefore, only a local coordination process on what can be taught in modules such as 'Interculturality' or 'Global Media Culture' can be done. The paper ends with some short notes on the institutional and image-pedagogical consequences of this critique.

Keywords: Body, calligraphy, eurocentrism, masks, pedagogy, tattoos

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1 This is a significantly revised English translation of Schröter 2022. In this form it is published for the first time.

1. Introduction

In this essay a certain Eurocentric bias in Western concepts of the 'image' is critically discussed.[2] Firstly (in 2) it will be presented how 'image' is defined in certain mainstream discussions of image studies. Secondly (in 3) it will be shown that there are Eurocentric blind spots in these discourses. The range of objects considered as images are restricted and thereby especially non-European types of images are excluded. Three of them will be mentioned: the tattoo, the mask and calligraphy and what their difference to hegemonic western notions of the image as separated from the body, to-be-looked-at and non-performative entails. The paper ends (in 4) with some short notes on the institutional and image-pedagogical consequences of this critique.

2. On the concept of the image

The image is one of the oldest cultural techniques of mankind, as indicated, for example, by prehistoric cave drawings. It seems to occur in various forms in all human cultures and plays a central role in many religions, e.g. already in the Christian creation myth: "So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them".[3] Because of this centrality, the image was seen by Hans Jonas as an anthropological specificity of mankind or can at least be called a basic medium (cf. 1994; Venus 2014).

Images have central functions, by no means only in religion or the field called 'art' in 'Western'[4] cultures, but also in science, technology, medicine, entertainment, the state (e.g., photos in identity cards), economics, playful, every day or even magical practices, and much more. The ubiquitous distribution of images makes it impossible to map this diachronic and synchronic diversity in full. Likewise, the literature on images, their forms, techniques, practices, meanings, and the like has become unmanageable – at least since the 'pictorial turn' in cultural studies was proclaimed in the early 1990s and an independent *Bildwissenschaft* (*science*

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2 On the definition of Eurocentrism, see Amin 2009 and Chakrabarty 2000. See also Shohat and Stam 2014.
3 Gen. 1:27, https://www.academic-bible.com/en/online-bibles/king-james-version/read-the-bible-text/ (Dec. 28, 2021.)
4 On the notion of 'Western culture', see Hall 2019.

of images; translation by the author) began to establish itself (see, among others Mitchell 1994; Belting 2001; Sachs-Hombach 2003).[5]
The enormous variety of forms and uses of phenomena called 'image' has so far prevented the formation of a universally accepted concept of the image (cf. Mersch 2014). It is even questionable whether a unified concept of the image encompassing all relevant phenomena is possible or whether the 'image' is not rather a historically changeable collective name of phenomena grouped by family resemblances. Nevertheless, there are admirable attempts at synthetic definitions – for example, Stefan Majetschak has proposed to define 'image' as follows:

> An image [...] is a texture of markings embedded in the formal latencies of any medium, which exhibits an internal differentiation that we regard, under given contextual conditions, *as* an analogically notated realization of a possible order of the visible (2003, 43; translation by the author).[6]

This formulation indicates the difficulties of a definition of the image, in any case all too simple attempts are problematic: The popular thesis, for instance in everyday understanding as well as in a vulgar-semiotic perspective,[7] that pictures are signs which, unlike linguistic signs for instance, essentially designate by *similarity to* the depicted, does not stand up to a closer examination. Two eggs are very similar to each other, yet neither is an image of the other. After his scathing critique of the theory of similarity,[8] Nelson Goodman, for his part, proposed a *symbol-theoretical* approach to the definition of the image. He conceives of images (as distinct from language and writing) as signs that exhibit a *syntactically dense symbolic scheme* (which is echoed in Majetschak's formulation of "analogically

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5 For an overview see Günzel and Mersch 2014. However, 'Bildwissenschaft' is again a relatively specific development of the German-speaking world (even if, for instance, American authors are received), in other parts of the world there is rather talk of *visual culture*, cf. e.g., Mitchell 1995.

6 Remarkably, Majetschak refrains from describing the image as 'two-dimensional' in his definition (although he mentions two-dimensionality several times at the beginning of his text), a description that occurs frequently in other definitions and is already untenable in view of *sculpture*, cf. Schröter 2009.

7 This does not mean that semiotic perspectives on images are vulgar per se; rather, see Barthes 1977.

8 The theory of similarity is advocated, for example, in the aforementioned Jonas 1994, 107. For reference to Goodman, see Majetschak 2003, 30–37. See also Winkler 2021.

notated realization"). What is meant by this is that in (at least Western) languages (unlike with images) there is an alphabet that defines which kinds of markings are permissible and which are not. Thus, there are 'characters' A and B, but no character between A and B (syntactic differentiation). Also, each marker must be uniquely assignable to a character; there is no marker that corresponds to both A and B (syntactic disjointness) (cf. Goodman 1968). That is, any given mark can and must be assigned to a character – but it does not matter whether the A is, say, in green paint, or in an unusual font, or even made of potatoes laid out on the ground. The alphabet as a 'repertoire' is missing in images, however; any difference, no matter how subtle, in the thickness of a line, in a hue, could be relevant: While the disjunctive and differentiated syntactic symbolic scheme of writing is 'digital', the syntactic scheme of the picture, in principle and possibly infinitely finely graded, is 'dense' or 'analog'. A completely different theoretical perspective, which instead focuses more on the relation of the image to seeing (without falling back into the theories of similarity), is offered by *phenomenological* theories, which conceive of images not as signs for (visible) objects, as semiotic approaches do, but as essentially visible conditions themselves, drawing for example on Edmund Husserl's phenomenological description of the process of perception (cf. Wiesing 2005, 37-43). Majetschak tries to account for this dimension with his reference to 'possible orders of the visible'. The diverse Western discussions about the image, however, agree that images have genuine potentials, 'iconic logics', that cannot be attributed to the signifying powers of language and writing, even though many images gain their meaning only through linguistic contexts – a central field of research in iconography and iconology (cf. Kaemmerling 1979). Regardless of whether a general definition of the 'image' is possible, the concept of the image can be made more precise through a series of internal differentiations: For example, *natural images* are distinguished from *artificial images*, with the former referring to phenomena such as shadows and reflections (cf. Eco 1988, who, however, denies that mirror images are images at all). Within the field of 'artificial' images, i.e., images produced by humans, a distinction can be made between *technical and non-technical images* (cf. among others Flusser 2011; Bredekamp, Schneider, and Dünkel 2008). With 'technical' images are then mostly meant the images from the invention of photography around 1839, over film and television to today's computer-generated images. With this distin-

ction also arises that between *still and moving images* – that is, images that change in time, such as those of cinema or television. The distinction *technical/non-technical* is questionable, however, insofar as all 'artificial' images are necessarily also 'technical'. Nevertheless, images can also be distinguished on the basis of their signifying functions: Thus, in the field of discussion of technical images, there is also the distinction *indexical/non-indexical images*, a difference derived from Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics, which describes whether images are causally connected to what is depicted (as in photography, for example) or not (as in painting). Another differentiation with respect to the signifying function is that into *singular and general images*, that is, with respect to whether an image represents a concrete entity or a general class of entities – e.g., images in an encyclopedia to an article about a class of entities. But also, in advertising images are often used in a general way, e.g., a man in a car advertisement usually does not represent *that* man, but men in general. Moreover, the distinction between *fictional and non-fictional images* should be mentioned here, but there are many more (cf. Scholz 1991, 25-31; 70-72). Another, more sociological difference relates to the question of whether images belong to the field of art and insofar have no purpose except to exhibit and reflect their own pictoriality (this is central to modernist aesthetics, at any rate), or whether they are functionally involved in communicative processes (e.g., advertising) (cf. Majetschak 2005). This distinction between *artistic and functional images* is also problematic, insofar as, first of all, the demarcation is not clear-cut in many cases, for even images of art may as well be functional as stores of value, or were functional in the service of religious communication. Second of all, the distinction is historical: The emergence of an autonomous art system begins in the 19th century and is, in a sense, the precondition for the distinction (cf. Belting 1994). Nonetheless, the rich and differentiated history of artistic images has entailed equally rich aesthetics that have sought to highlight the potentials of the art image in very different ways. In the process, the image has often been ascribed a revealing power.[9] The history of various image forms and the practices, modes of design, theories, aesthetics, and politics associated with them is by far too complex and too extensive to be even sketched here. Historical studies of

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9 A classic example for the attribution of a revealing power to the image is Heidegger 2002a, esp. 13–16.

painting, photography, film, television, and computer images abound, as do histories of the functions of images in religion, art, science, and the mass media, to name only the most important fields. As the last example in particular – the field of mass media – illustrates, *images do not usually appear in isolation*, but in conjunction with other media forms such as sound or writing, with which they interact in complex ways. In addition, there are *special institutions and architectures* dedicated to the archiving and presentation of and/or trade in images, such as museums, galleries, and so on.

Until this point some aspects of standard discussions of the image in image studies were presented. But especially the last two mentioned points are by no means unproblematic. Images are often separated from their context and certain practices with images, e. g. Western "artistic" practices, which result in images isolated in museums, are privileged.

3. Eurocentrism in the concept of the image

As already noted at the beginning, the image seems to occur in almost all cultures; for this reason alone, any study of the image should be differentiated not only historically, but also interculturally. But this is not always the case; for example, the influential[10] volume edited by Gottfried Boehm in 1994, *Was ist ein Bild?* (*What is an image?*; translation by the author), *does not* contain a single text that deals decidedly with non-European image forms or image concepts. In his essay *Die Wiederkehr der Bilder* (*The Return of the Images*; translation by the author), Boehm remarks with a "view on non-European tribal art":[11]

> The older and non-European history of images possesses a wealth of forms that is by no means inferior to that of modernity. Oriental carpets, Japanese tea bowls, African seats, hand axes from the earliest times of man, etc. already allow us to critically test what images are and what determines them (Boehm 1994, 38; translation by the author).

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10 This volume was chosen as an example because already the title makes a fundamental, ontological claim with regard to the question discussed here, and it became influential not least because of this. It is a good example of processes of canonization that are problematic in themselves.

11 A term like 'tribal art' is itself difficult.

Unfortunately, however, this thesis does not lead to a more detailed discussion of non-European pictorial forms in the rest of the book, especially since Boehm's formulations raise questions: *First,* it is noteworthy that he only gives examples of non-European pictorial forms that are closely related to objects of use, as if the "primitive" image could not emancipate itself from decoration. *Secondly,* he formulates that these examples only "already" show what pictures are – a mode of expression that makes the non-European pictorial forms appear, in a sense, as a childlike early form. In this respect, it is not surprising that Boehm, one paragraph later, mentions the "trials of modernity" that would have "considerably expanded our knowledge of the preconditions, of the flexibility, and of the mode of action, for example, of painting, of the art of drawing, or of sculptural design" (ibid.; translation by the author). But instead of arranging non-European art and modernism (European examples are Cézanne, Matisse, etc.) on a scale of progress[12] (as it seems here, at least), they can also be understood simply as different but equal forms.[13] There seems to be a certain Eurocentrism implied, in which not only the exclusionary gesture of the unfounded and unjustifiable exclusion of non-European image forms is problematic. Rather, this exclusion threatens to undermine the universal and global claim to validity in the ontological formulation "What is an image?". How can it be known what an image "is" if it is not known what "other-directed [...] image perception" or what "other thinking of pictorial representation" (Därmann 2005, 38f; translation by the author) exists. On the other hand, wouldn't "the use of such general categories as [...] 'image' [...] have to account for their specific foreign cultural meaning" (ibid 2007, 18; translation by author)? In this manner, for example, the ethnologist Fritz Kramer, in his important study *Red Fez: On Art and Obsession in Africa*, has undertaken the effort to compare "the Cokwe concept of the image with the elements of European aesthetics" (1993, 190 and passim). Heike Behrend has looked at "savage theories of film", that is, theories of photography and film which certain African cultures have developed (cf. 1990).[14] These examples come from ethno-

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12 The question of what is actually meant by 'progress' is left aside here, cf. for example Taguieff 2001.

13 To be correct: There are other texts in which Boehm draws on numerous non-European artifacts, cf. Boehm 2012. The critique here is not meant to especiall criticize Boehm. The quote was used as an example.

14 On alternative forms of knowledge in the 'global South', see Santos 2018.

logy, but in recent years there have also been increasing approaches in art history to break down Eurocentric fixations,[15] which is evident in efforts to create a 'global art history' in which the question of culturally differentiated visual practices and concepts is explicitly raised (see, among others, Juneja 2012, esp. 10; Elkins 1998).[16] Beyond this, a polycentric description must be carried out, which transcends the notion of a European center that now adds global image forms to its canon (cf. Shohat and Stam 2014, 13-54).

Even if the extensive discussion between ethnology, art history and intercultural media research concerning the question of the image cannot be presented here,[17] some points should be noted: *Firstly,* it emerges that pictorial concepts that were once thought to be special European achievements are themselves the result of a history of global interweaving and give no cause for Eurocentric superiority habitus, such as the central perspective, which was often praised as a particularly significant European achievement (cf. Belting 2011). *Secondly,* it quickly becomes apparent that the 'canon' of phenomena subsumed under the category 'image' is different in other cultures. There, pictorial forms can be central that play no role in 'Western' history and historiography, which – for example – remain centered around painting. Some examples can be found for this:

a) The *tattoo*: Tattoos can easily be described with Majetschak's general definition of the image given above. In various cultural contexts they have central ritual and aesthetic significance and have gained increased acceptance in recent decades, even in the 'West' (cf. Schüttpelz 2006; Meyer 2011; Oettermann 1985; Därmann and Macho 2017; Kumschick 2021).[18] Nevertheless, they are comparatively underrepresented in image

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15 Cf. on the relationship between ethnology and art history in this respect Mersmann 2012.
16 Cf. on the problem of global art history also Elkins 2007.
17 There are now a number of other initiatives in image and art studies, such as the professorship 'Bildwissenschaft im globalen Kontext' of Kerstin Schankweiler at the TU Dresden, the DFG network 'Entangled Histories of Art and Migration: Forms, Visibilities, Agents' and the mainly by Burcu Dogramaci initiated ERC Consolidator Grant 'Relocating Modernism. Global Metropolis, Modern Art and Exile (METROMOD)'. Furthermore, the Cluster of Excellence 'Asia and Europe in a Global Context. The Dynamics of Transculturality', led by Monica Juneja, and a sub-project of the DFG-SPP 1688 'Anachronie und Präsenz: Ästhetische Wahrnehmung und künstlerische Zeitlichkeitskonzepte im Black Atlantic', led by Gabriele Genge. With thanks to Anja Schürmann.
18 With thanks to Anja Schürmann.

studies research. Their connection with the body and even bodily, sexual pleasures seem to make them an inappropriate example for imagery. Tattos are not a detached vis-à-vis of the observing subject, what is central for the European conception of the image (see Heidegger 2002b, cf. critically Därmann 2005, 489-511). Moreover: Tattoos reverse the role of the notion of indexicality (in its relation to pictures). While in Eurocentric discourse, indexicality is normally only used to describe the relation between represented object and image (a painting is not indexical, while a photograph is). In sharp contrast to this, the tattoo is indexical in relation to a body.

b) *Calligraphy*: Although there are comparable phenomena in medieval European book illumination, calligraphy is a form that plays a far more important role in Islamic and Asian cultures. It is virtually unmentioned in classical European aesthetics. Calligraphy moves in the field of tension between image and writing and seems to question this distinction – so central to 'Western' discourse – itself (cf. among others Mersmann 2006; Elkins 1998, 30-34).[19]

c) The *mask*: A mask is a non-flat image form, which also exists in Europe in the forms of the death mask or of masks worn on the occasion of folkloric and carnival celebrations. However, similar to tattoos, masks seem to have (had) a more important role in other cultures. There is also a rather low consideration of the mask in discourses of visual studies (but see Belting 2014).[20] The example of the mask also shows a central problem of the European handling of different pictorial forms – to place a mask in a museum (to come back again to the institutions of the image) can mean to tear it out of its performative, but also intermedial contexts and thus just miss the pictorial specificity of the mask-space-image (see only

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19 The centrality of the distinction between image and writing for Western culture can be seen, for example, in the Bible (Exod. 2, 32), where it is about the conflict between the word of God, written on the tablets of scripture, and the idol, the golden calf, around which the people of Israel dance.
20 Especially 119: "Western culture has not produced masks with which to identify itself since antiquity." (translation by the author) There are discourses on masks in other disciplines such as theater studies – for example, a well-known theater studies journal is called *Maske und Kothurn* (*Mask and Cothurn*; translation by the author). With thanks to Johannes Hardt.

Strother 1998).[21] The mask-image disrupts the dichotomy of functional and artistic, as of every day and magical images. The mask-image also destabilizes the clear-cut difference between technical and non-technical images and shows that there are cultural techniques much older as the technologies in the strict sense, which in Eurocentric discourse are often uses as examples of technology per se (as compared to so called 'primitive civilizations'). Finally, and strangely enough, a mask is an image which is visible to other people – but not to the person who wears the mask.[22] Therefore, the mask-image disrupts the regime of visibility associated with images in Eurocentric discourse.

