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Toward an iconology for temporal object

Keywords
iconology
temporal object
temporal gesture
organogenesis
tertiary retention
grammatization
attention span

Abstract

The advent of cinema brought with it a different kind of image montage, to which Warburg's iconological project was strangely oblivious. Are we meant to believe, then, that the cinema does not produce icons? Is iconology destined to be only a science of classical culture, or can it also evolve to integrate into its own study new forms of kinematic art? We would like to ask the question of organogenesis of iconology here, that is to say, the invention of an iconological science for temporal objects by means of appropriate instruments for this new medium. The instrument is both conceived as a means of acting upon the real, and as a means of activating noetic capacities. The aim of our study will be to first outline the iconographic and iconological consequences stemming from animation and flux that have governed images since the birth of cinema, precipitating a crisis in classical iconology. Secondly, through the analysis of the noetic function of animated GIFs (Graphics Interchange Format) in digital streams, we will introduce the notion of 'temporal gesture' – as a

tertiarized retentional technology, which can be reused for imagining an iconology of temporal suspension and insistence. This will be presented in the third part of this work to reflect on an iconological device for temporal objects by the grammatization and the engramming of 'temporal gesture', as an art of delay and repetition. This thinking will be based on the video artwork produced in collaboration with Gregory Dassié titled Iconologie pour objet temporel*.*

In order to achieve his iconological studies at the beginning of the twentieth century, Aby Warburg took photographic images of classical art objects (sculptures, paintings or drawings). The possibilities offered by photography extended so far as to render the classical art object observable, a possibility that was subsequently lacking in relation to certain later art forms. Warburg used these photographic images of the objects, and others of the same type, to reconstitute a formal and symbolic genealogy between them. This cultural genealogy was based on a spatial device that Warburg called *Tafeln* ('tables' or 'panels'), which allowed the photographic images to be configured in a *constellation* (according to the Benjaminian concept) on a wall so as to render perceptible their formal and symbolic filiations, bifurcations, polarities or antinomies. The advent of cinema brought with it a different kind of image montage, to which Warburg's iconological project was strangely oblivious. Are we meant to believe, then, that the cinema does not produce icons? Or is it possible that Warburg's iconological science simply lacked the appropriate instruments for integrating the cinematographic object? Indeed, cinema was not appropriated for the spatial montage of classical iconology, since to have done so would require that the kinematic flux be stilled for an image to be extracted, whereas cinema's aesthetic efficiency is based on a temporal sequence: a series of images that roll together in time to form a video sequence. It is a temporal object. In his book, *Aimer, s'aimer, nous aimer*, Bernard Stiegler, defines the temporal object in relation to consciousness:

> [a]s a general rule, a temporal object is the object of a time-consciousness as it flows with the consciousness as its object – because this consciousness flows: it is itself essentially temporal; it continues to flow. It, as a temporal object, has a beginning and an end, and, between the beginning and this end, it is only temporal flow.
>
> (2003: 38)[1]

If Warburg' *Mnemosyne Atlas* enables us, as Philippe Alain-Michaud writes, to realize 'a history of art in the age of the cinematograph' (2000), what is the state of this device today in an age of video and the ever moving screen? Is iconology destined to be only a science of classical culture, or can it also evolve to integrate into its study the new forms of kinematic art? Finally, is it possible to imagine an iconology for the temporal object?

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1. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations cited are my own.

If Georges Didi-Huberman recalls to us that Warburg qualified his science of 'iconology of interval' (2002: 497) as the 'art of montage' (2011a: 280), whose 'method is to jump' (Didi-Huberman 2002: 469), faced with images whose artistry is embedded in a temporal montage, rather than spatial montage, and further, an accelerated temporal montage, rendering fluid each given sequence, the individual must dream of a new iconographic and iconological device. Moreover, as Didi-Huberman points out,

> [p]hotography made it possible both to remember each version but not to be halted there definitively. […] the man of fleeting ideas [the iconologist] could be thus the man of suddenness, rapidity, of the 'rocket': his rhythm is the jump from one thought to another.
>
> (Didi-Huberman 2002: 460, 469)

Photography was thus the apparatus of the iconological jump. A jump between images that executed at a certain speed interpreted the image in the interval, carrying with it a certain memory of the image, necessary for the mental reconstruction of the icon – drawn from image to image. Iconology thus requires that certain attentional, mnesic and hermeneutical qualities are directed towards images to reconstitute their iconicities. But, cinematographic experience, a process that does not present images but rather video sequences – images melting into a temporal continuum – renders problematic the practice of classical iconology's cultural reconstruction. What kind of 'jump' or interval could occur between video sequences so as to facilitate their interpretation and retention in order that their iconicity be reconstituted? What kind of technological inventions could iconography and iconology for temporal object propose for the emergence of icons from a kinematic device? What future can we imagine for the constitution of icons and iconology in the age of cinema and of a new ecology of attention and mind (Stiegler 2008)? We would like to pose the question of organogenesis of iconology here, that is to say, the invention of an iconological science for temporal objects by means of appropriate instruments for this new medium. The instrument is both conceived as a means of acting upon the real, and as a means of activating noetic capacities – thus constituting iconological science not only as a technique but also as an art.

The aim of our study will be to first outline the iconographic and iconological consequences stemming from animation and flux that have governed the image since the birth of the cinema, precipitating a crisis in classical iconology. However, we must stress that it is not altogether certain that the existence of icons and any iconology is, in fact, threatened by the age of the cinema. In recent years, we have observed the emergence of technological innovation in various digital cultures. Animated Graphics Interchange Formats (GIFs) would be one such example, providing a technological counterweight to the attentional, mnesic and hermeneutic problems generated by the digital streams in which they are generally integrated. These innovations allow a slowing down, or still frame repetition of the images or video sequences of images, which, in turn, give rise to what we might call a 'temporal gesture' – a notion that we will introduce in a second part as a tertiarized retentional art, a concept that we will also describe. GIF art and its subsequent analysis provide the groundwork for technological proposals for imagining an iconology of temporal suspension and insistence. This will be presented in the third part of this work. This thinking will be based on the video artwork produced with Gregory Dassié titled *Iconologie pour objet temporel*. The aim of this last part will be to reflect on an iconological device for temporal objects by the grammatization and the engramming[2] of 'temporal gesture', as an art of delay and repetition.

The *Mnemosyne Atlas* created by Aby Warburg between 1927 and 1929 is a device composed of tables that presented mobile configurations or plastic constellations of photographs of classical art (drawings, sculptures, paintings). This device permitted:

> [c]ertain aleatory cuts to constitute a sort of archeology or cultural geology, the aim of which was to render perceptible the historical immanence of the images [as such becoming icons]. In rebounds or ricochets, there emerges possibility for new concepts and new ways of thinking about social and cultural temporality.
>
> (Didi-Huberman 2011b)

Didi-Huberman recalls Warburg's 'iconology of interval' as proceeding from an 'art of montage' and whose 'jump is method'. That is to say, this historical interpretation of images is played out both in the separating spatial distance between the images on the wall, in a composite montage that facilitates comparison, in an attentional jump, which serves to highlight their filiations or antinomies, and in an attentional dissemination to the reconstruction of a synoptic vision of their evolution. The visual matrix of the *Atlas* must make it possible to see the world in its fugacity, in its constitutive plasticity, and thus the amplification of possible orders of interpretation. 'Warburg understood that he had to relinquish the stabilizing of images, just as a philosopher must know how to relinquish his opinions. Thought is about plasticity, mobility, metamorphosis' (Didi-Huberman 2002: 460).

Cinema is also opposed to the fixity of the gaze:

> [t]he reversible chronophotography, that is to say cinema, is opposed to the natural functioning of the eye: 'Fixity of the gaze on what we could seriously call a single thing, for example, a colored spot, a fixity that cannot last much longer than a second without serious risk of seeing the subject fall into hypnotic ecstasy or some analogous pathological condition', writes Dr. Abraham Wolf.
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> (Virilio 1989: 61)

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[2] In neurophysiology, the engram is the biological trace of memory (trace or mnemonic artefact) in the brain.