This examples might show that the concepts of the image in the European tradition by no means need to be globally valid. Neither the distinction from writing (calligraphy) nor the assumption that an 'image' is at all an isolable object (mask) or one that the image is a detached vis-avis of the viewing subject (which is undermined by the mask as it is by the tattoo) is universally valid. Moreover, there are likely to be non-Western engagements with the concept of the image of which the West is unaware – the very assumption that all concepts are known in Europe is Eurocentric. The often pejorative characterization of non-European image practices as 'magical' (cf. Lévy-Bruhl 1956, 154-158; Därmann 2005, 38) represses the fact that there are also traces or even unfolded practices of 'magical' image understandings in European cultural contexts that are still effective today and were often only silenced.[23]

Despite all the necessity of avoiding the absolutization and universalization of European concepts of the image, problems remain: *First,* despite all the differences, a kind of commonality in the concept of the image must remain assumed, otherwise the various phenomena from different cultural contexts cannot even be related to one another *as different images* (cf. Kramer 1990).[24] From this it could be deduced that a global

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21 With thanks to Anna Brus.
22 Looking into a mirror while wearing a mask is the obvious exception – and this case is interesting in its own right, since it shows that the artificial image of a mask can be seen (by the person who wears the mask) only by using the natural image of the mirror. In that sense the mask-image destabilizes the dichtomy between artificial and natural images.
23 In any case, this is how, for example, the 'punctum' from Barthes 1989
24 Here 33: "In the more general terms of spirit, image, and reality, however, African and European conceptions seem to converge." (translation by the author).

definition is necessary, such as that of Majetschak. However, terms used by Majetschak, such as texture and marking, must themselves be examined for their respective culture-specific meaning. Possibly, a transcultural and translocal negotiation has to be made strong, which does not start with a one-sided general term, but rather produces it in a kind of iterative recursion first of all. Such a process, however, is arguably still in its infancy. *Secondly,* the emphasis on cultural differences must not obscure the view that at present and in the future a global, capitalist, technological image culture covers the earth and that therefore a homogenization of image culture could be in the offing, in which divergent forms threaten to perish, as for instance Samir Amin has emphasized (cf. 1977),[25] even if the global image culture must always be appropriated locally (see Larkin 2008). At this point, the difficult question arises whether the emphasis on the role of a global, imperialist image culture does not fetishize it and, consequently, gets itself re-centered with respect to local practices. Thus, it must be emphasized that the expansive image culture of the centers is deformed by the agency of local image cultures, instead of being only unilaterally deformed (cf. Coronil 1996, esp. 61-68).

4. Institutional Conclusion

How should this situation be dealt with institutionally? In the following I have to discuss this from the perspective of media studies in Germany, since this is my institutional affiliation.[26] First of all, it is conceivable that academic, German-language media studies should pay more attention in research and teaching to questions of global media culture and, consequently, to questions about media that occur beyond European cultures. Tattooing, calligraphy, the mask and much more could become the subject of research projects and courses. The problem with such research and teaching that reaches beyond the European horizon is twofold: *First,* simply not everything can be done; researchers and teachers must reduce the variety of possible objects. This cannot and should not lead

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25 Especially 18: "*Capitalism is the moment of negation: negation of use-value, hence negation of culture, negation of diversity.*" (orig. emphasis). The text explicitly revolves around the question "whether our world was tending toward cultural standardization or was maintaining its variety."
26 Further discussions with colleagues from other disciplines are necessary to come to better "institutional conclusions".

to the exclusion of non-European phenomena, but not everything can be included – complete inclusion is impossible. Therefore, only a local coordination process on what can be taught in modules such as 'Interculturality' or 'Global Media Culture' can be done.

Secondly, dealing with non-European phenomena in media studies very quickly comes up against limits of competence: It is one thing to deplore, for example, Eurocentric narrowing of the concept of the image by appealing to secondary literature (as is also the case here), it is another to be able to understand, research and/or teach the operation of pictorial phenomena in a given, different culture as well. Limits quickly appear here, already of a linguistic nature – as can be learned from the research experiences of ethnology. In project research, cooperation with disciplines that are familiar with languages and cultures (e.g., African studies, East Asian studies, etc.) can help, even if other disciplinary problems of understanding are likely to arise. Joint teaching with researchers from other disciplines could be an option, as well as the hiring of experts for the media culture of other cultures. But this is again made more difficult by the scarcity of positions at media studies institutes, seminars, etc. Often there are simply no funds available to establish such positions – or at least this is put forward as an justification.

In class, the inevitable Eurocentric limitations should be pointed out, as far as it makes sense – an example that has always worked well in my classes, because it is so striking and surprising, is the *world map*. Different forms can be used to show, for example, how the Mercator projection displays the global north as relatively too large, while in a Peters-Projection the relative sizes are different (see fig. 1).

Maps can be shown where Europe is not in the middle, but at the edge and China, for example, is in the middle. *Upside-down maps* can be shown, in which the by no means neutral association of the North with 'at the top' is broken (see fig. 2).[27]

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27 'To be at the top' is unavoidably a metaphor for success, being rich etc.
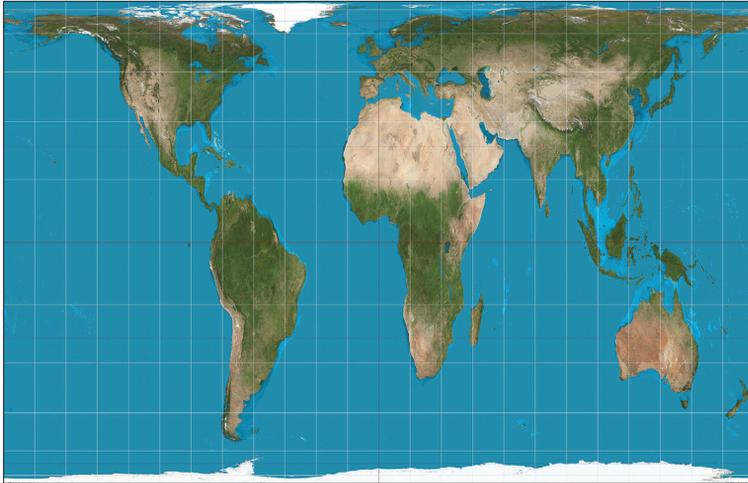
Fig. 1. Gall-Peters projection of the world map
Strebe, CC BY-SA 3.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>, via Wikimedia Commons
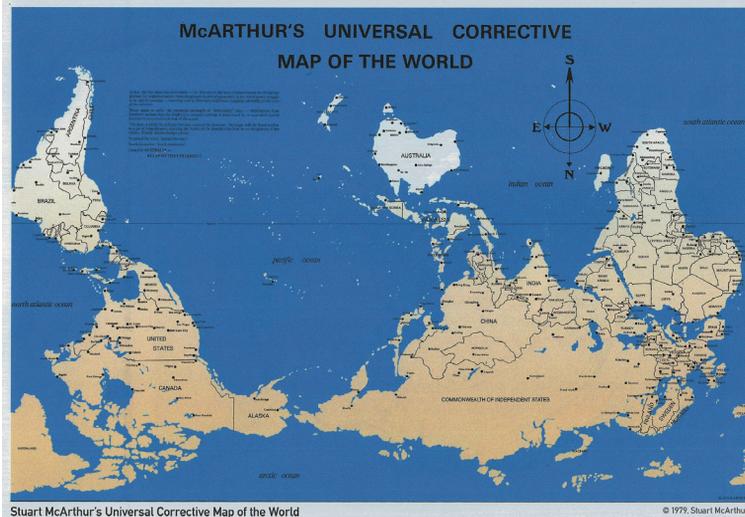
Fig. 2. McArthur's universal corrective map of the world, Stuart McArthur, 1979
http://www.topoi.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/weltbilder_exp15G.png

What is particularly interesting about this is that, on the one hand, in a strict sense none of these maps is 'more right' or 'wrong' than the other, but on the other hand, there could be wrong maps (e. g. where Munich is shown as the capital of China. From this much can be conveyed about situatedness and polycentrism (cf. Fiske 1993, 156-161; see also Bergermann 2010). The role of dealing with such basal categories as that of the image in other cultural contexts can lead to a necessary destabilization of being here:

> The impossibility or inevitability of never being able to start and set out from a place other than one's own does not have to and cannot mean to lull oneself into the universal security at the conti[n]gent place of one's own being here and to take cover from the intrusion of foreign interpretations of existence. (Därmann 2005, 487f; translation by the author)

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Abstract:

The importance of Charles Darwin's book, *On the Origin of Species* (1859), cannot be overstated, both in terms of (the history of) evolutionary biology and culture-wise. The book and the theory of evolution by natural selection presented therein eliminates the need for an explanation of a superior power in all that is related to the diversity of biological species, and thus provides a scientific and materialistic theory for "creation". The book and its author have become pivotal in secular culture, and the focus of attacks by various religious groups. With about 500 illustrated covers of a book whose importance goes beyond the scientific field to which it belongs, it is interesting to study how the ideas appearing in Origin of Species are illustrated in its many editions, whether there are recurring motifs in the illustrations, and if so, what their meanings are. The abundance of illustrated covers of *Origin* provides virtually controlled conditions for a study of the unique way in which concepts transfer to the public. Such an investigation must begin by examining the link between text and cover image. Accordingly, my aim is to map and classify the *Origin* motifs that appear on the covers of the various editions, and how they are brought to bear, toward determining which are being transferred In my paper, I draw on two related concepts first introduced by W.J.T. Mitchell in his book Picture Theory: the "imagetext", defined as a composite of picture and

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text that operates as a single unit. When the text and picture do not function in harmony– when something else intervenes between them – the result is an image/text. These interactions between words and images (imagetext vs. image/text) not only help to analyze representations, but trace their relationships to issues of power, value, and human interests. Herein I present and discuss recurring motifs among the illustrated covers of the various editions of *Origin of Species*, for example: motifs related to the Beagle's voyage; living nature; a focus on the author – Charles Darwin – rather than on his ideas; ascent of man (appears only on commercial editions); and unique metaphors.

Keywords: evolution, icon, imagetext, myth, natural selection, progress

1. Introduction

"Don't judge a book by its cover", so the saying goes, unless there are several hundreds of editions and translations of said book, each having a different binding and illustrations. This is the case for Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, Or The Preservation of the Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (hereinafter: "Origin of Species" or "Origin"). The importance of the book cannot be overstated, both in terms of (the history of) evolutionary biology and culturally. The multitude of the illustrated covers can be interpreted as part of the "Darwin Enterprise", a term coined by Kjærgaard (2010).

While moving from the dense academic "Darwin Industry" to "Darwin Enterprise", Darwin was transferred to the public domain. In the course of this transition, Kjærgaard believed, historians lost their privileged position in society "as the authorized storytellers" (ibid. 117). Darwin was appropriated by many and for many various and sometimes conflicting needs, which raises the question regarding the ease of the appropriation and "the use people have made and still make of Darwin" (ibid. 118). I propose answering these questions and examining the transfer of Darwin to the public domain by looking at the motifs that appear on the many covers of *Origin of Species*.

My decision to focus on illustrations that appear on book covers, as opposed to other types of representations, is tied to the fact that the book under discussion here is *Origin*. No other biologist whose copyright has run out has ever had a book published in so many editions and so many languages, resulting in such a large body of cover designs. Moreover, covers have another advantage: they reach places that the text and the internal (scientific) illustrations may not reach. Anyone interested in *On the Origin of Species*, even if they do not ultimately purchase the book, or if they purchase it and never read it, is exposed to a wide variety of covers (especially if they are making use of the internet), many of which are illustrated. The abundance of illustrated covers of *Origin* provides virtually controlled conditions for a study of the unique way in which concepts transfer to the public.

Such an investigation must begin by examining the link between text and cover image. Accordingly, my aim is to map and classify the *Origin* motifs that appear on the covers of the various editions, and how they are brought to bear, toward determining which are being transferred

to the wider culture. Where there is an absence of salient Darwinian motifs, I sought to explain this absence.

2. On the *Origin of Species* and the circumstances of its writing

First, however, certain facts about the book must be clarified. Published in 1859, it presented Darwin's theory of evolution, which integrates two major ideas. Darwin was not the first to write about evolution, but even if the general idea of evolution was not entirely new, Darwin's theory had very innovative elements. His first and very innovative idea is the notion of the *tree of life*,[1] whereby all life forms on earth have a common origin or a small number of origins, as can be seen in the only illustration that appears in the book (Fig. 1). This powerful image depicts a single branched tree wherein every two biological species share a common ancestor. Hence, human beings are related not only to chimpanzees, but also to wolves, storks, and even bacteria. The theory of evolution derives directly from there: if humans and chimpanzees share a common ancestor, then some process must have occurred whereby one branch of this ancestor's descendants became chimpanzees, while another became human beings. This process is evolution.

Nonetheless, Darwin's theory does not rest solely on the principle of evolution. He also proposed a process to explain how it occurs. This process, known as *natural selection*, is the second major element in Darwin's theory. The logic of the process of natural selection as presented in *The Origin* is often depicted as a series of inferences drawn from premises and observations. The first premise is that while organisms have a large number of descendants, the size of their population remains steady.[2] Another premise is that environmental resources are limited. The inference drawn from there is that the descendants compete for resources, that is, they "struggle for existence", and only some survive. A further

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[1] Darwin employed the term "tree of life" at the end of Chapter 4, where he discusses natural selection.

[2] In Chapter 3, "Struggle for Existence", Darwin actually calculated that one pair of elephants, whom he describes as the species producing the smallest number of descendants in the course of a single lifetime, will produce nearly ten million descendants after 740-750 years. These figures appear in the 6th edition of *Origin*; the 1st edition contains a flawed calculation.
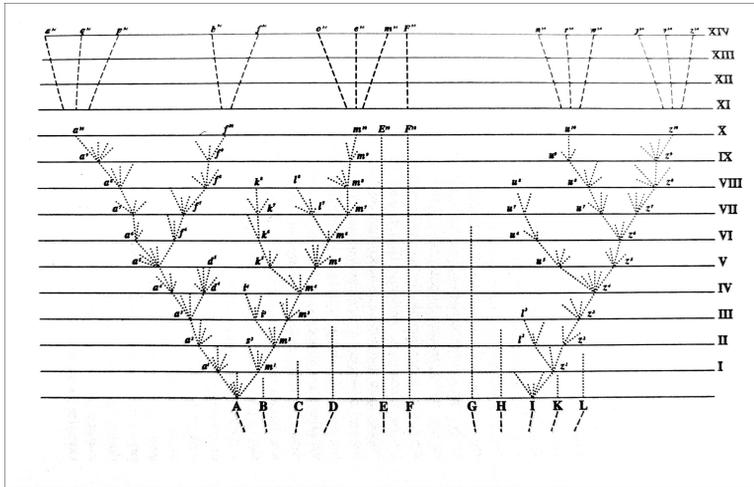
Fig. 1: Charles Darwin, "The Tree of Life", sketch from his notebook, 1837

premise relates to the existence of *variation* in the traits of the individuals in a given population. From this it is inferred that only those individuals that have the best "adaptations" (traits) survive to reproduce. The final inference is that the unequal ability of individuals to survive and reproduce leads to gradual change in a population, with favorable changes accumulating over generations.

In developing the concept of this process, Darwin made careful observations and did prodigious reading. While his observations during his five-year expedition as naturalist on the survey ship *HMS Beagle*,[3] convinced him that evolution existed, he still had no idea how it worked. The most famous evidence that observations alone were not sufficient to produce a theory can be found in his "Field Notes on the Galapagos",[4] where Darwin was negligent in his bird observations, not recording on which island each bird was observed, but indicating only the Galapagos Archipelago in general. He was not even aware that all of the birds that he collected were finches.

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[3] December 27, 1831 to October 2, 1836.
[4] http://darwin-online.org.uk/BeagleLibrary/Beagle_Library_Introduction.htm
 (accessed 15.7.2023) The voyage of the *Beagle* brought the survey ship *HMS Beagle*, under captain Robert FitzRoy, to the Galápagos in September 1835.

Frank J. Sulloway (2009) suggested that Darwin was a creationist[5] at the start of his intellectual career, citing both the huge impression made on him by William Paley's *Natural Theology* (1802) and the creationism theory that guided his work in the Galapagos. For example, during his visit to Charles Island (one of the Galapagos islands), Darwin wrote in his journal: "It will be very interesting to find from future comparison to what district or 'centre of creation' the organized being of this archipelago must be attached". Sulloway explained this quotation as an attempt by Darwin to fit the odd creatures that he found on the remote archipelago into the prevailing creationist paradigm (175). According to intelligent design of Darwin's time, various "centres of creation" accounted for the distinctions between the flora and fauna in differing regions, such as on different continents. Sulloway added that Darwin's phrasing is an indication that he was wondering how a region so small could be a "center of creation". Today, as a result of the work of Darwin and his followers, the Galapagos Archipelago is regarded as a living laboratory of evolution in action due to its relatively young geological age and its isolation (which will persist only as long as human beings do not interfere and make the effort not to leave their marks on nature).

On his return from the voyage, at the end of 1836, Darwin began reading extensively. The topics that he explored were not limited to the sciences, but ranged as far as philosophy and social economics. In a journal entry two years later, he noted that he had begun reading Thomas Malthus, who is mentioned in *The Origin*. Malthus contended that if human beings did not limit their procreation, eventually there would not be enough food for everyone, condemning the human race to an unending struggle for survival. Although some human beings would survive, many more would not, as hunger, disease, and war would impede and curb reproduction. Influenced by these theories, Darwin took a similar view of animals and plants. All living creatures, he claimed, reproduce faster than do their resources, forcing them into a struggle for survival.[6] Darwin realized that the variations that he observed in wildlife populations result in some

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5 Creationist of the old intelligent design school (with the teleological argument at its base).
6 Even during his lifetime, Darwin drew criticism for the aspect of the struggle for survival that he attributed to overcrowding in the animal population. Russian naturalists such as Kropotkin, for example, argued that there were open spaces populated by only a few individuals. See D. P. Todes, "Darwin's Malthusian Metaphor and Russian Evolutionary Thought, 1859-1917", *Isis* 78 (4), pp. 537-551.

individuals being better equipped and more capable of thriving and reproducing than others living under the same conditions. The former would have more offspring than the latter, so that over the generations, their traits would become dominant in the population. Darwin believed that new species were thusly created. Indeed, this is the nucleus of his theory of evolution by natural selection.[7]

Darwin did not publish *On the Origin of the Species* until 1859. He spent the intervening twenty three years developing a solid foundation for the theory that he proposed in his book, and collecting observations and experimental findings to support it.[8] It was important to him that his provocative propositions be backed up by as much solid evidence as possible. If not for the paper sent him by Alfred Russel Wallace,[9] he might have devoted some more years to his writing and search for evidentiary support. He felt that he was compelled to publish the book when he did, and indeed continued to add to and revise it for each of the next five editions. The result was one long impressive argument, together with a tension of opposites (which in literary terms can be said to create drama), which relates to the picture of nature that emerges from it: on the one hand, it conveys optimism and joyful appreciation of nature's wonderful wealth, while on the other it evokes pessimism and somber acknowledgement of nature's cruelty and wastefulness. As a result of this duality, quoting selectively from Darwin makes it possible to present him in one of two manners, each of which is inaccurate (Midgley 2002, 5). The fact is that in some cases the duality can be found in a single paragraph, such as the well-known "entangled bank" passage with which the 6th edition concludes.