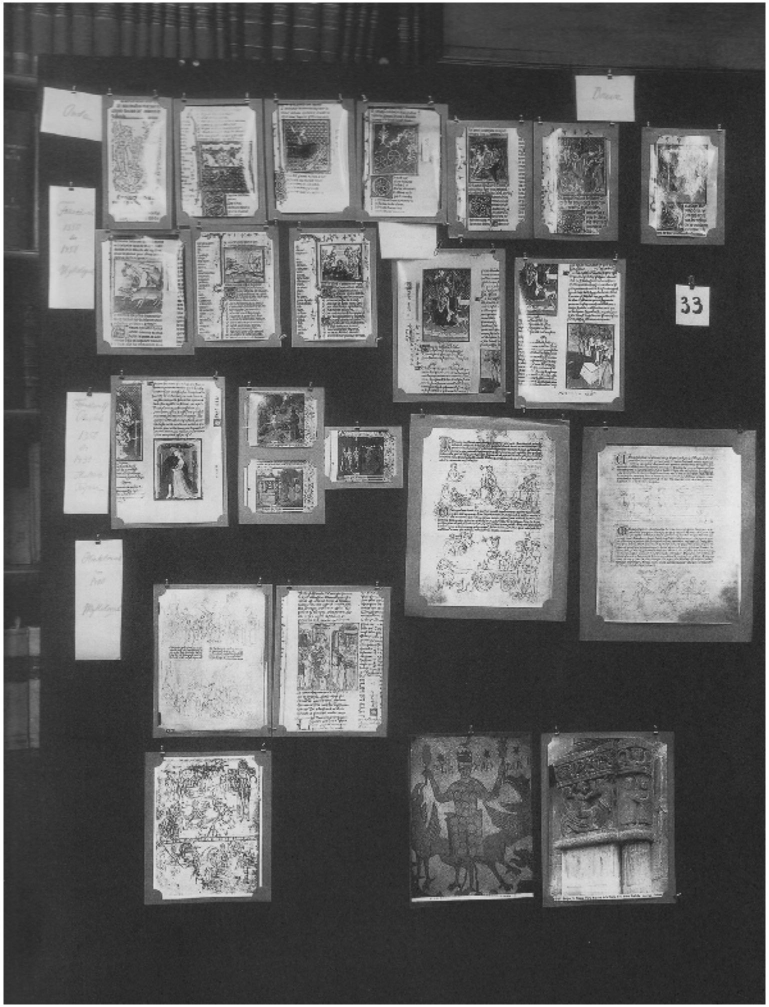


Figure 1: Aby Warburg, Mnemosyne Atlas, *Tafel 33. 1926. Photography. © Warburg Institute, London.*

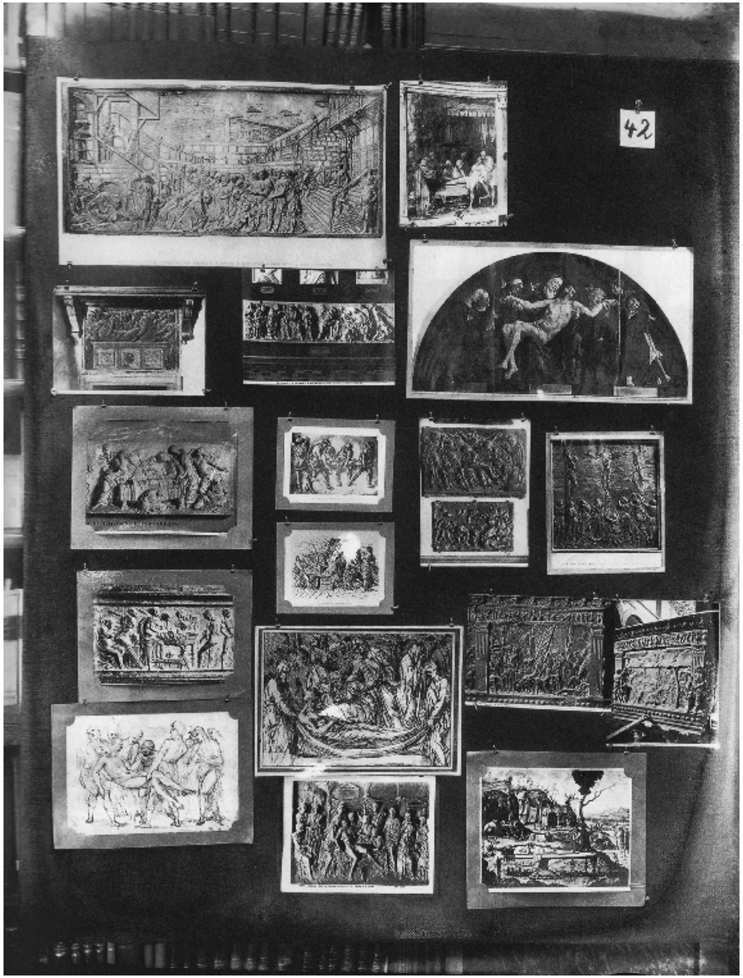


Figure 2: Aby Warburg, Mnemosyne Atlas, *Tafel 42. 2000. Photography. © Ed. by Martin Warnke and Claudia Brink, Berlin.*

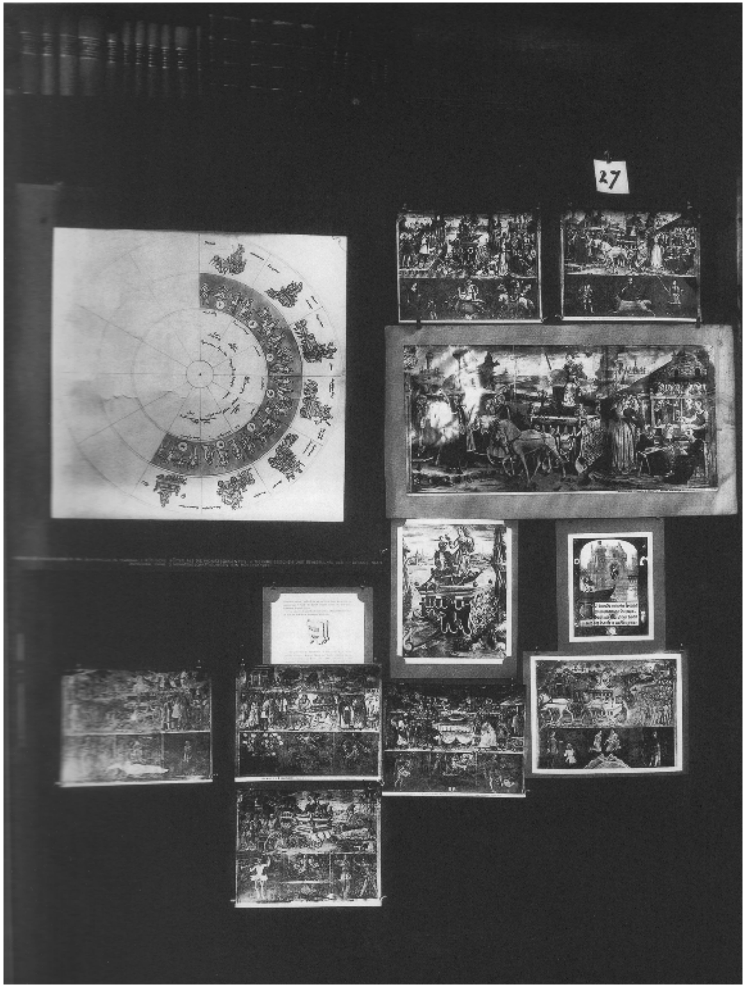


Figure 3: Aby Warburg, Mnemosyne Atlas, *Tafel 27. 2000. Photography. © Ed. by Martin Warnke and Claudia Brink, Berlin.*

However, Virilio adds: '[w]ith the kinematic accelerator, itself conceived as an active prosthesis, the measurement of the world becomes that of the vector of motion' (1989: 61). In other words, the cinema camera is itself an eye that moves through reality. It jumps from one object to another and imposes its movement on the spectator. What is given to sight by the camera is therefore separated from any interaction with consciousness, and from its attentional, mnesic or hermeneutic activities, to the point that 'when Marey reduces motion to a few photogenic signs, we penetrate an unseen universe, where no form is given to us, since all forms already inhabit a delayed time, devoid of mnemonic traces' (Virilio 1989: 61). Philippe-Alain Michaud notes in his work, *Aby Warburg et l'image en mouvement* (2000), that the *Foreign Quaterly Review* correspondent in France, commenting on Daguerre's first cinematographic experiments, also describes phenomena of jamming and difficulties: '[i]n foliage, [Daguerre] is less successful, the constant motion in the leaves rendering his landscape confused and unmeaning [...] The same objection necessarily applies to all moving objects, which can never be properly delineated without the aid of memory' (Alain-Michaud 2000: 40). Thus, for Marey, Daguerre and Virilio, the experience of kinematic accelerator's vanishing image reflects the importance of memory for the observation and formal description of the image. Indeed, the quantity of information to memorize is greater when we are faced with a series of images in video sequence. An iconographic device that multiplies temporal objects simultaneously would therefore require cognitive treatment of greater intensity on mnesic plane. Moreover, both supplementary mental effort and longer duration are required to process the message of a sequence of images in a video. A longer time frame for the semiotic analysis of the moving forms it presents is also necessary. The animated image thus holds more of the observer's attention than the fixed image to be analysed; this hinders his visual mobility. If the 'iconological jump' is an attentional technique that requires mobility and fugacity, is it possible for its application to temporal objects to be of the same quality, given the moving image requires greater semiotic analysis – increased attention duration and intensity? If the mobility and the fugacity of the iconologist's gaze analysing a temporal object are reduced, then it is his cognitive capacity to elaborate an iconology that is diminished. It seems that the possibility of an iconology for temporal objects is too arduous for both attention and memory – something confirmed by the first public experiments of our artistic work. In the video device entitled *Iconology for Temporal Object*, which I designed with Grégory Dassié, we conceived of a video editing work lasting two hours 33 minutes, which attempts to merge reflections on iconology with reflections on the relationship between attention, memory and interpretation in temporal objects. *Melancholia* (von Trier, 2011), *Antichrist* (von Trier, 2009), *Nymphomaniac 1* (von Trier, 2013) and *Dancer in the Dark* (von Trier, 2000) are the four cinematographic works produced by Lars von Trier, which constitute the cinematographic experimental material of this device. The first experiment of this device with an audience took place in the castle of Cerisy-la-Salle during a colloquium entitled *Media Archeology, Ecologies of Attention*. About 50 people attended the performance. Twenty minutes after the start of the screening, there were only ten people left. The difficulty of reading and understanding the four films simultaneously quickly discouraged the audience. 'The theory of costly signaling' by Rebecca Bliege Bird and Eric Alden Smith (*2005: 221–48)* applied to hedonic calculation and its regulation has been the object of a convincing non-functionalist critical reformulation in the field of aesthetic experience by Jean-Marie Schaeffer (2015). However, whereas Schaeffer thinks of the energetic and temporal 'cost' (2015: 275) of the aesthetic experience in terms of fluency by an attentional investment factor, we think we need to add a retentional factor that takes into account the 'cost' of memory efforts by the required retentional selection for the aesthetic enjoyment of our kinematic, multimedia and iconological experiment. We now wish to address the retentional problem of our aesthetic proposal.