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[7] This is merely a schematic description of Darwin's theory, over which he labored for 20 years, primarily to be able to answer any questions that might be posed to him. Among other things, he expanded on the process for generating species through the element of geographical isolation.

[8] During this period, Darwin published several books (and papers), mainly the findings from his journey on the *Beagle*, and these made him quite well-known in England, and not only among naturalists. Hence when the first (small) edition of *Origin of Species* was published, it sold out in one day. https://www.amnh.org/research/darwin-manuscripts/published-books (accessed 7.21.2023).

[9] An English naturalist, Alfred Russel Wallace, proposed a theory of natural selection independently of Darwin. For a complete edition of the writings of Wallace, see http://wallace-online.org/ (accessed 7.21.2023).

3. How to make a visual depiction of natural selection?

Darwin published over twenty other books in addition to *Origin*,[10] all of which were accompanied by illustrations,[11] save for *Origin,* which contains only one diagram: the evolutionary tree of life. The reason for that is not known. I mentioned above that Darwin was motivated to publish *Origin of Species* earlier than he intended, due to an article published by Russell Wallace that addressed the diversity of species using the same innovative idea of natural selection, which was also proposed by Darwin. It may be assumed that Darwin was in a race to keep ahead of Wallace regarding the development of the subject, and therefore likely did not have time to order pictures from the illustrators with whom he worked, such as the couple Elizabeth and John Gould.

Jonathan Smith (2009, 9-10) suggested that the lack of illustrations in *Origin* was due to the obvious difficulty of creating a visual depiction of natural selection. How, Smith wondered, might Darwin have illustrated the inordinately slow process that operates through tiny variations to produce adaptation?[12] Smith answered his own question, at least in part, when he explained that the conventions of scientific illustrations at the time were not conducive to Darwin's evolutionary view. And yet the lack of a suitable convention and the existence of an essentially unillustratable concept of "species" are not enough to account for the absence of illustrations in *Origin.* After all, zoological illustrations could have appeared in the appropriate places, as they do in Darwin's other books, including *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, which might be considered a sequel to *The Origin*. Twentieth and twenty-first century conventions of scientific illustrations, however, are not similarly inconducive to the theory of evolution. Consequently, a visual image of natural selection now depends entirely on the creative skills of the illustrator. Two other points should also be taken into account: Firstly, when designing a cover, illustrators have more freedom than do authors; they can opt

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10 http://darwin-online.org.uk/contents.html (accessed July 5, 2023).
11 See for example: Overview of illustrations and maps in Darwin's *Geology of The Voyage of The* Beagle http://darwin-online.org.uk/graphics/Geology_Illustrations.html (accessed July 11, 2023).
12 While evolution does not have to be slow and gradual – mutations in homeotic genes, for example, accelerate its rate – Darwin didn't know in his time either about genes or genetic mutations.

for a metaphoric, symbolic, or artistic representation of natural selection if they so choose. Secondly, the cover of *Origin* need not necessarily display a depiction of natural selection in order to maintain the ethos of cover designs, that is, to convey the contents of the book to the potential buyer. As aforementioned, there are numerous other motifs in the book from which the illustrator can choose.

4. The intertwining of text and pictures

W.J.T. Mitchell devoted his 1994 book *Picture Theory* to an examination of the connection between text and pictures, arguing that this connection was constitutive of representation, a claim that derived from his famous contention that "all media are mixed media, and all representations are heterogeneous" (5). Mitchell sought not merely to describe the interactions between visual and verbal representations, "but to trace their linkages to issues of power, value, and human interest" (5). He maintained, for example, that the priority given to text over pictures has ancient roots in Judeo-Christian culture and the story of Moses and the Golden Calf (2), although later in the book he addressed more recent iconophobias (that of Rorty, Wittgenstein, and the Frankfurt School).

To examine the cover designs of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* I draw on a concept that Mitchell first introduced in *Picture Theory*, the "image-text", defined as a composite of picture and text that operates as a single unit in representation. In contrast, when the text and picture do not function in harmony – when something else intervenes between them – the result is an "image/text". A third possibility is "image–text", consisting of a weak link between the image and the text and their distinctions. Mitchell's concept of "imagetext" appears apt for a discussion of book cover design, a well-established field that has drawn over time on various schools of art. The very ethos of cover design is that the cover is the reader's first contact with a book, and that the book's content is the inspiration for the cover designer.[13] Thus, at least on the face of it, all book covers

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13 The words of David Pearson, the house designer at Penguin Books, reflect the perception of many cover designers. Pearson was interviewed in 2004 after the publication of Penguin's Great Ideas series, which Pearson oversaw and for which he designed some of the covers. Asked to comment on the series' covers, which shared a common theme, he made the following remarks: "It seemed obvious to go straight to the text for inspiration and let the flavor of the writing directly influence the look of the cover". In response, the

should be examples of imagetext. But even before examining specific cases, we can readily imagine considerations that are liable to interfere with the harmony of imagetext and cause the first cracks to appear between the two elements: These might include financial considerations, and thus there are covers of the *Origin* without any design except for a few important details such as the title, the author, and the publisher. Another example is illustrated covers as part of a series with a certain theme, where the common theme sets the tone and prevails over the choice of the cover design.[14]

5. The methods and selection of the book covers

The current qualitative study examined several hundred illustrated covers of *On the Origin of Species*, from two small private collections[15] and from the website LibraryThing.[16] Also, by a search engine such as Google Chrome using the image feature and search terms that include the name of the requested book, namely "Origin of Species", and "illustrated covers", a variety of results were obtained. Following the scanning of the illustrated covers of *The Origin of Species*, I established a computer database divided according to motifs that often appeared in the illustrations and to which I will refer later. It is easy to see that some of the covers appear more than once in the LibraryThing display and that individual covers appear even more than twice. Therefore, as well as based on the database I created, I estimate the number of covers of *The Origin of Species* that have been illustrated over the years at about half of the number that appear on LibraryThing.

All of the covers appear on print editions of the book; that is, electronic books were excluded from the analysis in order to somewhat limit the

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interviewer noted, "The designs bring the insides of the book, the unashamedly decorative or ornate nature of a title page, to the outside". Steve Hare, https://www.eyemagazine.com/opinion/article/type-only-penguins-sell-a-million-shock-extract (accessed 26 July 2023).

14 See the series of books it is about in the attached link, and especially see the cover of *The Origin of Species* that appears second from the left in the last row: http://www.jimstoddart.co.uk/art-direction/series/0zbdo1gv7hnz0xb5948p1yacmx32qk (accessed 6 September 2023).

15 Many thanks to Dr. David Mallow for making available to me the cover illustrations of the *Origin of Species* volumes in his collection.

16 http://www.librarything.com/work/23533/covers (accessed 28 Jun. 2023; at that time the site contained 1,097 illustrated covers of the book, including 555 uploaded by private individuals and 542 uploaded from Amazon's website (in an approximate 1:1 ratio).

size of the sample that the study addresses. Whenever I could not actually see a hard copy of the book, I checked for it on several websites, most particularly that of the publisher, before including it in the sample. Editions in all languages were considered, although in retrospect the large majority turned out to be in English and Spanish. While the sample numbers around five hundred illustrated covers, the number of editions that have appeared since the original publication of the book, irrespective of the nature of the cover, is larger.

6. Visual and semantic types of the book covers

Several themes appear on the covers of *The Origin of Species*. First I will list them, and then expand on several examples: 1. Nature, in the sense of animal and plant paintings, is celebrated on many of the covers and will be divided into sub-themes: A – motifs related to the *Beagle* voyage: iguanas alone or on one of the Galapagos Islands, turtles alone or on one of the Galapagos Islands, Darwin's finches and exotic birds from the Southern Hemisphere; B – Entangled bank (see above); C – monkeys. 2. A focus on Darwin, the author, rather than on his ideas. 3. Metaphors. 4. Other, for instance, "ascent of man". 5. Color designs without any motif.

1. As an example for the first theme, I will expand on the first subtheme 1A. Beagle voyage and living nature:
While as could be expected, the animal world is celebrated in numerous cover designs for *Origin*, various creatures are the honorees in these festivities. Although many covers feature organisms of some sort, one in particular stands out: the finch. According to Kjaergaard, many myths are associated with Darwin, one of which is "Eureka Darwin", according to which Darwin "went to the Galápagos Island, took a good look at the finches and discovered evolution in a flash" (Kjaergaard, 110). The finch is a popular motif for the cover of Darwin's book, appearing either on its own or as one of the 13 bird species identified by ornithologist and artist John Gould for the London Zoological Society, which received them from *HMS Beagle*. Finches are the sole motif on several covers, and are featured on other covers along with a large number of other Darwinian motifs. So: Are finches illustrated on a book cover of the *Origin* create an imagetext? Or image/text?

There is no doubt that finches are part of a dramatic story, a tale of the "context of discovery",[17] about a discovery that very nearly did not happen, and about a great drama in the annals of science, as John Gould, who recognized that the birds that Darwin brought back with him from the Galapagos Islands were all differing species of finches (versus same genus and not different genii, as Darwin believed), was, ironically, a creationist. In addition to producing illustrations for various other writers, Gould painted and edited albums of birds aimed at extolling the act of Creation (Smith 2006, 92-136).

The external differences of the various finch species, and particularly the striking differences in their beaks, conveys the message of variation, adaptation, and evolution even to someone who knows little or nothing of evolution. But finches are not mentioned in the *Origin of Species*,[18] Darwin did cite them elsewhere, and speculated on the continuous variation of their beaks in the two editions of the *Journal of Researches* that he published in 1839 and 1845. These editions were accompanied by illustrations by Elizabeth Gould and included illustrations of finches. In the 1845 edition, a new illustration appeared: the famous image of four numbered heads of finches, illustrating the variation and gradation in the size of their beaks, an image with which Darwin was assisted by another (Voss 2007/2010, 50-60).

Voss (p. 20) claimed that this illustration was the first visualization of the theory of evolution presented to the public, and since then it has appeared in countless textbooks as an example of the splitting of species, as well as on stamps and t-shirts, and we might add, also on covers of *The Origin of Species* (Fig. 2). Moreover, "the power of the 1845 illustration exemplifies how images can formulate and convey scientific theories, and it offers a lesson in how pictures were used to communicate knowledge in the nineteenth century".[19]

The finches of Galapagos became a famous piece of evidence use to support Darwin's theory in the first half of the 20th century following David

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17 "The distinction between "context of discovery" and "context of justification" dominated and shaped the discourse on discovery in 20th-century philosophy of science". Scientific Discovery (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy) (accessed 26 July 2023).
18 To be precise, while the word "finches" appears in the first edition of the *Origin of Species* three times, and in the sixth and last edition twice, all of these mentions are anecdotal, and it was equally possible to mention other species of birds. Darwin did not mention details about their diversification suitable to their lifestyle and how they feed.
19 Voss 2007/2010 p. 20.

Lack's ten-year study of these finches, and a book he published in 1947 called *Darwin's Finches*. In the second half of the 20th century, the couple Peter and Rosemary Grant devoted twenty years to observing finches on the isolated Galapagos island Daphne Major, managing to demonstrate evolution in action. Jonathan Weiner made their findings available to the public in the 1994 Pulitzer Prize-winning book *The Beak of the Finch: A Story of Evolution in Our Time*. Variation in beak shape and size between finch species on different Galapagos islands has subsequently become one of the textbook examples of evolution. Voss (2007/2010, 50-60) described the metamorphosis of Darwin's finches from small, uninteresting birds to a scientific icon, a process that could not have taken place without "taxidermists, artists, and illustrators".

After presenting a condensed history of "Darwin and the finches" and the place of the latter in the history of evolution, it is time to return to the question whether the cover of *Origin of Species* with an illustration of one or more finches is a case of imagetext – i.e., of text and image working together as one unit without anything intervening and interfering – or is it a case of an image/text? The aforementioned historical description shows the intellectual efforts made over time to establish a mature example of evolution starting from Darwin himself to our times.[20] Considering that the center of this revolutionary book is the process leading to evolution, there is nothing like an example of evolution from nature to illustrate the cover, even more so if it is an example whose history is related to the author. It is easy to see that this is a case of an imagetext despite the myth mentioned. But these illustrations do not disprove the myth but might strengthen it among its believers – for them it is also an imagetext.

2. A focus on Darwin the author versus his ideas

The most common motif on *Origin of Species*' covers seems to be Darwin's portrait. In addition to the prominent and solo place given to him on the covers, his portrait appears on other covers together with other evolutionary motifs. The use of the author's face on the cover of his book is not unique to Darwin; it is common in the case of iconic figures or when there is an interest in turning the writer into such a figure.

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20 Example of adaptive radiation. "An adaptive radiation occurs when a single or small group of ancestral species rapidly diversifies into a large number of descendent species that occupy a wide variety of ecological niches (Herron and Freeman 2015 p. 740)". Darwin, of course, did not use this use this terminology.
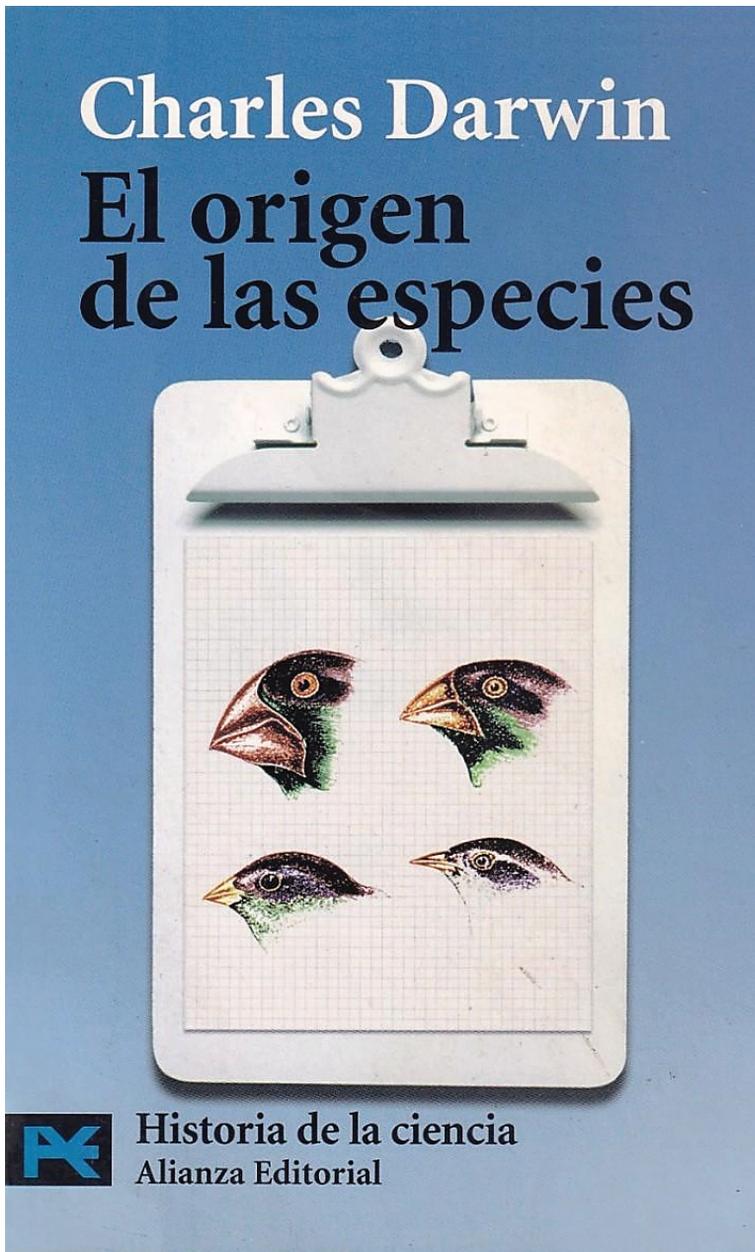
Fig. 2: "Darwin's finches" – Alianza Editorial "Origin of Species" 2003

3. Metaphors

A representative example of this category that also exhibits artistic excellence is the cover designed for the edition published by Washington Square Press in the early 1960s (Fig. 3). Here, working in the spirit of modernism, the designer managed to capture the Darwinian theory by means of a powerful and innovative minimalist metaphor. At first glance, we appear to be looking at the stalks of a green plant. Yet on closer inspection, we find that the plant also resembles a breaking wave or flames in a state of motion and flux, thus creating a visual image of the concept of evolution. Moreover, the flames or stalks all differ, so that no two are identical, and as we have seen, variation is a central principle of Darwin's theory. In addition, the "stalks" are arranged in a bell curve: The one in the middle is flourishing and growing toward the sky, while those next to it are beginning to droop, and those at the ends are practically wilted, an allusion to the notion of the survival of the fittest, most adaptive, variation.[21]

Book jackets were introduced in 1820 as a purely practical item. However, toward the end of the nineteenth century, they were transformed into a visual and conceptual means of communication when publishers began to realize that they could be used to attract potential customers if they bore a design, especially one in color.[22] Covers thus gradually became the object of growing interest in the field of design. In the early 20th century, the design began to be printed both on the jacket and on the binding itself, whether hard cover or paperback. This long history of cover design, beginning in 1820 and continuing to the present day, stands behind the Washington Square Press sophisticated cover (as well as other illustrated covers) and renders it imagetext.