Retention is, according to the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl, what is withheld or collected by consciousness. The primary and secondary retentions are psychic realities – the first belonging to the present time perception, and seconds in time past memory. Tertiary retentions are, according to Bernard Stiegler, technical storage media and artefactual attending consciousness in its retentional and mnemonic work: archives, recordings, and technical reproductions in general. The musical object, which is a temporal object, is an illustrative example of the meshing of the primary and secondary retentions, necessary for its appreciation:

> [i]n the 'now' of a melody, for example, in the moment of the elapsing musical object, the note that is present is a note, and not just a sound, that in so far as it retains within it the previous note, which remains present; the previous note still present retains in itself the previous one, which retains in turn the one before, etc.
>
> (Stiegler 2003: 40)

In our video experiment, temporary objects playing simultaneously complicated the secondary retentional process, which failed to retain everything in order to establish a coherent narrative continuity for each story. This retentional difficulty induces an impoverishment of the meaning of the stories presented, but only shows a succession of images devoid of narrative power. And as such, the spectators gradually left the projection room after only a few minutes. However, Stiegler specifies with interest:

> [b]efore the invention of the phonograph, it was absolutely impossible to listen to the same melody twice in succession. Now, since the appearance of the phonogram, which is itself what I called tertiary retention (a prosthesis of external memory), the identical repetition of the same temporal object has become possible, which allows a better understanding of retentional processes. Because what results from this is that, when the same temporal object occurs

> twice in succession, it produces two different temporal phenomena, which means that the primary retention varies from one phenomenon to another: retention of the first hearing, which has become secondary, plays a selection role in the primary retentions of the second hearing – this is true in general, but the tertiary retention, which here is the phonogram, makes this evident; on the other hand, the tertiarized temporal objects, that is to say registered or transiently transformed into controllable and diffusible signal (phonograms, but also movies and radio and television) are the materialized time which overdetermined relations between primary retentions and secondary retentions in general, and thus allow, in some ways, to control them.
>
> (Stiegler 2003: 40)

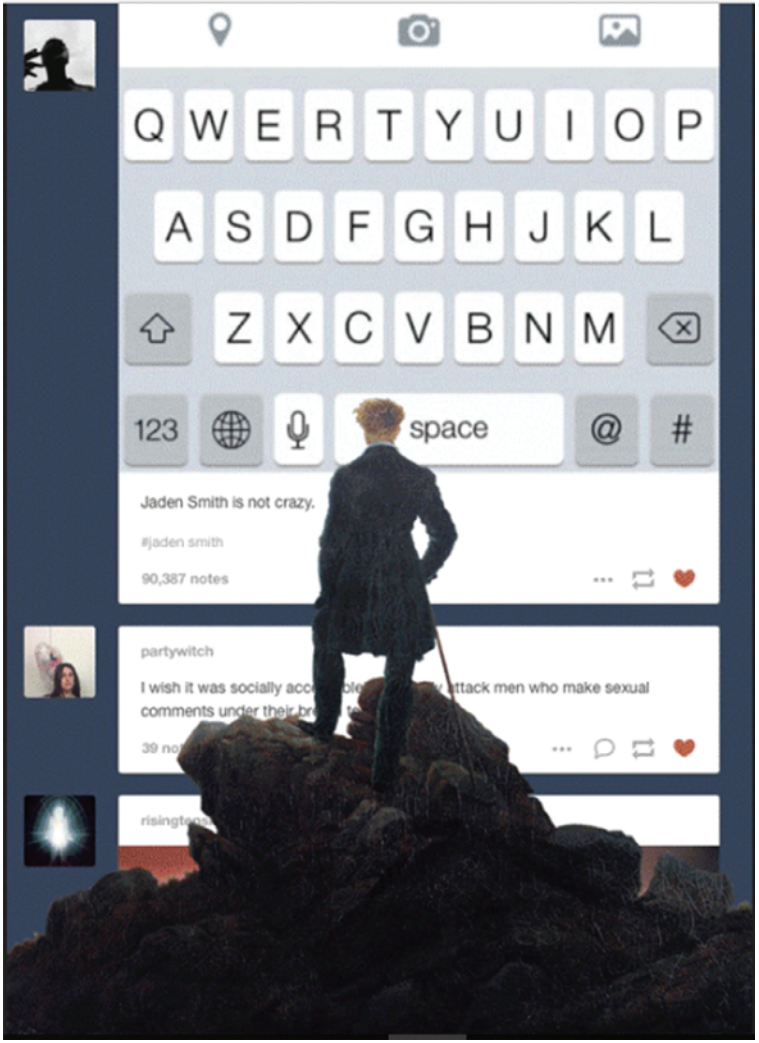
An iconology for temporal objects must become a retentional device that can retain in memory the image of a video sequence in order to control and promote its attentional and hermeneutic analysis by the consciousness.

Over the last ten years, it has become interesting to note that new retentional technologies are flourishing in digital spaces that present themselves as streams. This is the case of Facebook, Google + and Twitter, which disseminate animated GIFs on their walls of information. The GIF has thus imposed itself as a new attentional and retentional art, exchanged by thousands on social networks. It is the attentional and retentional effectiveness of GIFs within the digital and video streams that we now propose to study.

A new generation of GIFs uses a principle a series of images or a sequence on a Photoshop or Paint.net type editor without masking the parts of the photo that the user wants to animate. The GIF, whose common use is above all humorous or poetic, expresses in images a reaction, an emotion, a feeling, whose animation is repeated indefinitely. With the rise of smartphones, photographers from all backgrounds across the world are embracing the new technology to tell their stories in innovative ways. GIF, also called 'motion photography' has emerged as a new trend, but until recently required special tools and know-how. As part of its mission to enable people to pursue their interests, Google+ allows anyone today to automatically animate a series of still photographs and turn them into GIF. In recognition of the potential of this new technology, the Saatchi Gallery and Google+ has recently presented the Motion Photography Prize (Saatchi Gallery Official Website 2016) the first global open entry competition celebrating this creative art form. Micaël Reynaud, the winner of the Saatchi Gallery contest, explains the possibilities of the genre, halfway between the photo and the video: '[i]t is a playground to create surprising sequences. We do what we want to highlight a movement, a detail, it can be very abstract' (Slate French Official Website 2016). By stealth, the images sometimes have a poetic quality: '[t]he work on time-lapse, the interpolation and the fluidity of the images makes it possible to create pretty curls. The beauty of these sequences, which can appear as broken videos, is that they have neither beginning nor end' (Slate French Official Website 2016).

The GIF is part of what we call a 'temporal gesture'. Gesture is a manual or corporal sign that translates a language element. It communicates via a clear signal, one that is easily memorable and repeatable. A temporal gesture refers to a significant movement of a sequence in an audio/visual time band that is repeated by a computer program. It is endowed with a strong semiotic charge, and as before it is simple, repeated easily and memorizable. It acts as a gesture, a gap in mechanical time, computer-programmed time, which, as Gilles Deleuze could have said, creates a stammering (1993). However, it is not the language that stutters, but the information flow, or the computer program that produces a vibration, as if to indicate a symbolic and affective heating of the system. The temporal gestures of GIFs are particularly effective on digital social networks, which are characterized by continuous streams of information (feeds). They introduce variation in the speed of reading the images by virtue of their animation and their repetition. Within these streams, they act as symbolic technologies of temporal suspension or insistence, which aim to support the transition of a sequence within the scrolling flow, in order to better understand and memorize its semiotic power.