An example of an early illustrated cover is a fascinating cover of a Dutch translation of *On the Origin of Species* from around 1900. This book is one of a series: *Darwins biologische meesterwerken – Darwin's biological masterpieces*, all of the volumes of which bore the same metaphoric image.[23]

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21 I would like to thank Prof. Shimona Ginsburg (Open University of Israel) for her insights regarding this cover, including the fact that the stalks differ in the extent to which they are thriving.
22 Book jackets (also called dust jackets to reflect their function) are made of paper and placed over the book's hard cover. They can still be seen today, mainly on costly books or titles published by prestigious presses.
23 https://www.flickr.com/photos/57440551@N03/48815052083; http://darwin-online.org.uk/converted/pdf/1889_OriginDutch_F650.pdf (accessed September 13, 2023).
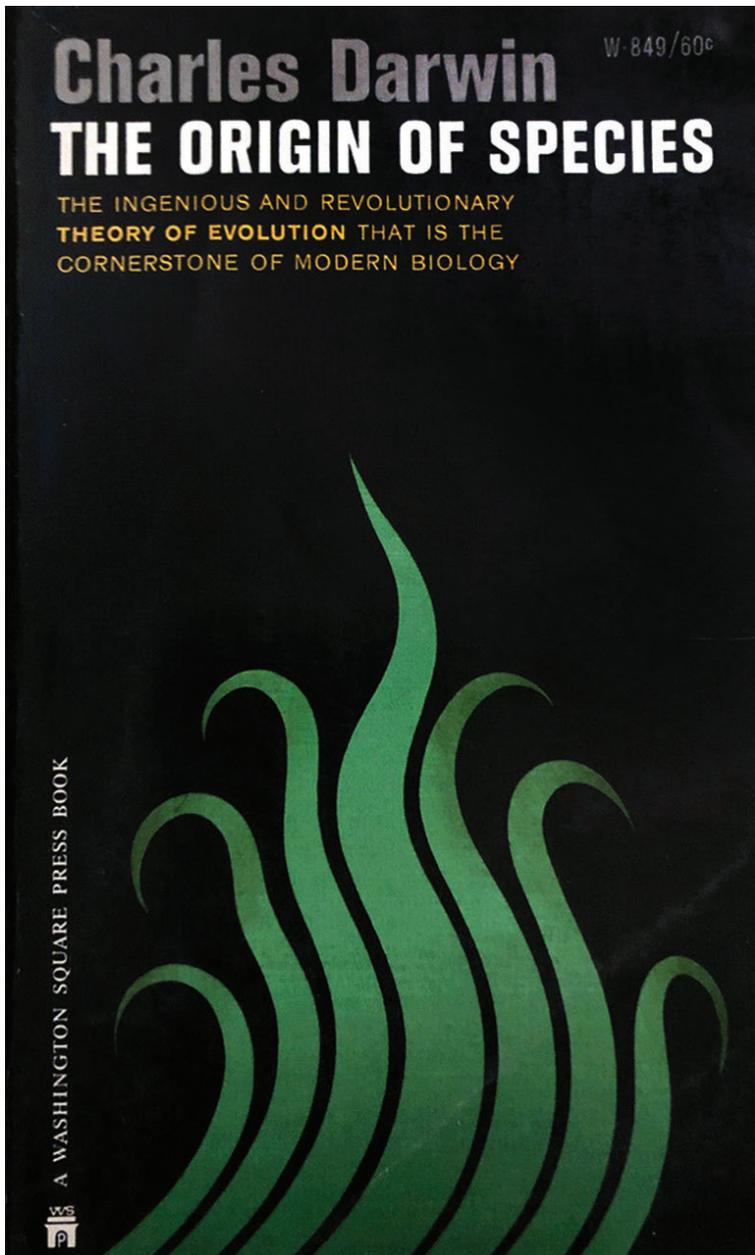
Fig. 3: An example of a metaphorical motif – Washington Square Press, early 1960s.

The representation includes a framed image of a partially covered wo-man, placed in nature, which includes plants and animals. We do not ex-pect to find a picture of such large dimensions in the context wherein it is placed. Perhaps the illustrator is alluding to the meaning of Darwin's work for us, that is, removing humans from the status that the Holy Scriptures gave us as the "crown of creation" and placing us in our natu-ral place together with all other animals.

This metaphorical type of image requires visual literacy in the viewer; moreover, the dialectic between the image and the text can lead to more than one interpretation. Therefore, some of the interpretations may place the representation in the image-text situation.

4. "Ascent of Man" or "March of Progress"

"Ascent of man" or "March of Progress" is probably the icon most identi-fied with the concept "evolution" and definitely the most parodied. While it appears on a considerable number of *Origin of Species* covers, none of these are published by university presses.[24] The origin of this image is the artist Rudolph Zallinger, who drew it in 1965 for the *Early Man* volume of the Life Nature Library.[25] I will show that "March of Progress" appearing on the cover of *Origin of Species* constitutes an image/text.

The Gramercy Random House edition of *Origin of Species* (1979) features "Ascent of Man" all over its cover (Fig. 4), while other editions are satis-fied with a more modest version of it. (The motif appears on other covers, often together with Darwin's portrait or some other motif.) March of Progress depicts a line of five or six primates, beginning with a monkey, continuing with an ape, and ending with a human, and which appears to form a segment of the great chain of being. The concept of a linearly ordered universe, or *Scala Naturae* ("great chain of being"), is very old in Western thought. Aristotle believed that all living beings could be ranked according to their degree of perfection on this metaphorical hierarchy. At the top of the scale he placed humans, and the other organisms that were known in his time are arranged in descending order according to their distance from perfection, animals first and then plants. At the bottom of the ladder were the minerals. In the Middle Ages, the hierarchy was believed to be God-given, and angels and God were placed above humans.

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24 It will become clear later.
25 https://sites.wustl.edu/prosper/tag/zallinger/ (accessed September 9 2023)
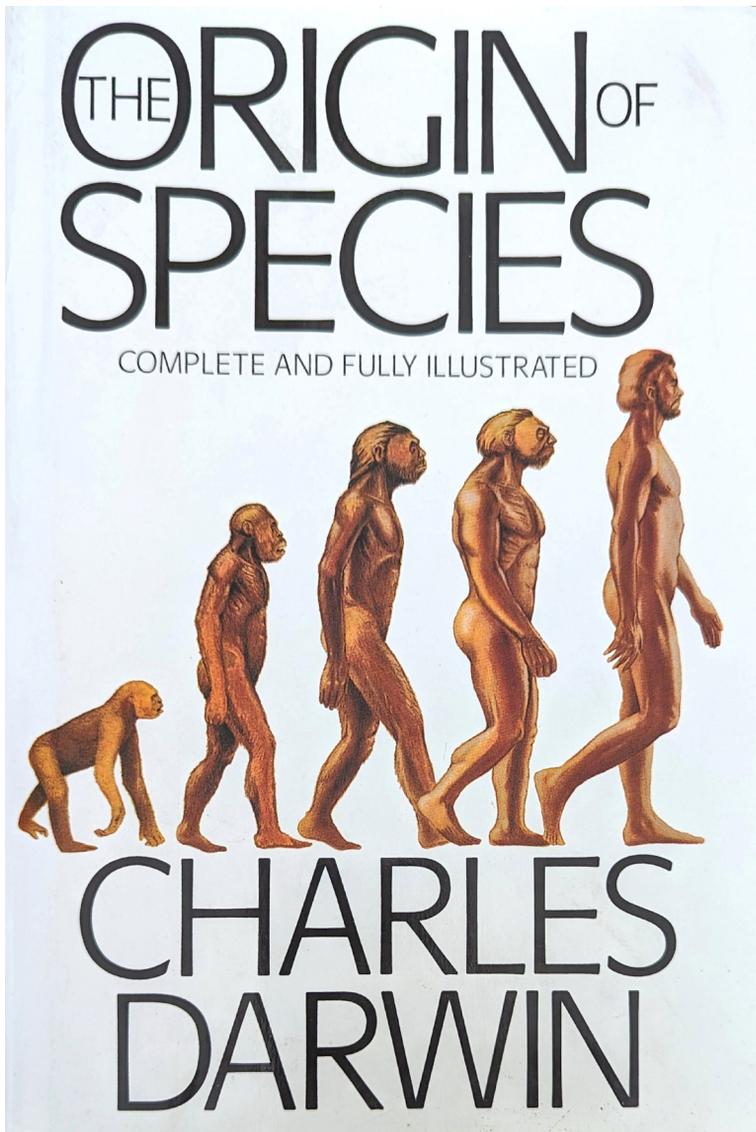
Fig. 4: "March of Progress" – Gramercy Random House, NY, 1979. Desginer: D.L. Cramer Ph.D.

The image expresses the statement "Humans are descended from the apes", which contains two errors. Firstly, it suggests that humans are descended directly from the great apes, though this is not the case. While humans and hominids are descended from a common ancestor, they evolved in differing directions. The second mistake is the notion of progress, or more specifically, of the ascent of humans, according to which individuals necessarily become more complex and sophisticated. While much has been written on the subject of evolutionary progress, including many disputes, a number of things are quite clear: Darwin's natural selection is opportunistic and makes use of the variability available at a particular time and in a particular locale. Fitness for existing conditions does not guarantee long-term survival, particularly when conditions change catastrophically. In some cases, adaptation by natural selection does lead to greater complexity, which is the result of luck of planning and purpose. Evolution cannot be conflated with progress, for the criteria for success in nature are survival, reproductive success, and diversity. Although homo sapiens may be a common species, the class is not diverse. Furthermore, complexity (anatomical, physiological, or morphological) is not in itself directly related to evolutionary progress, i.e., if a similar evolutionary solution can be achieved simply and elegantly, then this is preferable, as the chance of disruptions decreases. Paleontologist and author Stephen J. Gould explained in his award-winning 1989 book *Wonderful Life: The Burgess Shale and the Nature of History* why evolution is presented as a ladder of progress: Evolutionary biologists choose, as representative cases, precisely unsuccessful lineages, i.e., lineages from whose evolutionary bush only one thin branch remains (because the lineage is close to disappearing), e.g., horses and humans. This ironic choice occurs, in Gould's opinion, "because we try to extract a single line of advance from the true topology of copious branching. In this misguided effort, we are inevitably drawn to bushes so near the brink of total annihilation that they retain only one surviving twig. We then view this twig as the acme of upward achievement, rather than the probable last gasp of a richer ancestry" (35).

The need of humans to find regularities in nature and the universe is touching and understandable, owing to the sense of confidence that these give us facing the unknown, and thus, with the addition of curiosity, the magnificent scientific enterprise began. But it has been clear for a long time that linear regularities are not found in multi-interre-

lated living nature. I have shown the long history of the "March of Progress" that is not relevant to biological evolution, and hence when this icon is featured on the cover of *Origin of Species* an image/text is created. What motifs are rare to find on the covers of *Origin of Species*? As mentioned before, book covers reflect the contents of a book or transform the contents into a visual message. Considering this and the fact that there are around five hundred different illustrated covers for editions of *On the Origin of the Species*, I would have expected to find additional motifs expressed eventually.

A. The expression "struggle for existence" appears quite frequently in Darwin's *On the Origin of the Species*, and together with "competition", is part of the natural selection process described in the book. This theme is not echoed on the covers, appearing on only two covers among the five hundred: one on the Penguin edition (Fig. 5), and the other on the Bantam Classics edition. Both are cases of imagetext yet the preference appears to be depictions of nature's beauty as expressed in some sections of the book, particularly in view of the fact that Darwin was a naturalist and a genuine nature researcher.

The message on the Penguin edition cover (1988) features an 1830 painting titled *Duria Antiquior* by Henry De la Beche, a geologist and amateur illustrator. The back cover "clarifies" that the illustration depicts "extinct animals obeying the 'law of nature which bids all to eat or to be eaten in their turn' without any reference to what appears to be a quote". De la Beche painted *Duria Antiquior* with the idea of having it printed as a lithograph so that the income from sales would go to support fossil collector Mary Anning (1799-1847).[26] The cover of Bantam edition (1999) features Tapestry from the New World: Combat of the Animals (Gobelin Manufacture, 18th century, Conde Museum, Chantilly, France), which depicts preying and predatory animals in a beautiful landscape.[27] Although the

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26 Henry De la Beche's painting is the very first reconstruction of ancient life and hence its importance, writes the geologist and historian Martin J. S. Rudwick. He thinks that "the tone of the picture is more Neoclassical than Romantic" so it is not "a Darwinian scene of 'Nature red in tooth and claw'" (42-48). The echo of the artistic debate, mentioned here, does not change the fact that for Penguin Publishing and the majority of viewers it is a representation of animals from an ancient time that prey on each other.
27 https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/the-gobelins-tapestries-gobelins-manufactory/MQFADfDXsHiJ8Q?ms=%7B%22x%22%3A0.5%2C%22y%22%3A0.5%2C%22z%22%3A9.118374118385866%2C%22size%22%3A%7B%22width%22%3A2.3374555696305226%2C%22height%22%3A1.2374999999999992 (accessed Sept, 18, 2023).
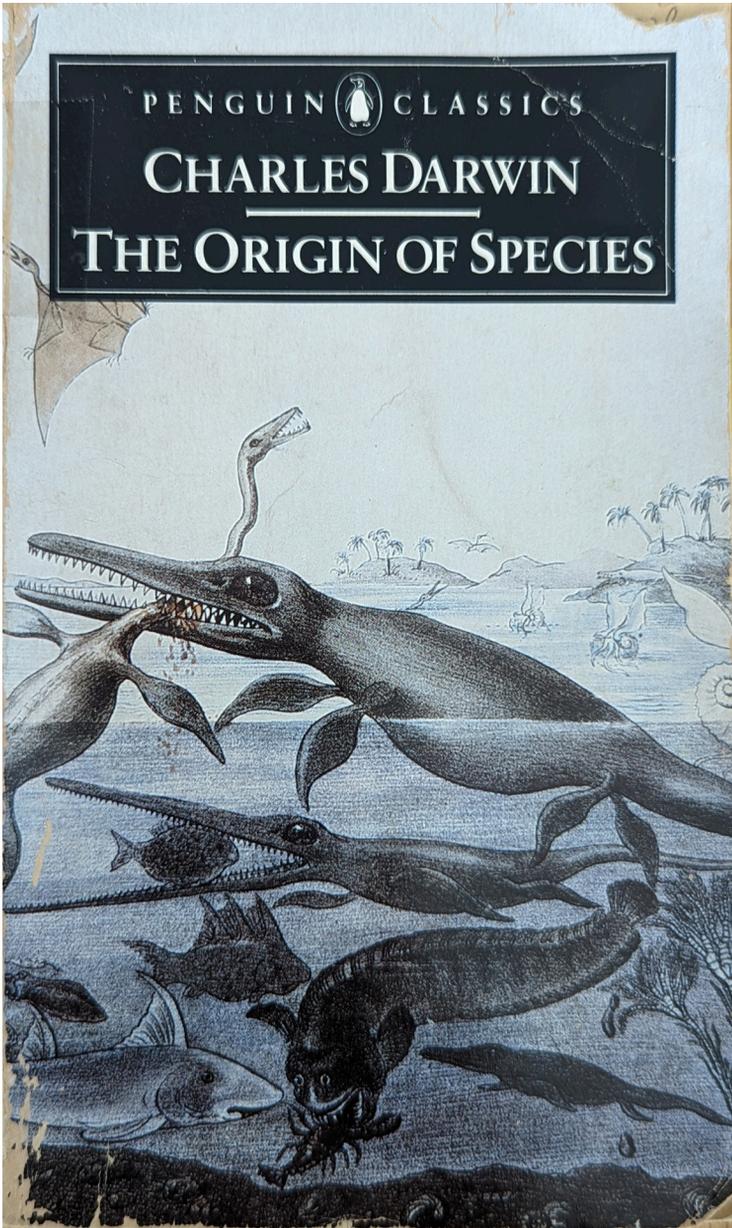
Fig 5: One of the two covers on which the "struggle for existence" motif appears –
Penguin edition 1988

tapestry is in color, the image on the cover appears in black and white. The concept of "struggle for existence" has a long history. As already mentioned, Darwin read Thomas Robert Malthus' (1798) *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, wherein Malthus argued that a population will increase exponentially if unchecked, while resources will only increase arithmetically. From it, Darwin drew the idea of the mechanism for natural selection that he sought. Wallace, who shared with Darwin the idea of evolution, also used the term "struggle for existence" in his paper. The only remaining question is: Why does this imagetext not appear on more covers?

B. The tree of life is depicted on only two covers of Darwin's book, even though it is one of Darwin's major ideas (see above) and the subject of the only illustration in *On the Origin of the Species*. Darwin stated the following in the final paragraph of Chapter 4:

> The affinities of all the beings of the same class have sometimes been represented by a great tree. I believe this simile largely speaks the truth. The green and budding twigs may represent existing species; and those produced during each former year may represent the long succession of extinct species. At each period of growth all the growing twigs have tried to branch out on all sides, and to overtop and kill the surrounding twigs and branches, in the same manner as species and groups of species have tried to overmaster other species in the great battle for life..... As buds give rise by growth to fresh buds, and these, if vigorous, branch out and overtop on all sides many a feebler branch, so by generation I believe it has been with the great Tree of Life, which fills with its dead and broken branches the crust of the earth, and covers the surface with its ever branching and beautiful ramifications.[28]

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28 Darwin, C. R. 1859. *On the origin of species by means of natural selection, or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life*. London: John Murray. 1st edition, 1st issue, pp. 129-130. http://darwin-online.org.uk/content/frameset?viewtype=text&itemID=F373&pageseq=1 (Accessed on December 10, 2023).

Why does the tree of life, which today is usually called a phylogenetic tree, not appear on other covers of *On the Origin of the Species*? Could it be that the tree of life metaphor is seen as having religious overtones?

7. Conflicting explanations

The central theory of the discipline – the theory of evolution – provides a materialistic naturalistic explanation for the formation of species, according to which species are created from previous species, starting from the earliest beginning. The explanation includes *our* species, i.e., homo sapiens. This explanation, as posited by Darwin and as it is updated, refers to an area that has been the monopoly of the Judeo-Christian tradition, according to which all creatures on earth, and humans at their head, are God's creation. Usually, explanations in different fields of science do not concern our place on earth or the way in which species, including the human race, were created. However, in the 19th century, explanations began to appear in the fields of natural history and biology[29] that touched on exactly these topics, including Darwin's naturalistic materialistic theory. The emergence of the theory of evolution led eventually to the creation of the discipline "evolutionary biology", but long before that to a head-on collision between religion and science that continues to this very day.

According to Haqq-Misra, the theory of evolution functions as a myth, because myths essentially address how a story is delivered to explain or justify natural phenomena,[30] the beginnings of a society, or various beliefs prevalent in society. Therefore, the theory of evolution addressing the question of the origin of diversity of life (including humans) tells a story about the order of events from the beginning of life, and thus establishes a myth similar to the myth of creation prevalent in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Haqq-Misra contended that the myth does not in any way indicate the truth, accuracy, or the possibility of the existence of a narrator of the myth itself, but rather only that it tells a story that explains a phenomenon or event. In his opinion, the religious and

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29 The word biology in the modern sense was introduced as an independent concept for the first time at the beginning of the 19th century.
30 A similar claim appears at the center of Oren Harman's 2018 book, *Evolutions. Fifteen Myths That Explain Our World.*

evolutionary myth are in conflict due to how the story is told: While both myths convey a similar idea of the superiority of humans over nature, they present differing accounts of how things came to be. Hence many people and communities for whom the questions about the origin of life are essentially questions of faith, and for whom the religious creation myth is the usual explanation, are compelled to angrily reject the evolutionary creation myth, which competes with the religious myth. This represents a clash of worldviews.

Midgley points to the mythic power inherent in science in general and in the theory of evolution in particular, and its ability to draw people, who seek meaning for their lives, into the "religion" of evolution. The promise of this particular "secular faith" to believers is progress, even though progress is not part of (the logic of) evolutionary theory.

In light of the treatment of the theory of evolution as a myth and even as a (secular) religion and opposing the Creationists, it is possible to understand the multitude of Darwinian representations on the covers of *Origin*. This view of things also elucidates why two representations that constitute imagetext – struggle for existence and the tree of life, which address prominent motifs in Darwinian theory – are in the minority among the other depictions on the book's covers: a visualization of the struggle for existence is not necessarily the most appealing sight, and perhaps not desirable for display in the shop window of those who compete for their place in public. As mentioned earlier, the reason for avoiding the "tree of life" motif is its nearly universal association with the Book of Genesis. The "ascent of man" motif corresponds well with Midgley's words, due to its problematic message of progress, and indeed its appearances on the covers of commercial editions of *Origin of Species* are numerous and are an icon of evolution in other contexts as well. As explained, it is an image/text due to the mechanism of evolution's not necessarily leading to progress.

Metaphorical representations are a special and perhaps subversive group, as in some cases, the relationship between image and text is blurred due to the idiosyncrasies of the artist. For example, the representation created by Damien Hirst in the Darwin jubilee year 2009,[31] while

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31 Hirst's cover can be seen here https://www.theguardian.com/science/blog/2009/jan/26/evolution-charles-darwin and here https://www.ft.com/content/8747290e-1fe1-11de-a1df-00144feabdc0 (Both accessed on December 10, 2023).

idiosyncratic, attracted a lot of attention and thus did the job despite Hirst's obscurity. Whether consciously or not, the illustrated covers become representations of the theory of evolution in the public sphere. Along with natural history museums, popular science books on evolution, the annual Darwin Day on February 12th, which is celebrated with lectures open to the public given by scientists, and more, they become a way to create a community that seeks to differentiate itself from the one that clings to the religious myth of the creation of life on our planet.

8. Summary

An illustrated cover of a book is a rhetorical device that points out the ideas conveyed in the book. Designers and other figures in the book business believe that the greater the degree of communicativeness of the cover, the more successful the distribution of the book. *The Origin of Species* has appeared in many editions over the years, and the number of illustrated covers is correspondingly high: At least five hundred illustrated covers have been published in various countries, in various languages, and by various publishers, both academic and commercial. Researchers point to the theory of evolution's mythical aspect, and some believe that this theory serves as a secular religion. In light of this treatment of the theory of evolution and facing its opposition by Creationists, it is possible to understand the multitude of Darwinian representations in the public sphere. The representations examined using Mitchellian tools can be divided into two: Most of them are imagetext, and only one – "the accent of man" – is image/text. That is, while the representations presented to the audience are harmonious in their structure, surprisingly – or seemingly so – one of the most popular representations features the image/text structure.

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Critical positions

ABSTRACTION, CONCEPTUALISM, APPROPRIATION

SEVEN PROPOSALS FOR VISUAL READING OF CONTEMPORARY OSIJEK ART

Blaženka Perica

On the exhibition "East of Eden", Museum of fine Arts, Osijek, 2022, curated by Valentina Radoš and Blaženka Perica; the concept of the exhibition by Vladimir Frelih.

Observing the works of art selected for the exhibition *East of Eden* by the participating artists from their existing artistic production with the intention of providing the theme with a consistent visual and spatial identity, the first thing we will ask ourselves is what are the reasons for gathering exactly these works and artists at the exhibition under that name. If we consider the location of the event, *East* from the exhibition title is self-explanatory: what connects it all is the living and working space of these artists, the city of Osijek. Until recently, on the map of contemporary art events it was considered – if not "empty land" – then certainly a marginal environment in comparison to Zagreb, and in relation to which the art scenes in Rijeka or Split were also marginally positioned. With the founding of the Osijek Academy of Arts and Culture in 2004, things began to change radically in Eastern Croatia as far as contemporary art is concerned. The work of the Department of Visual and Media Arts at the same Academy has become not only an ever more present and visible but also an unavoidable factor within both Osijek and Croatian art today. This is largely due to the initiatives and activities of the participants in the exhibition *East of Eden*, most of whom have either been active at the same Academy since its establishment or soon afterwards became lecturers there, whereas some former students became teaching staff there in the meantime as well.

The changes and increased attention to events in contemporary art in Osijek are witnessed also by this exhibition, whose actors, but also many other artists and theorists unrepresented in the exhibition together with the Academy as a starting point for the new events have made Osijek art scene during the last decade recognizable beyond the borders of our country. Such an achievement in such a short period may perhaps be called a miracle rather than a sin, but sin is not only a crime, but also has to do with the strange, with disobedience, something unusual that goes beyond the predictable or an existing, given state. In support of the *skandalon*, the fact that it is indeed a "criminal form" here we speak in a creative, most positive sense, namely artists and artistic production that gave the label marginally in this area a whole new meaning – the meaning of advantage, independent artistic expression with emphasis on the awareness of place and time as a framework for an activity whose reputation, in its essence, rests more on sin and disrespect, rule breaking than on virtue, which is more rebellion than acceptance of the circumstances. Dissatisfaction and disobedience to the given, both the current geo-po-

litical and socio-cultural conditions, here, however, were not primarily expressed bitterly or aggressively, nor were they accompanied by any revolutionary manifestos, theses or frequent anarchic speeches, but the shifts and changes took place in discipline of conceptions and disciplinary concepts of work, with an awareness of the effects of that work on one's own as well as on the identity of the urban environment. The activities of public joint performances of most of the participants in the exhibition *East of Eden* within the POPUP group established in 2012 can also be described as such. At that time, activities in alternative, mostly emptied and abandoned spaces of Osijek, among other things, pointed to the acute demographic and social problems of this environment, which however did not go at the expense of creativity based on research processes that primarily answer the question of art "here and now". If this characterization to some extent evokes lettristic and situationist analyzes of society and urban everyday life, i.e. Debord's definition of the term psychogeography presented in 1955: "study of precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals", then this can be applied to Osijek artists in a quite altered meaning: their desire for change was not reflected in the desire for "complete dissolution of boundaries between art and life", as stated in the continuation of situationalist demands but in the pursuit of articulation of separate boundaries of art within these domains. Likewise, according to the basic principles of the situationist theory of psychogeography, Osijek actors emphasize differences rather than overlaps: thus the term *derive* by no means implies "rapid passages through different environments" in the manner of *flaneur*; and from the method of *détournement* – even if the premise of "ludic-constructive behaviour"[1] is retained, it is with the broader meanings of this term – as "diversion, distortion, subversion" – with Osijek artists present in the aspects of socially conscious positions of art/artists towards society whereas also extremely non-narrative, controlled, ideologically and analytically based creativity is oriented primarily to the discourse of art itself.

Speaking about the plans for this exhibition, which, like many other activities was postponed due to the pandemic last year, on the occasion

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1 On psychogeography and its basic starting points, cf. Dario Vuger, Psychogeography: A Situationalist Position Against Psychoanalysis, at: www.coursehero.com/file/41249590/ Introduction-to-philosophy-Psychogeography-situationalist-position-docx/

of the opening of the Knifer Gallery in an interview artist Vladimir Frelih, the first gallery manager and one of the participants and initiators of the exhibition *East of Eden*, said that exactly these seven artists "in a way represent" and form a certain "cross-section, yet by no means a closed list of artists of the contemporary Osijek scene", i.e. that the exhibition brings together those artists who point to the "Osijek artistic moment related to the issue of the"new image", and which is according to him an attempt to "provoke the question of identity and different properties of Osijek artistic manuscripts".[2]

Hence what could these "Osijek manuscripts" stand for, that "script" which, in the meantime, out of isolation, from the position of marginal and secondary "remark", predominantly articulates the specifics of the potential of the scene in Knifer's hometown? This question is especially important if for each of the artists represented at the exhibition *East of Eden*, we can first of all state that the works shown – neither the individual ones nor the oeuvres of individual artists – are subject to subsumption under unambiguous definitions of e.g. individual media, which is why – as for the works of most artists today – we are talking about multi- and intermedia achievements, installations, objects, interventions, ambiences, interdisciplinary and performative approaches. In other words, we are talking about achievements whose primary definition is in their ideological origin and more permanent action, in the intention expressed as a longer-term (which does not mean immutable) conception and concept that is visualized, learned experientially or read in uniquely materialized phenomena (not always necessarily finished, completed artifacts), and not through a media or thematic framework or some prominent narrative that would e.g. be desirable in postmodernist citation in the wake of preferences accentuated either by historical or recent political or cultural themes. In relation to the events on the Zagreb art scene in the 2010s, where the rather subjectively colored so-called "new realism" was favored – painting by photo and media templates with personal intonations; or in relation to the Split scene, which also links the expanded field of painting to the "hybridity of the work", i.e. the inclusion of objects, sculptures and installations, and performance, but with a more noticeable interest in some socio-ecological problems,

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2 Vladimir Frelih, in conversation with Ivana Đerđ – Dunđerović, for *Vizkultura*, 15 October 2020.

or global, recently discussed artistic themes, in the artistic situation of Osijek the image has been envisaged as being determined in concepts outside of painting, that is the interest in painting was here accompanied by highly procedural and analytical research (of procedures, means and values) of the painting medium itself in processes joined by other, technological media both as part of the process and as tools, resulting in a single metamateriality and metamedia aesthetics of the art of the participants in the exhibition *East of Eden*. The exhibits for the exhibition *East of Eden* – from artist to artist, from work to work – point as much to themselves as they do to the relations to other works (of the same or other artist/s). This additionally emphasizes the referential features of these works that are already problematically present in the individual structures of the realization at the exhibition, which refers us to careful observation. Thus, with one and the same artist, we come across disparate works such as painting on canvas next to photographs and/or TV performance; with the others, objects on the wall or in the space next to the monochrome prints that we find in a different medium or way of creation of other artists; word paintings as well as ambient drawings transposed into photo or video media, along with computer simulations, interventions and installations… Paradoxically, all this does not diminish the ultimate clarity of the presented artifacts, which with the mentioned metamedia aesthetics, in a changed meaning, evokes the notion of "pure visuality"[3] – the phrase with which the theorist Konrad Fiedler emphatically advocated art as the production of visions and the need to see reality and nature through the eyes of art, and not in reverse, with the hitherto ingrained mimetic, imitative relation of art to reality.

The production of the identity of a work in the age of conceptualism

Although the first impressions while reviewing individual works lead us to think of abstraction as the dominant expression, we must consider the fact that in a more precise observation this abstraction turns out to be the result of a very close relationship with the reality of the source factors as well as the fact that there are also those works that include

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3 Konrad Fiedler 's text "Über die Beurteilung von Werken der bildenden Kunst¨ was first published in 1876.

the ability to instantly identify displayed content, figures/objects of reality, or literal readability when artists use words/text as material for their images.

As can be inferred from these words, the established terminology helps little in trying to interpret the contemporary state of art in general, so each term used requires additional clarifications: abstraction, conceptualism, appropriation, (non)referentiality would be key terms in describing analytical, logical, and the transformational and translocation procedures that mark the works of the exhibition *East of Eden*. However, none of these terms comes alone, individually defined in practice, but is always differently related to some other medium, process, means or surface.

When it is said that neither the work of Osijek artists presented at the exhibition *East of Eden* is strictly determined by the media – we have uttered only the well-known motto which has been in "use", with the obligatory addition of "hybrid works" and/or "installations" – since 1960s at the latest, when Minimal art of New York provenance with its *specific objects* both declaratively and in practice opposed the dogma of "media purity" by which Clement Greenberg marked the dominance of art, especially painting, abstract American expressionism and high modernist aesthetics of productive self-criticism and theory prone to final interpretations. In the Minimalist manner, what continued in artistic practice was the rhetoric of the negation of Greenberg's demands or the emergence of conceptual art, yet instead of realizing the promise of resolving art in language, by identifying art with its concept and definition, and against materiality, visuality and performance – a tautological version was achieved. ie. the fulfillment of Greenberg's ideas of the autonomy of art as is evident from the example of the work of one of the founders of conceptual art, Joseph Kosuth. The meaning of abstraction today, even for most of the works shown in the exhibition *East of Eden*, is not and cannot of course be the same as it was in the time of Greenberg's self-referentiality or Kosuth's tautology and even less as in the time of pioneer advocates of non-referentiality as understood by Kandinsky in one way, and Maljevic in another: reduction, "cleansing" of works from non-artistic, i.e. real world content on the one hand or the establishment of ideal/ideological content of art on the other, and in both cases based on formal features of the work. The referentiality of abstraction will be discussed later, but it should be mentioned

already at this point that in recent theory there are also collections on the "iconology of abstraction".[4]

Today, in the era of the pictorial turn, no one doubts (or at least shouldn't!) in the cognitive potential of art, so – if we find that the works from the exhibition *East of Eden* belong to the sphere of postconceptual or conceptualized art – we still haven't said much more than the generally accepted thesis on recent art according to the slogan: "all art after conceptual art is conceptual". Nevertheless, it is impossible to ignore that the Osijek art scene is really defined by distinctly conceptualized features. The problem arises where ideological foundations are decomposed/deconstructed with surgical precision in selected foci of the process of artistic production and/or materialization, and analytical approaches tend to provocatively expand traditional definitions of media and visual sphere, an expansion that consciously, both subversively and constitutively, involves theoretical strongholds. Disagreements over the exact definition of conceptual art, no matter how much it invoked internationalism in its initial events, today mostly arise over the inclusion of territorially and regionally dispersed, in the 1960s and 1970s non-established phenomena marked by conceptual art features initially associated with New York and London. This is evidenced by a number of events and publications from the early 2000s that emphasize the socio-geographical conditions of conceptual developments in environments with significantly different economic and political structures (South America, Russia, Canada, Japan and Eastern Europe in a very distinct form) insisting on the specifics of those "peripheral" phenomena. Finally, after the exhibition *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s-1980s* at the Queens Museum of Art in New York in 1999, according to Terrya Smith,[5] it turned out that initiatives in these areas were often more innovative and radical than the ones in the then artistically dominant environments because they emphasized ideology more as performativity, and encouraged the introduction of (then new) technical media. In addition, these initiatives outside the mainstream of the conceptual were primarily more socially and politically sensitive/engaged than the initial ones, which compose all those features that are far more valuable reference points for the events of today's art. Between

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4 It is specifically a collection of texts *Iconology of Abstraction. Non-figurative Images and the Modern World* edited by Krešimir Purgar (Routledge, 2020).

5 Terry Smith, One and Three Ideas, Conceptualism Before, During, and After Conceptual Art, New York, *Journal* #29, November 2011.

those who expand the notion of conceptual art to the limits where the concept itself loses its meaning and those who confine it to the narrowest, historically surpassed moment that referred to "pure" conceptual art as a movement whose limits were advocated by one of its loudest originators Joseph Kosuth – there is still a whole spectrum of artistic phenomena that basically have the same *concept* that was important to the founders of conceptual art: questioning the idea of art as the basis of its practice. According to Terry Smith, in the late 1960s, artists were aware of the dangers of various "isms" and avoided the term "conceptualism", but were happy to use the adjective "conceptual" in their work. Today, the situation is somewhat reversed: the term "conceptualisms" from a historical perspective becomes much more acceptable than the often unjustifiably used – more phrases, but the label – "post-conceptual art", as the primacy of mental and formal does not differ from, for example, intuitive approach to art.

"Osijek manuscripts" are not conceptualism in the sense of stylistic definition of a group in the problem framework of a new image, but what constitutes that manuscript has acquired the role of *stylus* (a writing utensil) – an individual means of expression that changes in the process of creation and transforms collective reception of meaning, yet not the meaning itself: the thing is not only in appearance, but in the way it appears.[6] If in the first two instances of conceptual practice concentrated on researching the status of the perceiving subject and perceived object in managing the minimum and/or maximum conditions of their thinkability and feasibility, then these factors in a third instance, according to Terry Smith – began to be considered problematically within the framework of (social, linguistic, cultural, political) pragmatic conditions of communication and modes of action. Osijek artists do not fit into the usual story according to which today anyone who has any idea of work creates in a conceptual manner, and it is at the exhibition *East of Eden* that the degree of reflexivity of their intentions is evident as well as the awareness with which they approach their own medium. The specificity of their conceptual approach seems to lie in re-examining those "minimum and/or maximum conditions of thinkability and realizability of the image/work" in the recent production and communication of the contemporary art situation.

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6 Appearance and appearing are key concepts that Martin Seel carefully differentiates in his book Ästhetik des Erscheinens (2007, Aesthetics of Appearance).

Fig. 1. Zlatko Kozina, *Serra in Slavonia*, 2018, 60 x 60 cm, acrylic, collage on wood

Appropriations as interpretations: referentiality and meta-painting

How, then, to characterize the "issue of the new image" in the encounter with the works at the exhibition *East of Eden*? First of all – what we see here as images are new artifacts, but the problematics, if we believe the first impressions when examining these works – has long been recognizable: most of these individual works do not refer to something beyond themselves and we will easily recognize that it is mostly about abstraction or non-referential artefacts. This should, without much hesitation, point to the now slightly more than the century-long history of abstract art and to some of the premises on which that history began. In layman's terms, it was about the images no longer representing "nothing", at least not what was expected to be recognized as part of the visual reality

around us: a house, a landscape, a home or war scene, some nudes or figures surrounded by haloes.

However, everything we know about non-referential art is not a sufficient reason to talk about the works of this exhibition in the context of non--referentiality, just as referentiality in the conventional sense is not the right expression if the paintings of e.g. **Zlatko Kozina** are in truth about the reference recognition as it is not the recognition of figures and/or objects that we at present visually identify in the first place, but the "verification" of adequate knowledge, information (visual and textual) stored in that part of our memory that concerns cultural discourse, unfolding in front of us, both in image and word/text, a pictorial compendium of historical and artistic reminders – from Picasso and Duchamp, Paul McCarthy and Franz West, through Malevich to Donald Judd, Richard Serra (Fig. 1) and many others...