The massive distribution of GIFs by Google+, Facebook and Twitter within their feeds generates a small retentional revolution: that of the engramming of temporal gestures in the consciences of the digital surfers – innovation that transforms our processes of grammatization. Grammatization refers to the transformation of a temporal continuum into a discrete spatial one: it is a process of description, formalization and discretization of human behaviours (calculations, languages and gestures) that allows their reproducibility; it is an abstraction of forms by the exteriorization of flows in the tertiary retentions (exported in our machines, our apparatus). The grammatization process is not only about language (as the typewriter so was the Greek city), but also gestures and behaviours (such as the machine-tool symbolized by the encounter between engineer James Watt and entrepreneur Matthew Boulton) and today animated GIFs. But, 'a temporal object is a tissue of retentions and protentions. These protentional and retentional processes trace the temporality of consciousness in general – and temporal objects at the same time modify these processes of consciousness' (Stiegler 2003: 38). Through the continuous visual experience of the GIFs which proliferate in the digital feeds, there is engrammed in the consciousness of the users, a basis for temporal gestures that act as symbolic data, participating in our noetic construction. However, the pharmacological risk is that a regular consumption and repetition of GIFs influence not only retentions, but also protentions. GIFs can prescribe concrete symbolic stereotypes. Any technical object is indeed pharmacological: it is both the poison and the cure. The pharmakon is both what makes it possible to take care and what must be taken care of, in the sense that it is necessary to pay attention to it. It has a curative power in moderation but its excess is destructive. All technique is originally and irrevocably ambivalent. The web can be said to be pharmacological because while it is a technological device that allows for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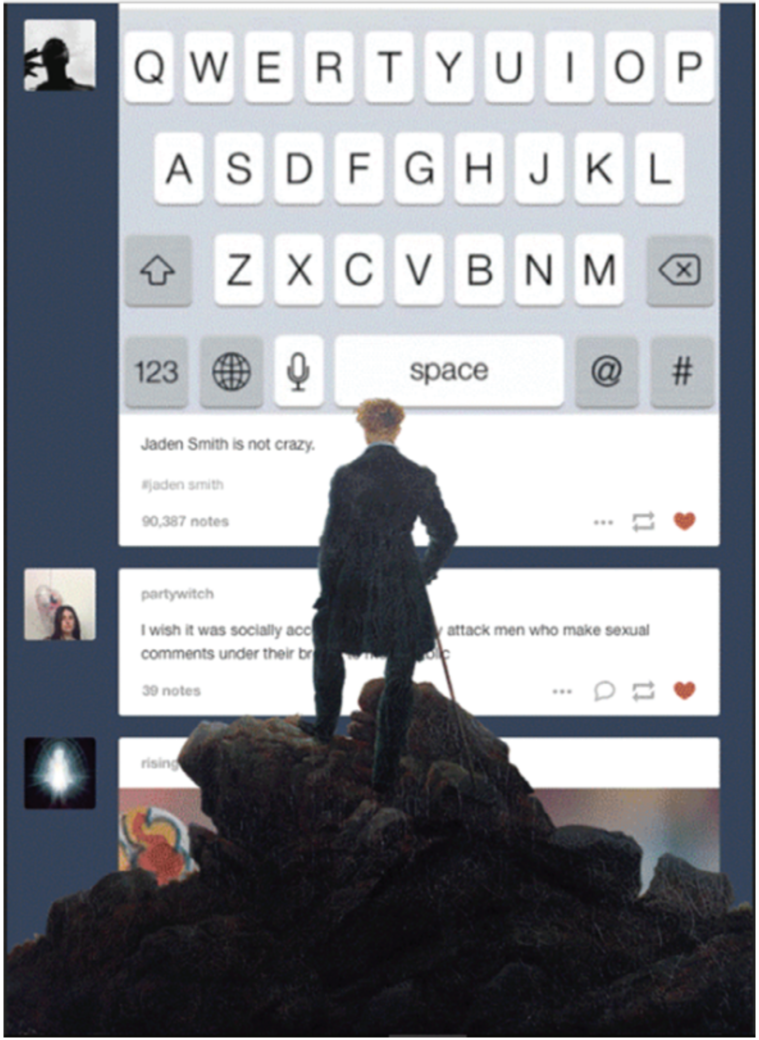
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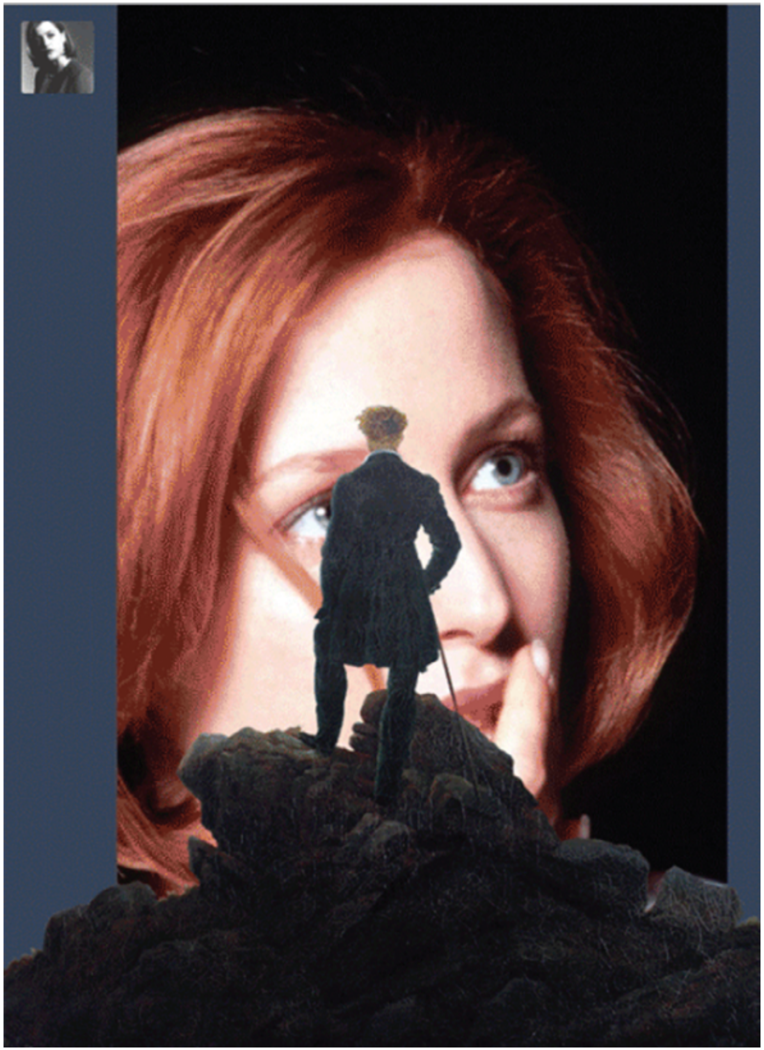