In the encounter with individual images of small dimensions, or with their various groupings, which Kozina, according to the mood he is in, the exhibiting intention and conditions, varies as wall formations, by which also presentations develop into completely new visual expressions, expressions of invisibly networked links and dividers – we are confronted with the contents that motivate our memory, make present the awareness of the existence of the known (but also unknown/unrecognized) fragments of collective cultural memory that the artist had in mind while creating them.

In addition to motifs, Kozina activates memory using also other appearance features: there is a way of working, ductus, palette, a quote by an artist written over the painted background of the work that is associated with another author or theorist, and sometimes the artist himself; the terms and/or titles of works that follow or are exactly the opposite of what is presented, and which often leads, as the artist himself emphasizes, to paradoxical situations and humor as an important moment of this painting. It is not surprising that the question "Bad painting?" refers to the meta-image,[7] to the slightly, "messy" painted (*bad painting* as a canon of modern painting!) red background and the answer: "No. It's Bad conceptual art". The print "Licence to Paint", or "politically incor-

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7 On the notion of meta-image cf. W.J.T. Mitchell, Picture Theory, Chicago University Press, 1994, or: ibid, Metaimages, in: K. Purgar (Ed..), Visual Studies. Art and media in the era of pictorial turn, cvs, Zagreb, 2009, pp. 24-57.

rect image" (entitled, by the way, *Entartete Kunst*) has a similar information density and pictorial value as the name of the *Art now* magazine in the picture that corresponds to its cover, so that the meanings/previous knowledge that is to accompany this kind of work is only up to the viewer. Referentiality is conceptualized as much as non-referentiality, not only metaphorically or ironically as Kozina's work comments, but also literally as a consequence of the superior involvement of theoretical knowledge in the core of the work. Correspondingly, the notion of appropriation is also displaced. Although the artist states that he "directly or indirectly deals with the world of art and the appropriation of artistic intentions as material facts" – more precisely his paintings are only conditionally appropriations, or rather: appropriations as interpretations because what we have here is not adequacy in taking over other artists' works or motifs (such as in the work of Elaine Sturtevant), but rather an intellectually based, non-personal strategy of meta-painting – paintings that speak about themselves or other paintings/works of art, thinking in images, pictorial interpretations of accumulated personal and/or collective knowledge/memory arising from which is, inherent in the discourse of art, referentiality – as a concept, which could be referred to as redefining self-referentiality, only here it is deprived of self-sufficiency essential for the discovery of abstraction, i.e. contrary to the demands modernist autonomy.

The art of appropriation with pioneering works (Sherrie Levine; Elaine Sturtevant; Richard Prince; Phillip Taaffe, etc.) in the early 1980s was defined as the "conscious use of works or fragments of works by other artists from other epochs or their own time with the intention of creating a new work", which was presupposed by the experiences of conceptual and so-called art of Institutional Critique, as well as semiotic and structuralist approaches to theory dominant at the same time.

If such a determination were quite applicable in the described paintings of Zlatko Kozina, we would then really see precisely taken motifs as they are exactly present in the works of the authors referred to by Kozina. If this is not the case – then the blue color in the exhibits of **Domagoj Sušac** can certainly be identified as International-Klein-Blue (IKB), an azure blue color that Yves Klein "created" and registered in 1960. With his work *Monochrome 69* (1959-1976-2019; offset printing on paper, 41.5 x 28.5 cm) we can undoubtedly determine Sušac's conscious intention to apply the method of appropriation – but not of Klein's work but his
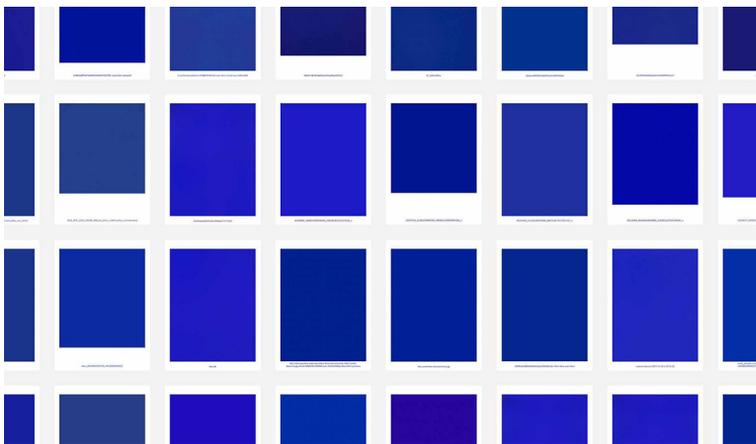
Fig. 2. Domagoj Sušac, *Post Festum*, 2008-2019, 210 x 430 cm; polyptych, c-print on paper, detail

reproduction, or more precisely in the words of the artist himself, it is: "actually a framed book sheet, a page from a book – a reproduction of Yves Klein's work from 1959. The page number of the book (69) is also visible on the page, which determined the artwork title. The year of creation of the work is also an integral part of the title of the work. Three determinate years are listed: 1959 as the year of creation of the original work, 1976 as the year of publication of the book and, finally, 2019 the year of "appropriation". These facts would almost be too extensive with the first but insufficient with the later appropriations that Sherrie Levine carried out in a spectacularly simple manner at the beginning of her artistic career by photographing reproductions of "original" photographs from the catalogue of famous artists-photographers, inscribing on the exhibition labels next to the work her own name i.e. subverting that institutional convention that "guarantees" originality and authorship. Unlike Levine, who in later appropriations wrote longer lists of data on labels to ensure her original authorship (and minimized subversion), Sušac underlines on the label, which he considers to also be a part of his work, the obvious authorship of another artist as well as the medium and method used by the artist and thus shows the "deviation from the norm", as the procedure of appropriation has become in the meantime. With his approach, Sušac "reveals" appropriation as an accessible tool of the media and photoshp age, but on the other hand affirms it as a less

trendy, more convincing *homage* to the neo-Dadaist artist and restores the re-presentative potential of IKB, that is, he dissolves the convention of monochrome, and ultimately forms the reference point of the discourse of abstraction. With his work *Post Festum* (2008-2019) (Fig. 2), composed of 84 framed digital prints of "identical" IKB i.e. the work by Yves Klein entitled *IKB* taken from various Internet and media sources which have been "merged into an ensemble of repetitive images without subsequent correction of reproductions", Sušac confirms this potential of transformation not by proving that even by technical repetition it is not actually possible to obtain an identical color imprint, but by demonstrating that precisely because of this impossibility both appropriation and repetition in the metamedia age prove to be creative procedures.[8] Without losing sight of the fact that with his azure blue Klein referred to the "materialization of the infinite" or immaterial – Sušac uses Klein's blue in the construction of two-wall and one-floor object whose material objectivity primarily emphasizes the optical effect, which is especially noticeable in the work *Image Sign* (2019, aluminum sheet, steel, foil) since it is a reflective IKB surface of a signal sign. Reflection includes the surrounding spatial context, while already the titles of the objects *Self-Meter* and *Self-Adjustment* emphasize the relationship with the author, with the subject that – as absence – appears once as an "abandoned", amorphous and undefined object created by folding a rigid blue paper that "unadjustedly" hangs exposed on the wall, and other times, equally "anonymized" lying on the floor. Or in artist's words "on IKB paper a ruler or scale division in centimeters is digitally printed, whereupon using the same paper the non-existent (phantom) ruler is self-wrapped and then unwrapped as the final form of the work. Why the ruler with the "space" dimension of blue? Perhaps because of the fine dose of humor for which the objects – "sculptures in the extended field" – by Domagoj Sušac are otherwise known, created by distorting everyday objects (size deformation, elongation, etc.).

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8 Quite a similar result as this work in progress by Domagoj Sušac created by selecting, downloading and collecting prints of different reproductions of the same Klein monochrome/color as it is present in the media form on the Internet can also be found with Vladimir Frelih, yet without the method of appropriation: the starting point of an as well multi-year project, however, is in the photograph of one particular red color – Kat. No. 13041664 (work started in 2005), whose nuance differentiations are caused by printing machines of different capaticies for 33.5 x 40.5 cm photographs.

The ruler has been a commonly present "motif" at Sušac's exhibitions: This practical measuring instrument as a "Ruler" can be made in the form of a crumpled thin plate of lead, or in white forming shadow between two white canvases, and in the work *Rented space*(exhibition *Objects* at the V. Buzančić Gallery, Zagreb, 2017) it can close an angular void that, thanks to the manipulation of light, creates deep shadows and becomes the illusion of the measured space. Using tools and similar apparatus Sušac comments on (in)purposefulness. According to Dario Grgić, the curator of the exhibition in question, "they 'act' as real painting accessories – it is a self-portrait without the self-portrayed, a pure waiting for action, a suspension of the act of creation." Is the method of appropriation for Sušac really just an indication of such a suspension, of the pure potentiality of all elements due to disbelief in the effectiveness of this method, so the application of IKB is actually a "horizon of the future time and is ready for a new beginning." Of what? The "Self" from the title of some works, in the age of selfies?

In monochromes, the tradition of finality and infinity of painting is encountered. Rodchenko's triptych with primary colors from 1921, the first three monochromes of avant-garde art (also the last paintings of this artist), did not mean the end of the representational as well as of painting in general, as this prominent Russian constructivist claimed, but used monochromes to demonstrate the "conventionality of painting by which it could be ultimately defined/limited to basic colors",[9] which of course were not depleted but only opened up possibilites of monochrome painting in art research, which is why Klein could, three decades later, expand/transcend the idea of monochrome by creating the IKB concept, color/blue "without dimensions", which is "invisible that becomes visible", and his paintings "emphatically physical objects – unmodulated, intensely saturated ultramarine fields of velvety pigment" which for Klein, who considered himself a "painter of the universe", were the way to the idea of immaterial, into a great void.

Historicization of the phenomenon of abstraction points to the conclusion that the revolutionary radical negation – the attempt to always re--create the last image so that Johannes Meinhard[10] argued that the history

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9 Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London, England, 1996, p. 17, 236.
10 Johannes Meinhardt, *Ende der Malerei und Malerei nach dem Ende der Malerei*, Cantz Verlag, Ostfildern-Ruit 1997; introduction.

of modernist painting played out as the history of last images – was succeeded by, at the latest with the emergence of Postmodernism, the opposite principle of action: if modernist painting was in the sign of reduction, extraction until disappearance and dematerialization, i.e. replaced by the idea/language in the conceptual, then the continuation, whose processes we are witnessing today – meant painting as expanding the boundaries of that medium into image as a result of either media expansion or redefining the concepts of pictorial and painterly in conjunction with language, and/or space. It is precisely the spatializations of image that characterize the works of Josip Kaniža and Miran Blažek, while the visualization of words/text is the domain of painting/image by Ana Petrović.

The imagery of words

The use of language or the painting of words and letters is typical of **Ana Petrović's** painting/images but in a completely different role than in Zlatko Kozina's paintings. *Pay to touch this painting* is a series of paintings created in 2015, and a continuation of the series from 2010 speaking in favor of a very present custom of Osijek artists represented at the exhibition, which is to temporalize their themes, i.e. to deal with a specific *concept* in a nonlinear sequence over time. Whether painted with acrylic, from a frontal or lateral, slant angle, these paintings, just like those whose surfaces and letter shapes are made of unconventional material (metal particles, sequins for canvas decoration), on which we read words like *Broken* or *Shattered* (both from 2017) are targeted semantic mimesis. These images are characterized by a certain correct distortion, compression or stretching of letters/words vertically and/or horizontally, so that we get the impression of tightness or flexible width of the painted surface format. The words in the paintings are in a state similar to the anamorphosis in Holbein's *Ambassadors* (1533), a painting full of hidden messages and mysterious encryption, dangerous meanings, stories of power and schism told in banal motifs. Words like *pure* or *pay* are just a different – textual – way for Ana Petrović to stage a seemingly banal thing, which in the sentences she writes on the glass facades of art institutions (gallery in Osijek; high school in Ulm or building in Timisoara) that call for breaking turns into a purely visualized, even carefully designed message that is too aestheticized to be truly

politically "engaged" to imply truly destructive action. With such works, Petrović also realizes the presentation form of images as interventions in space, or the form of an ambient painting as in the case when multi-colored adhesive tapes (sellotape, insulating tape, crepe paper tape) were collaged on the floor of the gallery entrance on the occasion of the exhibition *Shudder* (work *Non-Red Carpet*, 2015). This speaks of Ana Petrović's tendency to expand her pictorial and textual expressions to adaptable formats *in situ/site specific works,* while the contents/meanings of some of the imperative prints appeal more to the awareness of action/situation limits than to agitate for real interventions in social corpus of art, namely on rebeling against the distribution of power in the system of institutional structure of art, against the division into favored and systematically neglected in the hierarchy of value criteria, ways of forming market prices, work distribution networks, etc. determined by capital. "Ana Petrović's staged statements lead us to painting in which the idea is and remains the starting point, but also the end point", Igor Loinjak will establish on the occasion of the series *Pay to Touch this Painting.* In line with this, it should be added that this conceptualized painting has equal contacts with pop-art aesthetics in the way described by Ian Burn in 1972, saying that Kosuth's paintings from the series *Art-as-Idea as Idea* would have been declared objects of Pop Art if they had been made a few years earlier, but as they had been exhibited in 1967, they became paradigmatic cases of "strict forms of conceptual art".[11] In the obvious conceptual basis of Ana Petrović's painting, such linear-historical – stylistic – determinants of art are inscribed and restored, but no less is the artist's desire to step out of them: between the changing dimensions of works and imperative statements/instructions for aggressive action, or big words in "limited", "too small" formats of the stretched canvas in Ana Petrović's paintings often vibrate with fluorescent-bright pop colorism, which is not without reason more reminiscent of, for example, Robert Indiana's painting *Demuth's Figure Five in Gold* (1963, according to R. Demuth's *I Saw the Figure Five in Gold,* 1928) or a similar "borderline" case such as Ed Ruscha's *Word Paintings,* and even his monumental print of *Hollywood* (and exactly Ruscha painted the sentence *Pay Nothing Until April* in 2003, acrylic on canvas, 60 x 60 inches), than of Kosuth's

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11 Information taken from Terry Smith's text, One and Three Ideas, Conceptualism Before, During, and After Conceptual Art, New York, Journal # 29, November 2011.

Fig. 3. Ana Petrović, *Receipt J8/2W* (Tirana, Albania), 2020, 120 x 100 cm, acrylic on canvas

black plates with graphically shaped white letters/texts with terms taken from the dictionary, or of Weiner's elegant, moderately painted ambiences with word paintings. On the other hand, black-and-white images of enlarged prints of *Receipts* (Fig. 3) supplemented by numeration – "documentary images" of various places, years, purchased items – Petrovic also inevitably associates some conceptual works whose contents are reduced to scanty prints of information on materials, formats and similar specific technical data of a (non-existent) image (e.g. Mel Ramsden, *100% Abstract*, 1968). However, her paintings here are also mimetic

in the style of Pop Art, enlarged as comic book scenes of Lichtenstein, and unlike these non-subjective images with motifs of popular culture – sparse contents of *Receipts* (2012, 2013, 2014) also provide some information from the artist's biography. Their starting point is the real world of the artist who very well balances between *painting*, *picture* and *image*.

Image-space and image-time

Willem Flusser bases his anthropological theory of image on the belief that a specific human activity is not speech but the ability of man to produce images and that at the root of communication is primarily the image, not speech/language.[12] The state in which a person transfers an object or being (e.g. a pony) from the environment to an image in the first instance means "deviating from the object of painting", "retreating into oneself", which Flusser refers to as Flusser "stepping into the strange non-place from which man makes images," which, according to this theorist, is traditionally known as subjectivity or existence".[13] Therefore, the power of imagination is the unique ability of man to withdraw from the subject world into his subjectivity, which, I believe, has largely determined the work of the mentioned artists Zlatko Kozina, Ana Petrović and Domagoj Sušac. Such a distance from the world can be achieved once again, yet inversely, by reversing vectors of intentions – namely "byentering the object of painting". By stepping out of the "strange non-place", from the inner space of consciousness and imagination, the authorial subject can "paint" with bodily action, appropriate real space/its parameters in order to indicate the (ir)reversible power of performance, transformation potentials, and re-materializing the existing concrete state create new materialized – pictorial – interspace.[14] And thus also produce a part of one's own identity and existence.

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12 Willem Flusser, Eine neue Einbildungskraft, in: Gottfried Boehm (Hrsg.), Bildlichkeit, Internationle Beiträge zur Poetik, Frankfurt a. M., 1990, pp. 115-126; quoted here according to: Lambert Wiesing, Artifizielle Präsenz. Studien zur Philosophie des Bildes, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M., 2014, pp. 20-21.

13 Ibid.

14 Davide Del Sasso, *Exploring Conceptual Art,* wrote about the idea of conceptual art as materialization of dematerialized in the direction of meta-materiality, meta-art, or conceptu alism as a "new model of materialization" that presupposes abandoning dematerialistic utopia in favor of ordinary, everyday reality. in: "Realism and Anti-Realism: New Perspectives", Leonardo Callo, Sarah de Sanctis and Vincenzo Santarcangelo (Eds.); special issue,

Real space as the starting point of painting activity opens a phenomenological, experiential horizon of the creation of the work and its reception, which means that the designation of the image as an iconic difference, "the totality of the plain surface" that excludes all externally painted surfaces as stated in the definition of the painting according to Gottfried Boehm,[15] is displaced to the other, today a common form of perception: immersion, bodily immersion within the boundary spatial parameters of the work.[16] If we face the strategies of **Josip Kaniža**, his frottages used for translating the structures/textures of the surfaces of architectural elements of very real, living spaces – e.g. the hallway of the Fine Arts building at the Academy of Arts in Osijek where he realized the series *Copy/Paste* (2012) on A4 paper with graphite pencil (6B) immediately after graduation – we will encounter an unusual mimetic approach: graphite pressures over paper applied on wall surfaces have the character of a print/trace the same as photography, except that the index character of the technical medium presupposes digital or chemical recording of light effects on luminosensitive background (hence: photography), while Kaniža's trace record creations are manual and direct. More real/physical or more authentic, therefore, than the most realistic scene possible in the technical medium of the transmission of visual properties of reality. Kaniža transfers the real, material foundations of

Philosophical Readings, Vol. 6, No. 1, Summer 2014; pp. 101-114), which was reported by Ivana Bago when writing about art in Zagreb from 1961 to 1986, with conceptual art or conceptualism being the starting notion. Cf. "Something to think about: values and valeurs of visibility in Zagreb from 1961 to 1986", in: *Parallel Chronolоćgies. An Archive of East European Exhibitions,* Zagreb, http://tranzit.org/exhibitionarchive/essays/ivana-bago-something-to-think-about-exhibiting-valeurs-of-visibility-in-zagreb-from-1961-to-1986/

15 Gottfried Boehm, *Wie Bilder Sinn erzeugen. Die Macht des Zeigens*, Berlin University Press, 2007, pp. 208-2012. On p. 69 it says: "Die ikonische Differenz macht mithin aus dem physischen Faktum einer materiellen Oberfläche das Feld einer artikulierten Aufmerkamkeit." (the iconic difference turns the physical fact of the material surface into a field of articulated attention).

16 Here I rely on the definitions of the notion of immersion according to the interpretation of Lambert Wiesing *(Artifizielle Präsenz, Studien zur Philosophie des Bildes*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M., 2005; pp. 107-110) who opposes the equating of immersion with the notion of virtual reality (in the strict sense of care cyberspace is, but for example video games are not immersive in nature because they still retain an iconic distance), while the famous, standard text on the subject of virtual art in general is based on immersion (Oliver Grau, *Virtuelle Kunst in der Geschichte und Gegenwart. Visuelle Strategien,* Berlin, 2001, p.22). Namely, Wiesing distinguishes the assimilation of the perception of an image object into the perception of real objects (immersive virtual reality) from the perception of real things that assimilates the object of an image into imagination (non-immersive reality).

3D elements – not space itself but its boundary parameters, the wall as a physical surface – into the medium of graphic two-dimensional surface of A4 paper which then folds as fragments into new – other (exhibition) spatial ambiences furnished with paintings. This type of translocation, which is also the quality transformation of one material surface (wall) into another, artificial paper materiality – is the "reverse" of the process of leaving a handprint on cave rocks e.g. of Pech Merle, created around 20,000 BC: Kaniža's traces are mobile, portable, iterable (as Derrida would explain the property of an individual sign) like "free-floating signifiers" which, through transfer and moving can redesignate another context or change its identity, even if only temporarily, during an exhibition. Insofar these works correspond to the semantic theory of reading images as signs. Their origin, however, as well as reception, implies physical experience, activity of being in the spatial radius of painting and/or observation/reception of the image – as when encountering *color field paintings*, for example when observing Newman's large formats whose coloration expands, becomes an inconceivable emanating surface and penetrates deep into the space of the observer. Kaniža works in cycles, the creation of the work is long-lasting, which does not mean that it is not the same when making traditional paintings, but it means that the physical spatial component – the volume of the wall surface he copies – but also the temporal one, dictates the frottage process in two ways: from the closest proximity the artist gentso into the pattern in such a way that the subject of the presentation is also a measure of the artist's existential time and the position of his physical body in the activity of tracing.

The duration of concentrated uniform strokes on paper conditions and defines the ritualized rhythm, repetitive meditative activity of the artist in filling in the paper format on which all time-accumulated, deposited traces from the original wall surface accumulated over time, and the work simultaneously acquires the character of archiving, the place where (not necessarily noticeable) memory is being written and transcribed. The process of arranging the fragments is adequate to the sequence of strokes, it covers the wall to give it a second "state of matter" of visibility, i.e. the materiality of the abstract image.

Such media transposition enables toying around with the dimensions of time, synchronous and diachronic, and at the same time the pronounced communication/communicative character of Kaniža's achievements: when in accordance with the properties of graphite saturations paper

Fig. 4. Josip Kaniža, *8971_01*, 2017, 1000 x 150 cm, graphite on paper

surfaces become mirrored (the wall imprint becomes a reflection of the environment in front of the wall), they always bring the artist, and above all the observer, to the point of presence, to the confrontation with one's own character. In the case of transferring segments of the work and stages of the process of its creation into photographs (the colored ones) and a video that Kaniža exhibits with frottages, the moments of the present before the finished work gain their temporal (diachronic) face, providing at the same time different effects, the nature of the media, their special (in)abilities. The complex work *Copy/Paste* was followed by the series *Not so Grey* and a series of works called *8971* (Fig. 4) whose tenth variant, the work *8971/10* is also of the largest dimensions, namely 10 meters in length (for comparison, e.g. Monet's *Water Lilies*, a cycle of 250 paintings with reflections and changing effects of light presented in MOMA with a painting measuring 219 x 602 cm!). On the occasion of the exhibition at the Waldinger Gallery (2017), where this work was exhibited, among others, the features of Kaniža's work that oblige the observer to "look also with the body" and his communicativeness in reflections of black surfaces were best confirmed. These are also the differences of Kaniža's approach in relation to the tradition from which it originates, to the primary and analytical painting with which it shares

the characteristics of processuality and materiality, but still, especially if we look at his black monochromes, it is far closer to Knifer's meander especially due to the performances in the saturated mirror graphite-coated surfaces when "the meander hid the ritual of the hand",[17] and where that vital component in the intention of this work, its existential dimension, comes to light.

The act of frottage itself is an authentic imprint of a material reality of the wall (location), which means that it is determined by the artist's intention, and of course, the result does not have to and is not always determined by the reflection of the graphite surface. In cases where Kaniža's work has higher tactile qualities, greater visibility of the surface texture he painted/copied – its quality, the quality of "relief" will be determined by the same amount/number of graphite layers as well as changing light conditions of presentation. The real reference point in the parameters of physical space in the creation of an abstract work – primarily paintings, drawings, and sometimes objects or ambience should be understood as a staging of the artist's thought about the processes and means of artistic production of the work, and the role of the author in that process, which is a prerequisite for the work of **Miran Blažek** (Fig. 5). What is "copying" with Kaniža, with Blažek, as he himself states, it is "photographic capture" of the wall: while Kaniža's work in the first instance of making is personified, and "ends" in documented photo and video notes, Blažek, to whom the anthropometric approach was important in the first part of his oeuvre, in a more recent approach chooses the technical picture as a starting point, e.g. for the works *Monumomentum* (2018), or *Exhibition Wall* which were shown in 2020 at the exhibition *Ratio IV* at the Salon Galić in Split. They are also the determinants for the exhibition *East of Eden*, with new works joining them: floor ambience and anobject, i.e. *Stand* (monochromes simply lie on the floor as elements of physical space determinantion and evoke the convention of sculpture), and *Work* (table, topos of work and communication, over which a white canvas

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17 Cf. very inventive text about Knifer's graphite works by Mirela Ramljak Purgar ¨Knifer's abstraction of gesture. Survival, or how the meander hid the ritual of the hand¨, in: Krešimir Purgar (ed.) *Image and anti-image. Julije Knifer and the problem of representation, cvs,* Zagreb, 2017, pp. 307-323. For example, in the analysis of "abstract movement" and performativity of painting, the author skillfully connected Knifer's geometric graphite drawings and Pollock's dripping, as well as the "projection function", the idea of a project in the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

5. Miran Blažek, *Plinths*, 2021, dimensions variable, photograph of a gallery wall in the gallery space, print on canvas, frame

is stretched – a digital print of a photograph as a version of previous works for *Exhibition Wall*), whereby there is an expansion of the field of action in terms of image spatialization and imaging (elements, physical parameters) of space using photography and video but at the same time additional layering, shifts to additional focus – the semantic level of the work. Thus, for the "monument to the moment" – the work *Monu-moment* (2018), created on the occasion of the Zagreb group exhibition related to the anniversary of the freedom-utopian student revolution of 1968 – technical support was necessary, namely Jasenko Rasol's camera and video processing of the facade of the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb shot in the late twilight, the time when people are no longer there, so the facade appears as a regular monumental raster of glowing uninterrupted window rows. Turning off all lights at one moment, sudden darkness lasting a minute and eight seconds (signaling commemorative silence? Or something a little more?) occurs in a *loop,* a repetition of the change with the lights being turned on... Simple action, visual phenomena/appearances and meaning contained in the work title, and the conceptuality of the approach are reflected and continued in the aesthetics of white monochromes – wall objects called *Exhibition Wall* shown at the aforementioned Split exhibition *Ratio IV:* according to Blažek's description, one and the same photograph of the wall from Osijek's Kazamat

Gallery "became a painting" by "being processed in a computer program, passed through layers, printed on canvas and stretched on the painting subframe". This results in a dual inversion: primarily the physical carrier of the presentation of artifacts (the exhibition wall) in the digital print of its photographed surface is turned into a two-dimensional scene on the canvas, and then the mounted print-canvas on the frame construction becomes a three-dimensional object hanging on the wall; it can be the same photographed wall, but the object can also be shown on another wall, in another space (e.g. in Split, or Osijek) which is again a property of the image/work as a sign called iterability, yet with the use of a wider range of means and media, the individual work achieves conversion probability that makes the originality of the sign unrecognizable during transmission, so the property of portability of the sign assumes an operational function of a completely different quality than in the case of abstractions created in different, more classic media and procedures, which are also characteristic of Kaniža's frottages, as well as of Blažek's early achievements. Namely, *Ratio* is the name of the whole cycle of exhibitions that has a longer genesis the beginning of which was not in the spirit of technical, but subjectivist construction of the trace and its spatial transformations and media transmissions: it started in Gallery Koprivnica in 2015, continued in Gallery Bužančić, Zagreb, in the Labin City Gallery and in the Flora Gallery, Dubrovnik during 2017. In addition, in a way, the whole series was a continuation of Blažek's preceding moving away from traditional painting after his return from a study trip to New York on the occasion of the Radoslav Putar Award (2012), which he demonstrated with his exhibition *Inside Story at* Zagreb's Academia Moderna in 2013. There, within his hands' reach, he painted all the walls of the space with charcoal, and in a later version of the work he collected the remains of charcoal, mixed it with beeswax and shaped it into an object – a compressed interior model of the previously painted space. This version of Blažek's works will be followed by a record: "Hypnosis, contemplation, alchemy, self-referential painting, institutional critique or simply a sense of the space in which he works and resides, (…), perhaps mysticism…" These were followed by other anthropometrically defined works, regular shapes of the circle with which the cycle *Ratio* begins: on the wall/walls in geometrically determined centers of the surface/space Blažek used his hands to determine the contours/diameter of the circle in which the measurement

of volume, the artist's body dimensions or his trace is described and inscribed, and in which the quality, the structure of the surface of the wall on which the drawing is performed is inscribed at the same time. The link between the existential vital and physical and geometric abstract aspects of circles, black regular monochromes, finds a certain counterpart in Blažek's reflection on materials. Although wax is also important to him (let's remember Beuys!), besides materiality, for Blažek, coal has also a special, symbolic, content, and even metaphysical value: deposited in the earth in the process of carbonization over millions of years, coal carries traces/memory of geological time, that is, sediments of organic matter (former organisms that were given life by the Sun); as a fossil fuel it produces energy, it has its physical laws and structures, and chemical formulas, i.e. its "life" can also be expressed scientifically. This seemingly paradoxical bond between the living and the nonliving; between geological and organic existence and eternal cosmic laws (matter, time/duration, energy, natural laws) is for Blažek not outside the domain of artistic material creation, but through his processuality and openness this bond evokes exactly through its in-accessibility/coprehensibility. This starting point seems to be close to Sol LeWitt's view that conceptual art is irrational[18] (irreducible to tautological propositions, to language, as Kosuth argued). LeWitt, who distinguishes the idea (*components*) from the concept (*implies general directions*), emphasizes: "Conceptual Artists are mystics rather than rationalistics. They leap to conclusions that logic cannot reach." and "Illogical judgments lead to new experience", as opposed to rational judgment that only repeats itself. Such binary conclusions are included but not obviously sufficient for Blažek's worldview and understanding of the term "ratio", which may be explained as the effect of historicizing the phenomenon of "pure" conceptual art, the shift from its initial period to the forms it takes today in the sense of "materialization of the dematerialized".[19]

This historicization approach to the notion of the conceptual as contributed to its liberation from stylistic historical and artistic interpretations and the affirmation of intensifying the practices of transformations in art that prefer a conceptual, cognitive approach but do not give up

18 Le Witt, Sol (1969), Sentences on Conceptual Art, in: 0-9, No. 5, January 1969, pp. 3-5. Also in Alberro, Alexnder and Blake Stimson, *Conceptual Art: A Critical Antology*, 1999, 2000, pp. 106-108.
19 Cf. note 14.

those irrational levels of consciousness in creating works, especially if the emphasis is on processuality and not the finality of the work, to its always possible (permanent) new emergence, e.g. through metamorphoses and translocations, and even through de-construction rather than on the value of its (eternal) existence. Thus, for example, specially constructed frames of different-sized white monochromes of *Exhibition Wall* (and thanks to changes in resolutions of different white tones), give object appearance to individual works on whose wide edges there are lateral black and white photofragments of the originally photographed space, the Gallery Kazamat in Osijek. Presented on the wall of some (other) exhibition space, these objects already entail several different transformations/appearances of the same scene of the wall that became "transferable" across media just as the mentioned works – the copied walls of Josip Kaniža.

However, while Kaniža's high efficiency is initiated by palimpsest layering and "signifier economics both at the level of the message and at the level of the medium",[20] in Blažek's works the Protean nature is more pronounced, the transformativeness of the work that puts media substantiality in the foreground, or rather subtle transitions from one medium to another in order to "blur" (not erase) the boundary effects of the intermedial (that artificial) space and enable different variations/transformations of media appearances of the work in an undefined number of occurrences. This procedure also automatically changes the iterable property of the work as a sign: it becomes changeable beyond recognition as it is expressed in an always different, not the same form, no longer representing anything but its own adaptive potentiality: readiness for the next change.

Blažek's work *Polyptych* addresses this as another interesting way of transferring the visual experience of one place and medium to the other one/s: the transformation of wall drawings, inscribed circles created for the purpose of their translocation to other spaces can be enacted as a wall intervention of scraping the charcoal traces of the previously completed work, the painted circle. By bonding and cooking charcoal scraps and wax wall particles, thanks to compression, the black monochrome wall drawing can be "shrunk" into a black brishaped object and transferred to the next exhibition.

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20 Cf. Text by Andrej Mirčev on *Copy/Paste* – monochromes by Josip Kaniža from 2012.

Painting beside itself[21]

A painted glass can "come out" of a picture, but at the cost of getting a different form of physical existence. This is evidenced by the work *A Glass Full of Painting* (2013) by **Robert Fišer**, a small installation inside of which there is, at least at first glance, a simple painting – a white mono-chrome – placed above a pedestal on which the glass is filled with white acrylic powder scraped from the surface of the painting on which the artist had previously painted the glass. If we were to use the terminology of Husserl's phenomenology here, i.e. the terminology utilized by the philosopher to analyze the image and distinguish the existing, painted object on it, the phenomenon he calls *Bildobjekt*, from the material carrier (e.g. canvas, wood, color) which is *Bildträger* and finally from *Bildsujet*,[22] that is from a real object outside the picture to which the painted object refers (which it represents; signifies) and which is similar to it but by no means the same thing, then we would say that in the work *A Glass Full of Painting* Fišer on the material background/carrier (*Bildträger*, which is a canvas of certain dimensions and qualities) constructed a painted object that we identify as a glass (*Bildobjekt*, in a certain size and color, in a certain place on the canvas/carrier), which in physical form, as a glass, served the artist as subject of depiction/painting (Bildsujet). By scraping the paint from the canvas on the place of the painted glass – which has no physical properties on/in the painting, i.e. is not subject to the physical laws of gravity, cannot, for example, fall out of the paint-ing, or break, grow older, etc. – Fišer destroys the painterly material which, seen in micro-proportions, turns out to be inseparable from the background/image carrier (color and canvas), which has nothing to do with the actual object of the glass except the similarity until the paint scrapings are put into the same glass. With these simple operations of

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21 The subtitle refers to the text by David Joselit "Painting Beside Itself", in: *October* 130, 2009, pp. 125-134. On the topic of his text, Joselit said: "I write about the most traditional sort of art object, and some would say the most market-corrupted, which is painting. In terms of how conceptual art's notion of the circulation of propositions, the dematerializa-tion of work, and the understanding of how meaning migrates could be folded back into that object status". Cf. DAVID JOSELIT with Greg Lindquist, *The Brooklyn Rail* in https://brooklynrail.org/2013/06/art_books/david-joselit-with-greg-lindquist

22 Cf. onn this topic Edmund Husserl, Phantasie und Bildbewusstsein, Hus, XXIII, p. 29; quoted here according to Lambert Wiesing, *Artifizielle Präsenz. Studien zur Philosophie des Bildes*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M., 2013, pp. 37-80: 53, 70.

painting and painting as a destruction, Fišer not only achieved a material transformation of the painted object, eliminated its resemblance to the object of representation and "brought it back to reality" in the form of color particles, but also demonstrated the basic postulates of Husserls's philosophy of the image without the help of language or words. Husserl's philosophies of the image: "The image shows something that it itself is not". and the statement of the philosopher: "The bearer of the image shows the painted object, but is not the painted object itself",[23] may in a way turn out to be questionable and even superflous if we take into account that through destruction Fišer demonstrates and proves that the similarity of the painted glass with the real glass is not relevant for the essential determination of the image (referential relationship of the similarity of the image/the painted with the world), but the fact that the image remains (and becomes) the image even when the painted object is removed, that it still makes something – namely itself – visible, thus resulting in a metapicture level of reading abstraction (about which Husserl did not write). That is why Martin Seel in his "Aesthetics of Appearance" presented arguments about the paradigmatic status of abstract painting,[24] questioning the whole tradition of representation-oriented image theory, which, with the appearance of abstraction, according to Seel, was placed in an unenviable position to seek additional explanations for the definition of image. According to Seel, it is not constitutive for the image to bring to light the appearance of something that is not present, or even that "an image shows what it itself is not":[25] Since all images represent, and only some represent something, then what an image presents is how it is presented, and that always includes its self-presentation, the latent self-referentiality from which the subject reality is excluded. Paradoxically, it follows from this conclusion that the so-called figurative, object/representational image in relation to the abstract one is an added achievement, and not something that is the "natural appearance of the image" from which the abstract image is subsequently derived.