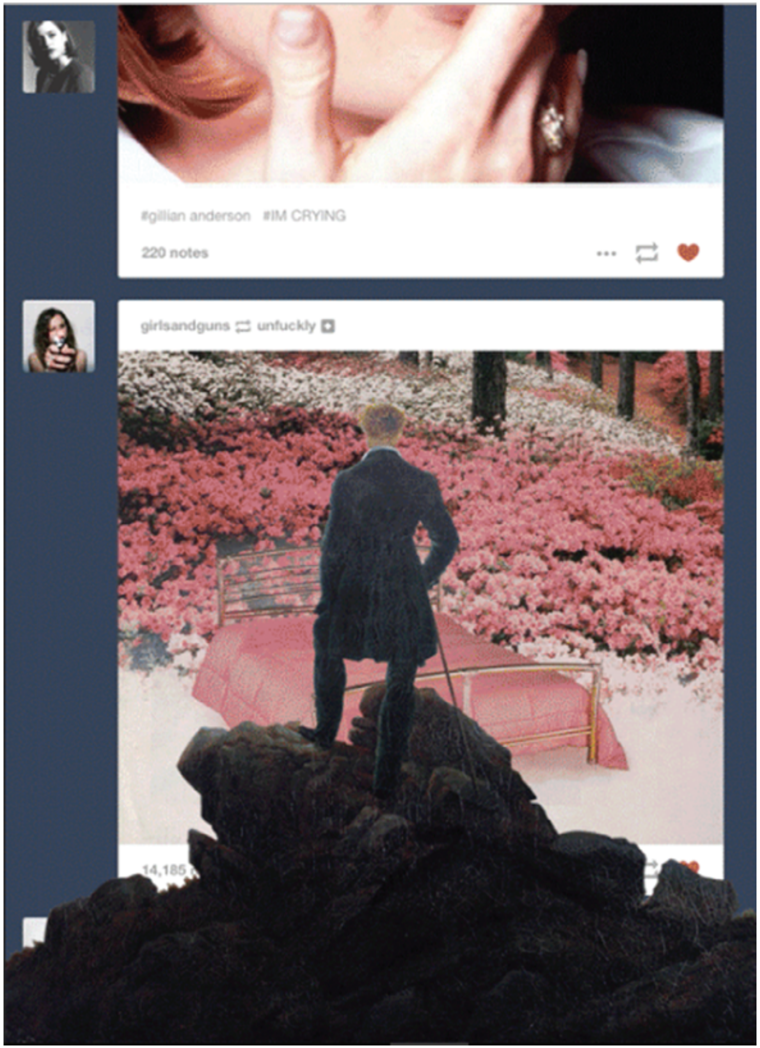
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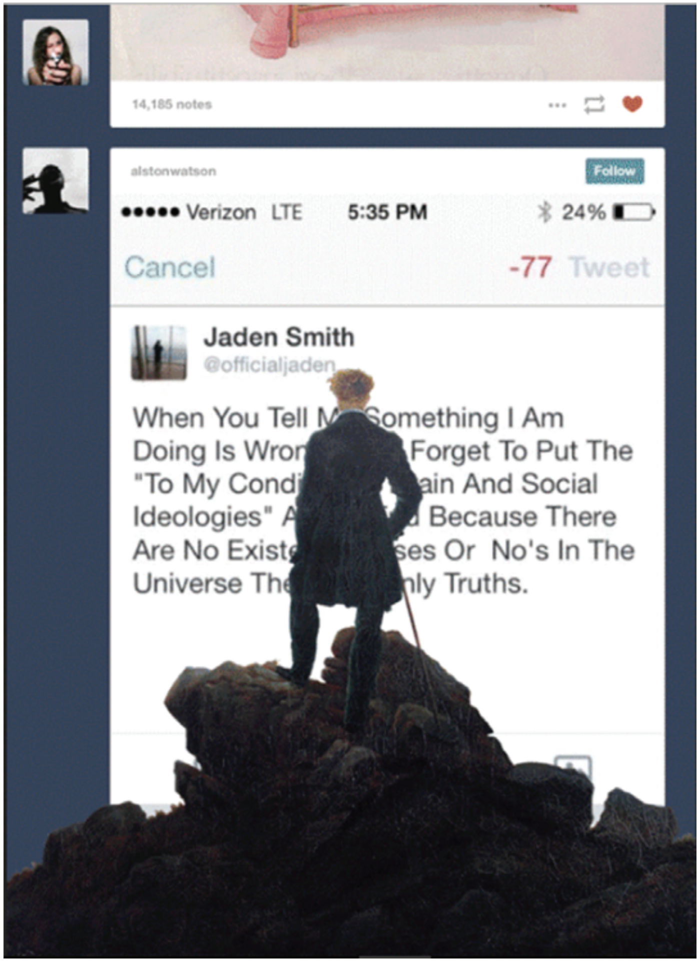
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When You Tell M Something I Am
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Ideologies" A Because There
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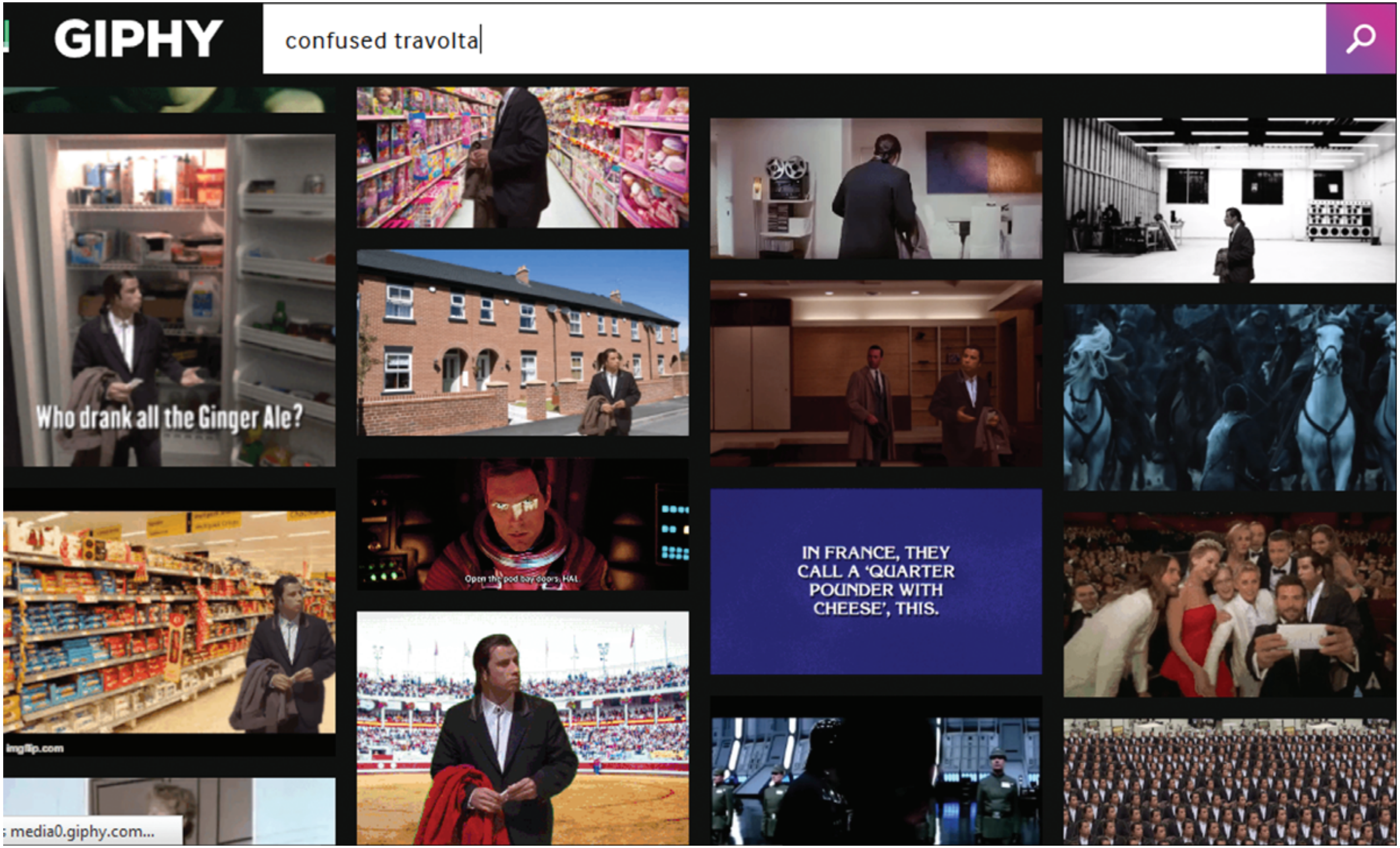
Figures 4 to 8: Dreambeam, Wanderer above a sea of blogs *2016. © Animated GIF on Twitter, Tumblr: http://yrbff.tumblr.com/post/116515324875/wanderer-above-a-sea-of-blogs-by-caspar-david.*



confused travolta

GIPHY
Who drank all the Ginger Ale?
Open the pod bay doors, HAL
IN FRANCE, THEY CALL A 'QUARTER POUNDER WITH CHEESE', THIS.
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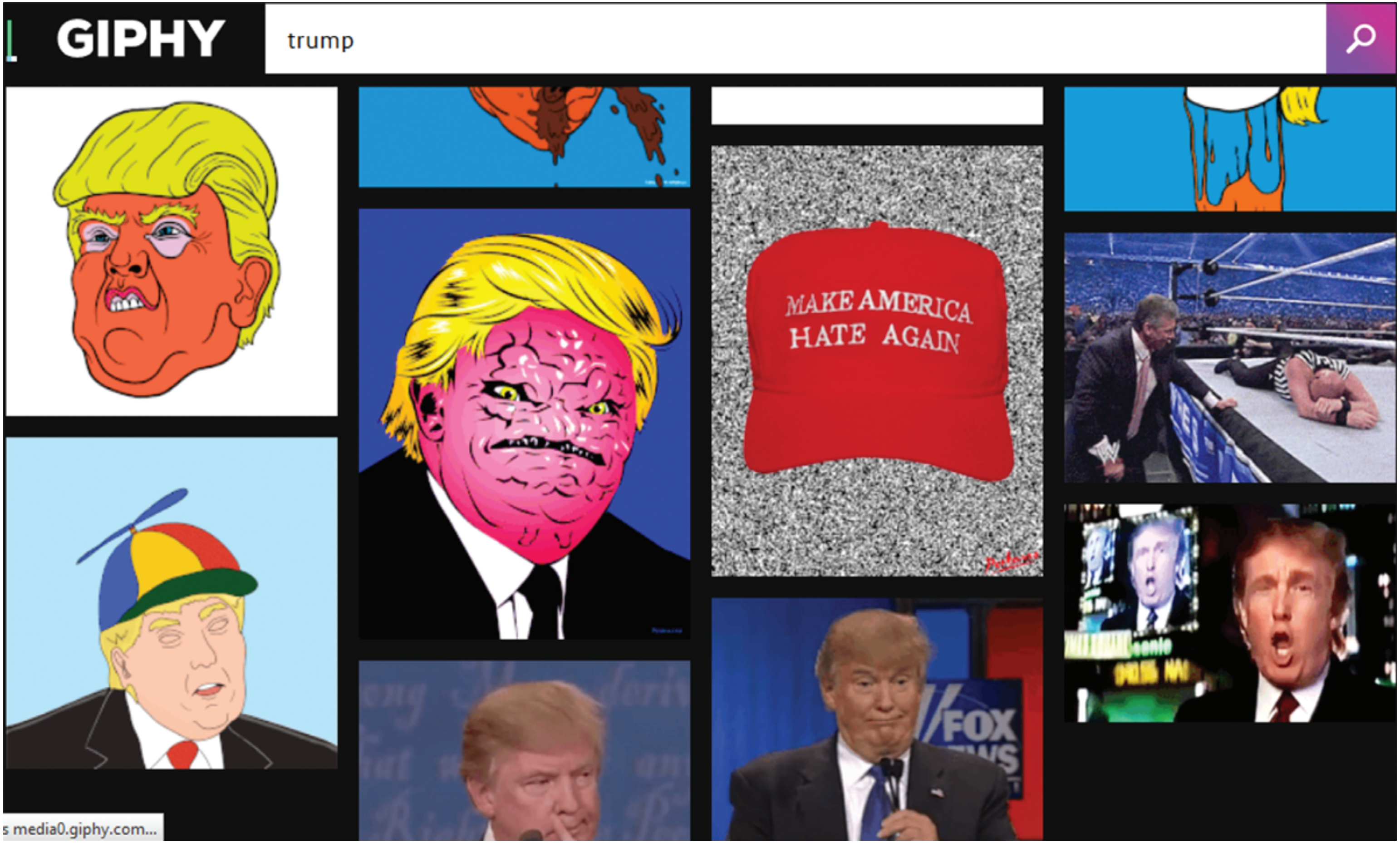
Figure 9: Confused Travolta*, 2016. © Series of animated GIFs. Giphy: http://giphy.com/search/confused-travolta.*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MAKE AMERICA
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Figure 10: Trump. *2017. © Series of animated GIFs. Giphy: http://giphy.com/search/trump.*