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23 Ibid. On p. 70. there is a quote from Hesserl's text: "Das Bild zeigt etwas was es selbst nicht ist. Der Bildträger zeigt ein Bildobjekt und ist selbst kein Bildobjekt." as well as: "Bildträger wird verwendet um ein Bildobjekt zu präsentieren." With this, Husserl points out that the existence of a painting as an object hanging on the wall has nothing in common with a painted object, but also that the object-painting on the wall differs from all other ordinary real objects precisely because of that painted object.
24 Martin Seel, *Ästhetik des Erscheinens*, Hanser Verlag, München, Wien, 2000, pp. 269, 274.
25 Ibid., pp. 272-274.

Analytical decomposition of either procedures or a work itself at a certain point in the process of its creation, or of an object, proves generally to be crucial for Fišer's achievements. A special kind of de(con)struction from which the chance for a new design is originating, as can be similarly observed with Blažek, is the basis of more works by Fišer, an artist who in his conceptual approaches was most intensely preoccupied with painting and image possibilities which could be noticed as early as 2013 in a series of paintings, objects and installations with which he exemplified thoughts on visual media, most often with a starting point in painting. Among these works, in addition to *A Glass Full of Painting*, there are also works shown in the exhibition Gentle Destruction (Flora Gallery, Dubrovnik, 2015, and Waldinger Gallery in Osijek and Labin City Gallery in 2016), a series that the artist describes as a cycle in which he is preoccupied both with the "experimental research process" in terms of the expanded notion of the image and the medium of painting. The other three works of this cycle are manifestations of questioning the same procedure – scraping a painted canvas – with very different outcomes: the works *Emergence in Disappearance* and *Negative* are differently designed functions of scraped paint from the canvas, which includes interaction with the observer: located on the gallery floor as dust that visitors spread in space as they walk, in the first case it is a simple scattering of dust in front of the painting, and in the second one the dust on the floor marked the outlines of the canvas (its negative) which was moved from the floor to the ceiling. The process is the opposite in the case of the work *Automimesis*: Fišer uses a light projection to collect the sensitive substance, contrary to the spreading of scrapings in the previous two works, and places it on a pedestal between the screen and the projector whose light now leaves a triangle shape on the painting/screen at the place where earlier the cone had been painted. In all these cases, using similar or more complex procedures, Fišer also deals with the works *Transition* (as a version of the work with the glass, yet this time scraping black monochrome, and re-merging the powder into an object, a black cube); *Bi* (negative prints of objects/geometric solids, a sphere and a cube as floor ambiences); *Binary Space*, and others. Fišer writes that the painting cycle *Monochromy* reflects "his own cold agony, resignation brought to me by the impossibility of painting something new and original" repeating (perhaps even without intention?) a part of a sentence from the work of one of the pioneers of conceptualism in

Croatia, Goran Trbuljak. However, while Fišer openly communicates the impossibility of painting with a sense of agony, Trbuljak's sentence in the poster work in question, written below the artist's photo-portrait, is an indifferent statement: "I did not want to show anything new and original" (1971, the poster is also Trbuljak's first solo exhibition in the Gallery of the Student Center in Zagreb), and then, with a touch of irony, Trbuljak dedicated his cycle *Sunday Painting* from the early 1980s to the impossibilities of painting, i.e. unconventional creations of objects by painting from the background of the painting, dripping paint on the canvas through the hole in glass, etc. Such shifts in almost six decades of the existence of conceptual expression speak for themselves.

Writing about the mentioned exhibition *Gentle Destruction* with a review of Fišer's monochromes – black and white, mostly "untitled" or "nameless" (Fig. 6) – Igor Loinjak emphasized one important moment of this painting: the texture[26] of the surface which was the inspiration for many innovations within Russian, and then Polish constructivism or Unism, as formulated by Władysław Strzemiński during the 1920s, which over time took the form of *Theory of Vision* (1958/2016). Following the monochromes Fišer also deals with texture, and perhaps even more with the vision: Having limited himself to black and white, Fišer chooses the extremes within which he pays attention to the appearance of the painting surface, which changes depending on the manner and means of painting: thus –

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26 Igor Loinjak, Monochromy on two txtures, in: *Artos/Journal of science, arts and culture*, No. 5, Osijek, 2017. Although Loinjak emphasized that on the advice of Zvonko Maković, and Maković made his conclusion based on the study of the manifesto "Luchism" – he opted for the term *faktura* instead of *texture*, here I remain with the latter term. Namely, the Polish constructivist Władysław Strzemiński started writing in the 1920s when he formulated his theory of Uunism, while his book *Teoria widzenia/Theory of Vision* was completed in 1947, published posthumously in 1958; and the first revised edition is from 2016, Museum Sztuki Łódź, (with English translation). In the curriculum held by Strzemiński at the College of Plastic Arts and Design in Łódź for the first course under no. 7, "faktura malarska" is mentioned, under no. 8. *faktura uksztalpowana* and under no. 9. *faktura uksztalpowana*. The translation of the word *faktura* from Polish or *фактура* from Russian (Strzeminski was educated in Moscow at Vkhutemas, where the term was also used) into Croatian is *tekstura*, which coincides with the translations into German (Textur) and English (texture) and was used by many authors who wrote about Strzemiński and Uniism (e.g. J. Meinhardt; B. Epperlein; or Yve-Alain Bois or cf. the text by Polish author Helena Trespeusch written in English: "Abstract painting faced with the real: From the first abstractionists to the Neo-Geo movement… and Bertrand Lavier" – which is a contribution to the collection of papers *Publication of the research project "To each his own reality. The notion of the real in the fine arts of France, West Germany, East Germany and Poland 1960–1989)*.

6. Robert Fišer, *Untitled*, 2020, 100 x 50 cm, oil on canvas

if we leave aside for the time being an important element of this work, and that is color in the form of reflection, i.e. light – the lower part of the diptych *Event Horizon* (2019) is a mirror polished surface, while the upper part is opaque, and on some monochromes part of the painting is painted with precise brush strokes, while on the next segment on the same surface the same color is applied with a roller resulting in more

tactile, "embossed" and thus more visible textures. The described field of Fišer's interests, the atmosphere of experiments close to protocolary ritual actions of eliminations, creations based on transformational and/or destructive processes, and textures, is joined by the interest in which perception and science most closely touch, exploring the spectrum of possible (in)visibilities which can to some possible extent be placed close to Strzemiński's *Theory of Vision*, i.e. the way of reflecting on "visual consciousness" which is, quite differently from "biological viewing" of historical significance according to the Unistic artist: "The expanding base of visual consciousness constitutes the essential foundation for the development and transformation of our knowledge about the world. This is how we see the world – not biologically, but historically. We see realistically – with our real, conscious eyes".[27] Thus, Fišer accompanies the works *Dark Matter* by writing that he seeks to "reconstruct quantum theories with visual language","the areas in which the known laws of physics do not apply, such as hyperspace, invisible (dark) matter, the event horizon (black hole)" and in the form of an "optical puzzle", "through geometric visual elements" to connect the things of the universe with human existence. It would be naive to think that Fišer believes in a literal, rather than just offered, possible visualization/imagination of inaccessible cosmic spaces and phenomena, at this point within a certain scope of human knowledge, but not being part of human experience. It is important to note, however, that Fišer turns his plan into a consistent strategy, with UV paint playing a prominent role, as its properties allow, according to Fišer, to make visible the "parts of our reality that are not visible in themselves, except for reflection as a consequence that confirms their presence. UV paint is found on surfaces invisible to us, because those surfaces are above or below our eye level but reflected in the closest surface, which is the only way for them to become visible. The levels below and above the eyes represent invisible but reflective frequencies, while what is at our eye level, as most accessible to us, reflects nothing but the present, limiting, emptiness". The already mentioned works *Dark Matter 1* and *2* and *Event Horizon*, as well as a polyptych of seven objects entitled *Grey* were realized in accordance with the description and the scientific interest in astrophysics and the limits of human

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27 Cf. Władysław Strzemiński's "Theory of Vision" in https://post.moma.org/wladyslaw-strzeminskis-theory-of-vision/ i www.moma.org/artists/5700

vision. Significant for these works are reflections of colors that spread like light in the interspace, the "gap" between the solid segments of the form, "on the surfaces of which there is a UV color that we cannot see directly, but only its reflection." In this way, the pictorial representation in the form of abstraction turns out not as a reduction but as an expansion of the field of (beyond the reach of human vision really existing) visibility within a scientific discourse that is in itself abstract. "Visual consciousness" is a conceptual awareness of the consequent effect/combination of knowledge and media, which also shifts the limits of "sharpening the sense of existence of the undepictable" as Lyotard, differentiating between beautiful and sublime according to Kant, characterized abstraction in postmodernity, as opposed to the one in modernity that sought to "show the unpredictable".[28] The artist **Vladimir Frelih**, who studied at the Düsseldorf Academy of Fine Arts under Nam June Paik, guru of video and media art and no less important video installation artist Nan Hoover, and sculptor Magdalena Jetelova, as his spheres of interest is expected to record space and media/technical image, i.e. the dimensions of visuality that balance between the real and material and the virtual, which then results in a very wide range of often larger spatial realizations from which traditional media of painting, printmaking, sculpture and text/language are by no means omitted but rather serve as bases and starting points or as means/tools for questioning the nature of visual media and art in general in the condition of the present and the place of its origin. Of course, Frelih's work, as well as the work of all participants in the exhibition *East of Eden*, is most often characterized as multimedia, but at the same time it indicates certain terminological deficits rather than some clear commonalities, because using the designation multimedia we cover a very modest range of distinctive features that such a designation may imply. In the case of Frelih's complex projects and achievements such as *deGeneric* (Osijek, Gallery of Fine Arts, 2009) and *deEvolution* (Pula, Museum of Contemporary Art Istria, and Split, MKC, 2013/2014), the artist pointed to the continuity of interest in rethinking possibilities and development achievements of different visual media following a basic concept that he developed in an exhaus-

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28 Cf. Jean-Francois Lyotard, Answer to the Question: What is Postmodernity?, in: Ivan Kuvačić, Gvozden Flego, (Eds.). *Postmodernity: A new epoch or a delusion*, Zagreb, 1988, pp. 233-243: 239.

tive number of variations of representation and media modalities, often with the aim of questioning a certain performance medium/media or the conditions of its/their realization and/or reception, the result of which is summarized in a statement on the expansion of intermedia spaces. Whether he connects the forms of works with their institutional framework and (intra)media spaces as in the aforementioned projects or seeks the focus in the visual sensations enabled by technology,[29] Frelih is distanced from narration or content expressions by a very precise and recognizable way of action typical of which is reaching for previous achievements, their modifications or improvements. At the exhibition *East of Eden*, Frelih shows the work *In the same space*, a collaborative video performance with Selman Trtovac, his longtime artistic interlocutor, which was realized for the needs of their joint exhibition of the same name held at the Belgrade Museum of Contemporary Art in 2017. "It is an overhead video shot using stop motion technique: in the correct time interval one photo is taken every five seconds, which is later merged into a video. The photos in the video are stretched/blurry because the exposure time is about half a second, and Selman and I are moving around the space" – explains Frelih. At the exhibition in Osijek, two of the four possible positions of this video of different durations can be seen. The joint performance takes place on a white paper background ("in the same space") on which there is a small pile of coal dust in the center at the very beginning. By synchronized, minimal, repetitive movements of the two artists during the performance, with their feet they spread the coal dust to the edges until a uniform black surface has been created, i.e. an abstract image – a black "low resolution" monochrome, because a "blurred" appearance of the painting with visible traces of the artists' activity evokes the rhythm of the ritual and the "blurring" of the video image. That being reminiscent of Robert Smithson and the interest in entropy inspiring this work is not only in the domain of spontaneous associations, as we will conclude only if we are familiar with Frelih's

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29 At the exhibition *Outlines of Space* (Lazareti, Dubrovnik 2017, with Čaušić, Fišer and Sušac), Frelih created a video installation, a light projection in the form of the so-called static dynamics by projecting three colors of the RGB system, an optical model used in electronic media systems to reproduce colors and produce moving images. By projecting each color of the RGB system from a separate source toward a common point at which the image is reproduced, Frelih creates static dynamics using the foundation of media moving images to reproduce the still one.

long-term experiments in which he has been studying the relationship between inversible and irreversible processes of the medial image production.

Frelih's famous work in the form of *work in progress* is a multi-year project started in 2005 with a starting point in photography of a certain red color – Kat. No. 13041664. The minimal differences in the shades of the individual prints of the photograph, measuring 33.5 x 40.5 cm, which we perceive as a series of red monochromes, are caused by printing machines of different capacity. The question of the photo originality is clearly overshadowed by the fact that an identical copy is impossible. In different photo shops and on different machines, analogue to digital conversions are subject to variations, incompatibilities of the conditions of the creation have been "documented" with the work having an open end: so far there have been over 180 recorded/newly created red shades and their presentation not only requires an ever increasing wall area but also constructs a new realization, a new variant of serial artifacts.

Similarly, yet not for such a large series of prints, at the exhibition *East of Eden* entitled *Rothko* (Fig. 7) are Frelih's initially photographed smaller (mostly monochromatic) parts of Mark Rothko's paintings from Vienna (however the artist does not really care which exactly these paintings are, and in the end also who the author is), which he then technically processed individually, and above all, multiple magnifications of photographs were the cause of "deviation" in the visual field. Let's remember the scenes of Antonioni's film *Blow Up* in which a photojournalist looks through a magnifying glass at his photograph (accidentally taken in the park where the murder took place) in vain trying to sharpen the scene with magnifications in the photograph, to get to the truth. However, in the place where the medium itself is "stripped" to the pixel by magnification, it is of course not possible to see the truth of the scene more clearly, just as we are not able to notice the essential structure of the media by looking at the footage of the scene. It is this fact, namely the split between the structure of the media and the conspicuity of the visual content/representation, that Frelih has been using productively in many of his works, even for the series *Rothko* with monochromatic (blue, red, green, black) abstract photo representations of colors that do not really exist. In other words, in various degrees of magnification, "intersurfaces" were created, whereby, as Frelih says, "the machine/program estimated that the holes/surfaces created by manipulation were

7. Vladimir Frelih, *Rothko 090,* 2021. 100 x 160 cm, ink-jet print on foil, laminated on Forex

to be filled by augmenting analog reality into digital reality." Using thus manipulation as part of the production process Frelih exploits the knowledge of the incompatibility of analog and digital into the creative goals of research, reproducibility for productivity purposes as to produce new imagery/visuality on the one hand. On the other hand, there is the question of referentiality of the abstract photo-image: the fact is that the original magnification model exists (just as the original red photograph existed) and that it has its referent in reality, although it is not a three-dimensional object but a painted surface, a historical example of a self-referential abstract image. Frelih's work seems to correspond to any abstract, self- or non-referential image, however, by showing itself the work "hides" its referent as well as the technological procedure of its creation or its medial nature – which contradicts Mitchell's definition of metapicture, which should talk about itself and other images, about the way it was created and how it establishes its meaning without using language. The medium of photography and its technological conditioning as Frelih uses them are the basis of his abstract photo-image, and in the legacy of traditional monochrome which is also a self-referential type of image. Diversity is created from the ability of the technical image/media to "comment" on that historical medium, and yet have a constructive and authentic result, namely a new work marked by a com-

pletely new aesthetic that was not possible before. In the processes, the dual nature of Frelih's approach emerges, in which Mitchell's conception of metapicture and Lev Manovich's conception of metamedia are connected, as Krešimir Purgar put it in the text "The Meta-Medium as a Work of Art" for the catalogue of the artist's solo exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Skopje in 2018, interpreting two of Frelih's abstract objects – in fact clusters of utility objects tightly wrapped, covered/hidden under black adhesive foil – after which the exhibition was named *Black Raw Memory*.

To clarify the complexity of Frelih's approach to pictoriality, Purgar establishes his term – meta-referentiality, which he came up with based on relations to referentiality as contained – besides in Mitchell's notion of metapicture also in Manovich's notion of metamedia which includes the syntagm "Avant-Garde as Software" (a text dating back to 1999). Manovich's view is that "new media today are a digital version of historical avant-garde from the 20th century, while modern media, as they did 100 years earlier – use all previously created media but adapt them to the most advanced technological possibilities of their time.", as Purgar conveys in the mentioned text, noticing all the complexity of the difference between the two metaconcepts. In short, Purgar's conclusion is: Manovich's concept of metamedia puts emphasis on the method of construction while Mitchell's term metapicture refers to the social conditioning of meaning. The meta-referentiality that Purgar articulates here as his new term and prefers in his analysis of Frelih's objects does not correspond to either of the two concepts at all, so Purgar interprets Frelih's work *Black Raw Memory* "ontologically grounded between metamedium and metapicture, i.e. between radical exclusion of medial nature on the one hand and the social connotations of the individual symbols of which the work consists on the other". Understanding the theory of media and image in these extremes, Purgar advocates a comparative approach that is summarized in a term whose meaning can be found in the parallel comparative/comparable interspace*: in-betweenness.* Should Purgar's term of metareferentiality be added with a combination of intellectual curiosity, analytical awareness of the historically changing nature of painting (and art) and the *concept* of material and medial nature of artistic production based on that awareness accordant with the presented interpretations of works, we would move closer to the range of meanings of Osijek manuscripts. The mentioned *in-betweenness*, with all the

connotations carried by its starting points on the poles of metapicture and metamedia, would be exactly that unique, authentic field of articulated attention, which makes the recent position of painting on the Osijek art scene exceptional.

All photographs made by Davorin Palijan.

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We always need more history than we have. Is history enough? No. Is Lascaux a historical site? Yes. Is it also a nonhistorical site? Yes, and we need both. I think one half of the question of iconology is answered by the imperative *Always historicize*. Always place the image in its context—and context includes discourse, language, words. But also: *Always decontextualize*, because the image always resists text, leaps out of it. So the second imperative, I would suggest, is *Always anachronize*. Always defy the notion that history explains everything. If Lascaux were purely a matter of history, we couldn't even see the images. The fact that they transcend history, that they leap across historical boundaries, is what lets them speak to us.