participation, it is also an industrial system that dispossesses users of their data, in order that they might be subjected to targeted marketing. This is done by user profiling technologies, including GIFs, here figured as economic instruments, since they are not produced by Internet users but by commercial firms to disseminate advertising on digital social networks, through a new technological form more cognitively effective than an image or a video. This can distance the GIF from a potentially symbolic, even iconic, function to reduce it to a mimetic function. Behaviourally, mimicry is a fundamental mechanism of learning, which involves the synchronization of one's own gestures with those of the imitated person. The GIF can act as a synchronizer of temporal gestures that can be symbols. If these symbols are the same for a very large number of Internet users, it impoverishes and standardizes symbolic production, whose interest and noetic wealth is the opposite of the diversity and singularity of the creators by the expression of the *idios*, that is to say of a typical and personal feature around which individuation will be organized. The figure of the modern artist materializing his subjectivity through a specific artistic style represents in this sense a model of individuation. Thus GIFs can contribute as much to the diffusion of temporal gestures, which may be personal symbols, as to the production of 'symbolic misery' (Stiegler 2013). Beyond the auctorial question, the potentiality of a mimetic reception of the GIF encourages us to think of a diegetic approach, of which the icon can precisely serve as a model. The *diegesis* as a subjectivized narrative reconstruction supposes, like the icon, a personal interpretation of the temporal object.

The promise of distance from an object gives rise to the possibility of interpretation. As Georges Didi-Huberman wrote in the *Surviving Image*: '[t]here is no symbolic world possible without the creation of a "distance"; there is no image creation without rhythmic movement of this distance (sense-meaning) with incorporation (sense-sensible)' (Didi-Huberman 2002: 501).

> Bringing Warburg and Binswanger together once again, interpretation could not construct, as with montage, unless aided by interval itself [and Didi-Huberman quote Warburg]: 'one could here compare this phenomenon to that of the filmic montage or a technique of collage in painting. It follows, then, that what belongs to interpretation itself is of the order of the interval.' […] So much as to say that interpretation always plays out in the in-between sense – there where meaning is yet to be thematically constructed.
>
> (Didi-Huberman 2002: 502)

In the classical iconographic device, the interval's necessary distance is characterized as a *zwischenraum* ('an intermediate space'):

> [f]inally, the 'middle' can be understood as the interval between the images, these details or monads of each table. The gap first appears in the borders that separate the photographic

> prints: they often form large vacant areas of black canvas. This last meaning of the 'middle', to be called in German, *zwischenraum* – the space between – is essential to understand all that Mnemosyne invents and implements in its manipulation of images and in its effects of knowledge.[…] [The intervals] offer the montage its workspace.
>
> (Didi-Huberman 2002: 496)

The void left by the interval is thus called *denkenraum* by Warburg: a *space of thought* in which it is possible to bring a link between the present and the beginning of history, as well as between oneself and the image. I do not melt myself in the image, but I leave between the two of us the distance necessary for reflection, allowing for interpretation and infinite reinterpretation. However, whereas in the iconology of the interval, the hermeneutic distance is spatial, in the iconology of the temporal object the hermeneutic distance is also temporal. It consists in slowing down the frequency of the images to allow for an interpretation, and in repetition, allowing for reinterpretation, and not only engramming. In contrast, the difficulty of reinterpreting the image will be the sign of a loss of its iconicity, of its death as the icon, and the return of a mimetic relation to the image or the temporal gesture. But, interpretation requires a specific attentional inclination. As Jean-Yves Leloup writes in his *Art of Attention*:

> [t]he icon does not arrest my gaze, what gives itself to sight, here; there is a presence that opens me further. From the visible, I go to the invisible. I can then see everything, every visible presence, surrounded, inhabited by invisible; the eyes widens.
>
> (2002: 76)

The psychoanalytic and literary hermeneutics also share the same presupposition of an 'inter-attentional surplus value: the interweaving of coupled but floating attentions, that is to say, although anxious to detach from one another, they produce sensitivities and new knowledge, superior to the sum of the knowledge brought by each one' (Citton 2014: 172). Jean-Marie Schaeffer also shows that the attentional style required by poetic experience, but also by the aesthetic experiences proposed by contemporary art, is based on a 'delay in categorization' (2011). That is a delay in the activity of hermeneutic synthesis, which allows the individual to give meaning to what he feels. In other words, it is a temporal extension of the cognitive treatment of the object in favor of its immediate sensory enjoyment. Thus, the hermeneutic interval for the temporal object must make it possible to experience an icon and not an image. It is a time interval, not just a spatial one. Analysis of the video art of the GIF and its contributions to our retentional problem, elements of reflection on the *temporal gesture*, the pharmacology of engramming and the hermeneutic interval here are present in this discussion in the service of the realization of a tertiary retentional iconological device. Finally, in the third part of this article, we will present a few technological propositions for the implementation of an iconology of temporal suspension and insistence through the presentation of our video work: *Iconologie pour Objet Temporel*.

To realize an iconology for temporal object, we wanted to reuse five cinematographic techniques whose iconographic effectiveness resides, as for the GIF, in the suspension and the repetition of temporal sequences. These were: the three-second pause, the three-minute pause, the repetition of time sequences, the increase of the volume of a repeated sequence, and the exchange of sequences between the films. As such, they become strategies of temporal suspension or insistence, with the aim of reintegrating certain images, replicas and temporal gestures, which may be symbolic, or iconic, in the cinematographic flow. These strategies have the effect of suspending the flow. This is done in order not only to impregnate the consciousness with certain cinematographic images and sequences, to embed memory, but also to entreat the imagination to interpret and reinterpret the image or sequence presented. These five techniques allow for the iconization of certain images or sequences of the film, which we chose for their strong meaning:

> Ernst Cassirer [wrote Didi-Huberman] perfectly expressed what in his friend's work was organized for the comprehension of forms through forces – 'configuring energies' – which were themselves identified in the eye of their own storm, 'in the middle of the tempest and the whirlwind of life itself', that is to say, this disaster: that time never ceases in its desire to engulf us.
>
> (Didi-Huberman 2011b)

With the temporal object, the forms of time are spatialized and materialized by flows of information and video sequences. Suspension, insistence and delay strategies must work as *configuring energies* that symbolically organize flows against digital and video eddies that flatten and drown symbols in digital virtual spaces.

The three-second pause and the three-minute pause are temporal suspension strategies. They allow the viewer to both reflect on a sequence that has just ended, but also to observe more carefully and precisely the paused image. The repetition of the sequence and the increase in the volume of repeated sequences are strategies of temporal insistence. A repeated sequence makes it possible to review it more precisely and to better memorize it. When the volume of one sequence is increased, it draws attention away from the other film sequences. The increased volume takes account of attentional competition between the bands, and distinguishes a sequence as significant. Finally, the exchange of sequences between the films makes it possible to show the significant filiations between the temporal objects in order to constitute vehicle-sequences rather than vehicle-images (*Bilderfahrzeuge*, according to the Warburgian concept). There is a possibility that the interpretation of the films in enriched by cognitive imprint of past sequences. Through displacement, these past sequences recall significant elements for their interpretation, but also, for the interpretation of the integrated bands. Thus, they act as secondary tertiarized retentions, which it is a matter of 'primarizing', by making them reappear in the temporal present of a filmic tape as a primary retention. This last strategy breaks the narrative continuity of a story in favor of its hermeneutic enrichment by external elements, which make the spectator's imagination work. This intrinsic power of imagination is at the heart of the Warburg *Mnemosyne Atlas* project:

> [t]he imagination accepts the multiple and returns to it to discover new intimate and secret correspondences and analogies which will themselves be inexhaustible, as every inexhaustible thought of the relations that a new montage, each time, will be capable of manifesting.
> (Didi-Huberman 2011a: 14)

However, despite the difficulty of simultaneously reading the temporal sequences of the four films, there emerges the possibility of a singular experience in certain moments of the links between attention and cognition, by means of an encounter between attention and cognition with the multiplicity and simultaneity of the device's temporal objects. This cognitive experience is increasingly commonplace with the development of new multimedia technologies. The scattered attention span is caused by simultaneous connection to multiple audio-visual channels. This phenomenon, better known as 'multitasking', is now the source of new problems in the ecology of the mind, as it generates cognitive saturation effects (Galligo and Stiegler 2013). The increased presence of our five retention strategies at the end of our temporal device's, however, makes it possible to experience the plasticity and the adaptive faculties of our attentional capacities, thus making possible once again the aesthetic and iconic enjoyment of the temporal objects presented. While at the beginning of the video experience, the spectator is bored because his attention is quickly saturated, a change of aesthetic experience occurs when he or she agrees to continue the experiment longer, despite the reading difficulties mentioned. The experience of the device no longer consists of trying to follow and understand all four stories, but instead switches between the four videos, guided by the five strategies of temporal suspension and insistence, that attract attention, structure and organize the aesthetic experience of the viewer. The experiment of the device thus oscillates between an ambiental reception of the device and a semantic and semiotic reception of certain images and sequences that act as moments of aesthetic intensity. These intensities are built not in rupture with the ambiental environment but in a progressive way by the distinction and crystallization of an indistinct and unreadable semantic background which takes form at the significant moments chosen in the narratives. The aesthetic enjoyment and the possibilities of intelligibility of the device are thus determined by our cognitive potentialities. If the cognitive 'cost' of the proposed experiment is too excessive, either the viewer will interrupt the experiment, or

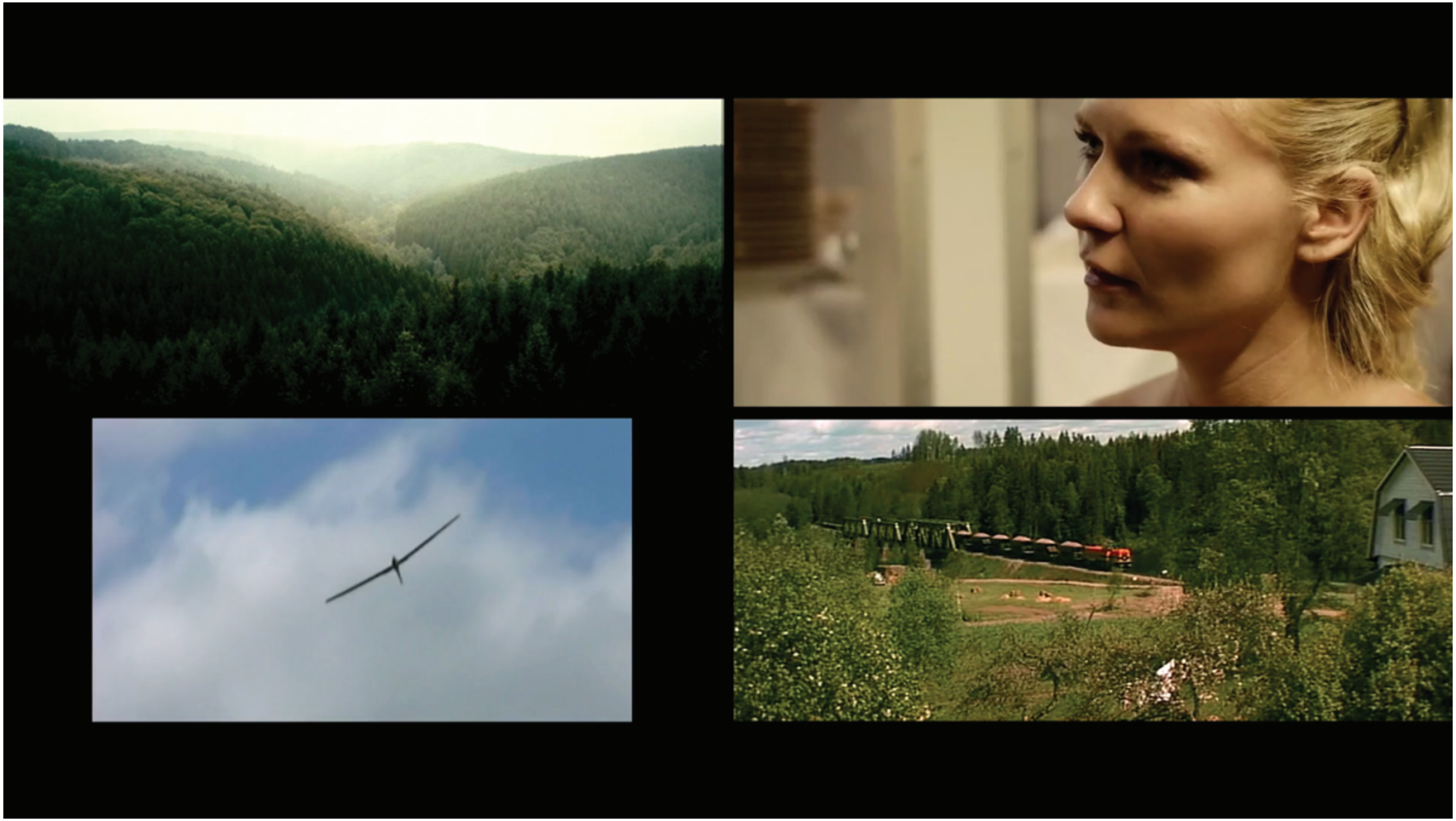

Figure 11: Igor Galligo, Gregory Dassié, Iconologie pour objet temporel. *1h03m51s. 2016. © Vidéo device, 2h33. Viméo: https://vimeo.com/170165536.*

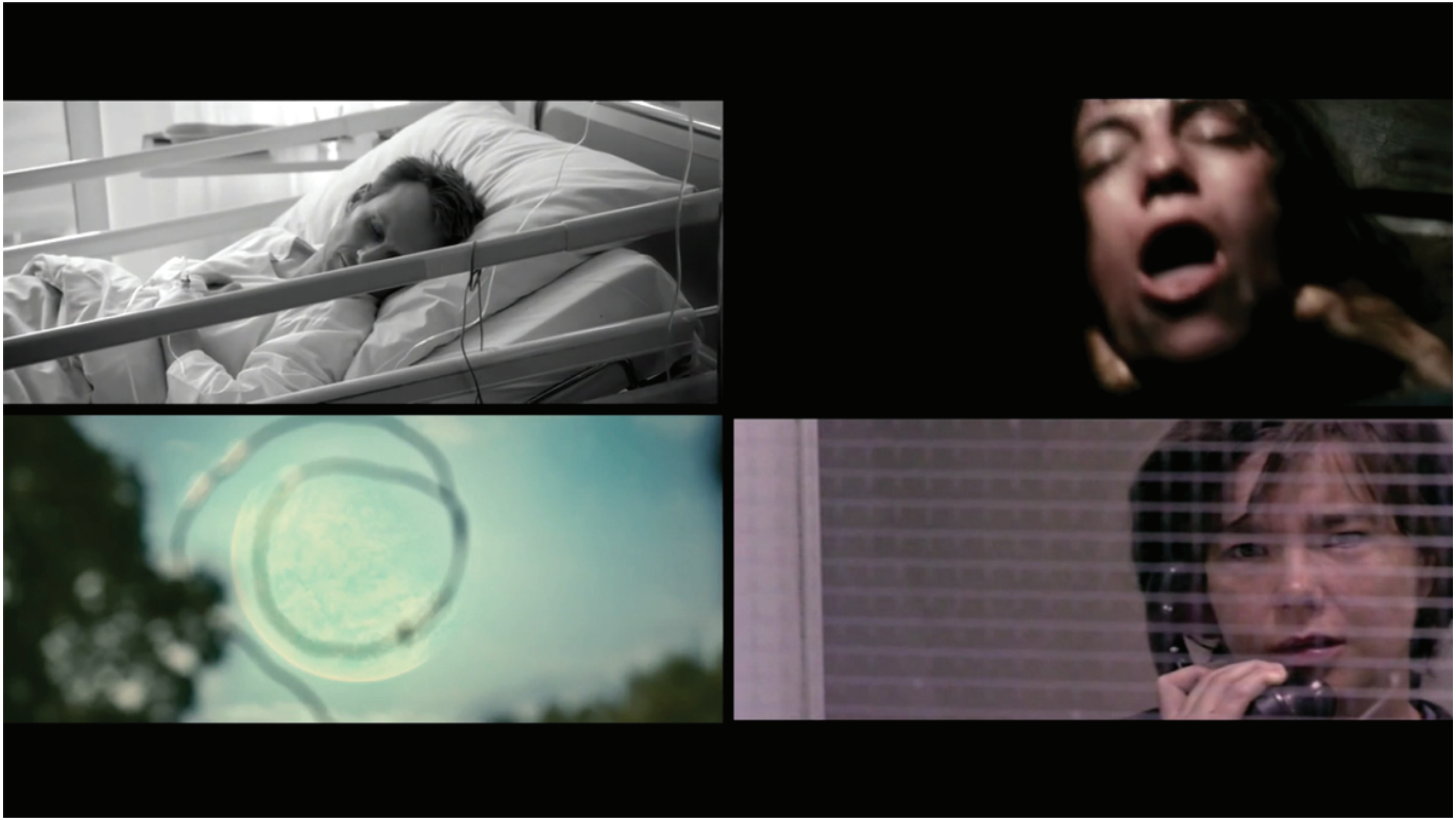

Figure 12: Igor Galligo, Gregory Dassié, Iconologie pour objet temporel*. 1h57m16s. 2016. © Vidéo device, 2h33. Viméo: https://vimeo.com/170165536.*

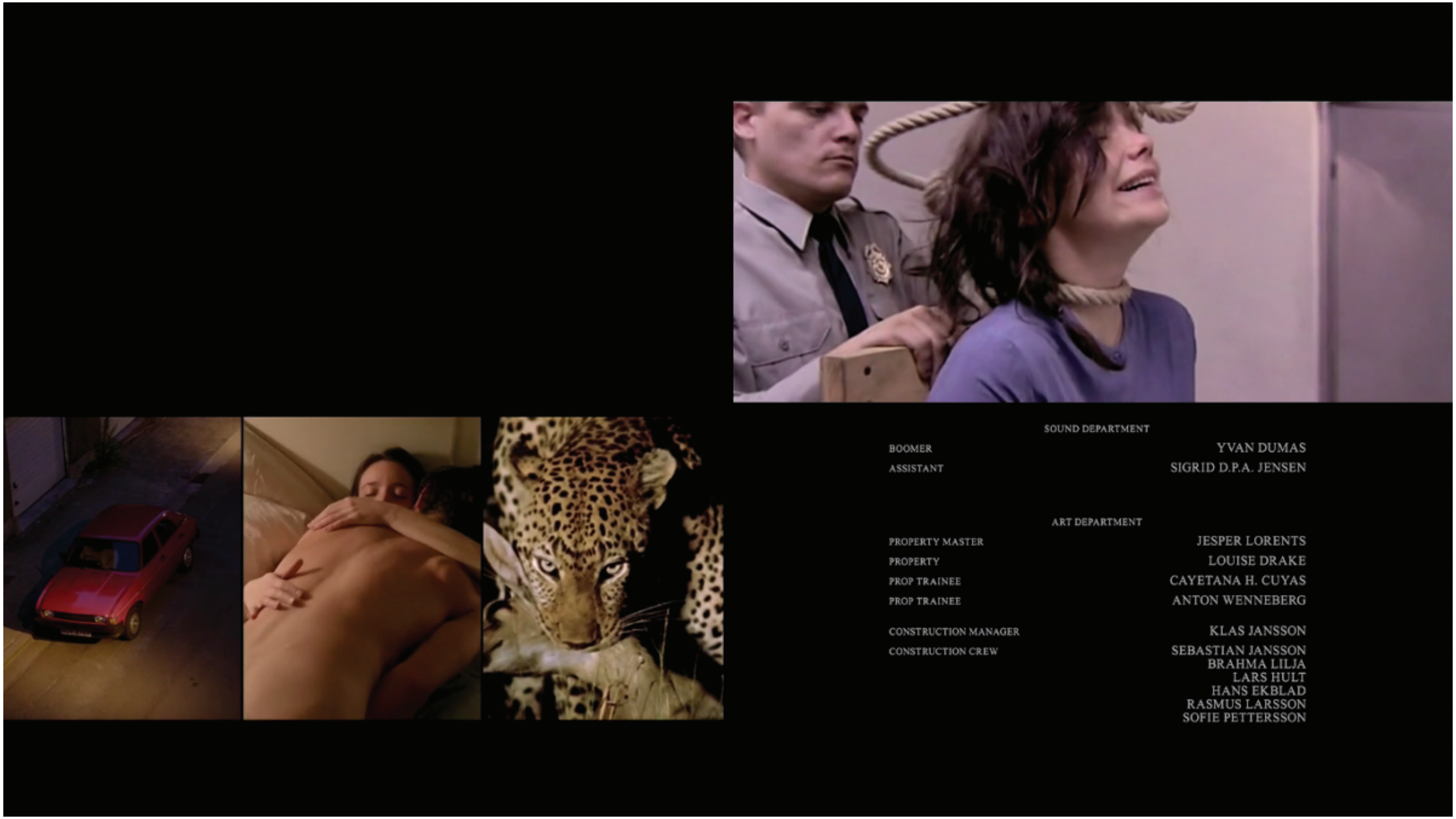

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Figure 13: Igor Galligo, Gregory Dassié, Iconologie pour objet temporel. *2h24m22s. 2016. © Vidéo device, 2h33. Viméo: https://vimeo.com/170165536.*

he will reconfigure it from other sense data and stakes other than those of video playback (which he had incorporated as a visual and cognitive practice). The multimedia device we have produced therefore proposes a reconfiguration of the aesthetic experience of video playback from two aesthetic polarities that articulate the experience of the device: icon and atmosphere. The icon dissolves in the atmosphere, while the atmosphere takes shape in the icon by promotion of retention's sedimentation and attention's crystallization implemented by our five strategies. Our *Iconology for Temporal Object* is woven from the cognitive and aesthetic play of these two polarities.

From the video art of the GIF, we were able to develop five techniques of temporal gestures constituting five strategies of temporal suspension and insistence. These form a retentional tertiarized device of attention, memory and interpretation that allows us to imagine an iconological device for temporal object. However, we do not defend the thesis that the icon would be constituted only by the interplay of attention, interpretation and memory in front of an image or a sequence, whatever its object. Not every image can be icon, and not every audio/video sequence garners cult status. However, leave aside the question of whether an image or a created sequence has intrinsic symbolic power, that is to say, the question of the *poïétic* power of the iconographer, here it is a matter of organizing the possibility of icon formation by a specific reception of images and sequences that, in its very constitution, takes into account the potency of the attentional, hermeneutic and memory factors. On the former point, Aby Warburg derailed the conception of the work of the iconographer, which consists not of drawing icons but of revealing them and highlighting them by the genealogical reconstruction of the history of the formal symbolic matrices of a culture. It was already felt that the aesthetic experience of art does not depend exclusively on the artistic production and the *poïétic* qualities of its creators. Rather, it was felt to depend also on its aesthetic reception, the sensibility disposed to receive it, and the capacity of technology to interfere with and participate in the formation of spiritual beliefs. If Warburg, on the occasion of his famous lecture on *The Serpent's Ritual* (Warburg et al. 2015), defends the idea of an 'eternal paganism' that transcends cultures,

> the conclusion of the conference is of a rather dark tone, and the tension is perceptible, [as Didi-Huberman indicates], it ends with technology's victory, one that expels magical practice, dispels the fear of lightning and snakes by domesticating electricity, now a prisoner of a copper snake, but that has not yet solved the enigmas of existence, thus depriving man of the possibility of coping symbolically with these enigmas, and the fears they arouse.
>
> (Didi-Huberman 2011b)

Even at this point, the dangers of modern science and technology on the life and formation of culture *(kultur)* are raised, joining the Freudian argument (Freud [1929] 2010) that a mastery of nature by science and technology will have falsely dissipated the *anxieties of the existence*.

However, what was not yet seen was that science and technology were not merely in competition with culture and religion on the fight against fear by knowledge, but that they also transform and condition sensorial, attention and retentions capacities, and thereby the ability to experience certain emotional, aesthetic and iconic experiences, as writes Bernard Stiegler in *De la misère symbolique*, developing the leroi-Gourhantian thesis of the technicization of the living (Leroi-Gourhan [1964] 1974):

> [w]e can distinguish at least two esthetics, that of psycho-physiologists, a study of sensory organs, and that of the history of art, artifacts, symbols and works. While the psycho-physiological aesthetics appear to be stable, the aesthetics of artifacts, over time, are caught in unceasing evolution. The stability of the sensory organs is an illusion in that they are submitted to an incessant process of defunctionalisation and refunctionalisation, precisely linked to the evolution of artefacts.
>
> (2013: 18)

The attentional, hermeneutic and memory capacities necessary for iconography and iconology are today strongly disturbed by kinematic and digitals revolutions, which introduce new grammatizations and condition our aesthetic and noetic life. Fortunately, the human species, originally constituted by its *prostheticity*, has a third memory, neither genetic nor epigenetic: the epiphylogenetic medium, as the total of the tertiary retentions, forming retentional artefactual devices, which will perhaps enable us to respond to certain negative technological effects exerted on the life of the contemporary mind. Today's artistic and technological challenge is not only about creating news icons or *symbolic forms* (Ernst Cassirer), but above all about inventing new devices allowing their aesthetic and cultural effectiveness, in our new organological configurations.

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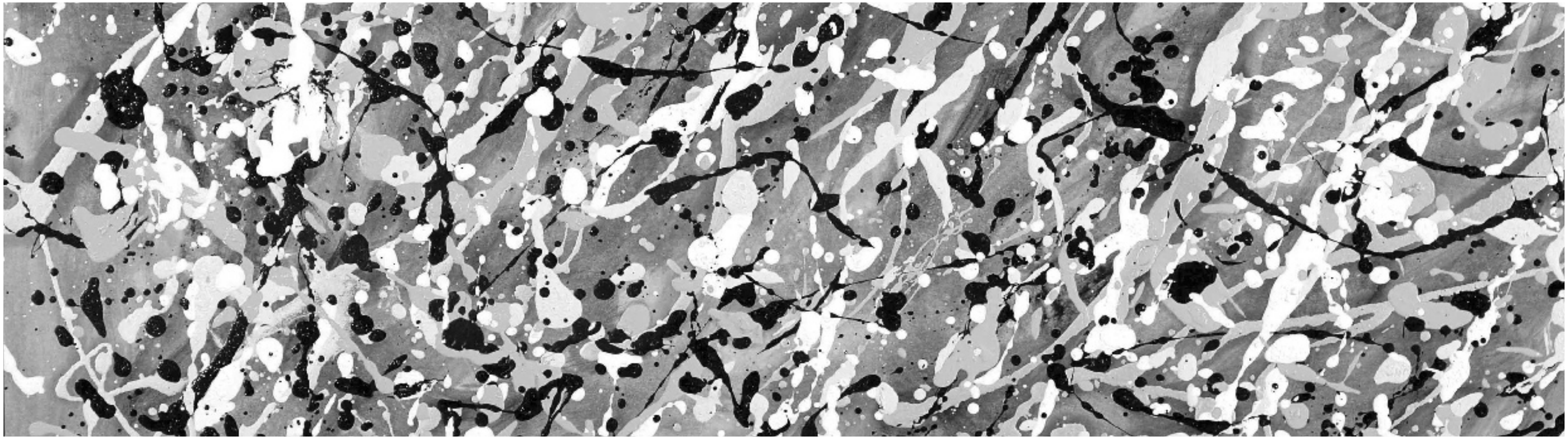

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