

# D I G I T A L F A C T U R E

PAINTING AFTER NEW MEDIA ART

DOCTORAL THESIS

SCHOOL OF FINE ART

*A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy*

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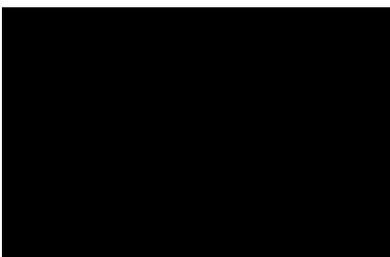
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# DECLARATION

I, James Eley Haldane Frew, declare that the enclosed submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and consisting of the Thesis entitled “Digital Facture: Painting After New Media Art” meets the regulations stated in the handbook for the mode of submission selected and approved by the Research Degrees Sub-Committee.

I declare that this submission is my own work and has not been submitted for any other academic award.



**James Frew**

The School of Fine Art

The Glasgow School of Art

01/09/21

This research is dedicated to the memory of Karen Roulstone.

**digital** (adjective)

dig · i · tal | \ “di-jə-təl” \

: characterised by electronic and especially computerised technology

**facture** (noun)

fac · ture | \ “fak-chər” \

: the manner in which something (such as a painting) is made

**Merriam-Webster Dictionary**



*“I think the potential of what the Internet is going to do to society, both good and bad, is unimaginable... I’m talking about the actual context and the state of content is going to be so different... Where the interplay between the user and the provider will be so in simpatico it’s going to crush our ideas of what mediums are all about.”*

**David Bowie**

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# ABSTRACT

By exploring the research question ‘*What is the position of expanded painting practices and processes within a perpetually shifting new media art discourse, and how has this affected the translation of the painted gesture?*’ this thesis investigates the painted gesture’s translation into a digital discourse. Specifically, the translative properties of the painted gesture, its formal underpinnings, the overall themes associated with new media art and the post-digital, and the key practitioners and processes emerging from painting’s mobilisation within a technologically embedded environment. The impetus for this research arises from the often-contested nature of definition and classification within a new media art setting.

Situated as practice-based, and employing an emergent, mixed methods approach, this research heuristically gathers material data generated in a studio setting. Practical artefacts support quantitative and qualitative contextual research following an inter-, multi-, and trans-disciplinary method of making.

Contributions arise through synthesising a hybrid model of critical and contextual positions, which conclude that a polymorphic definition of paint(ing) emerges. By blending previously divided formal classifications of “medium” and “media”, an original definition of the post-digital painted gesture manifests. Moreover, by surveying a broad range of contemporary practitioners, characteristic formal traits termed “Digital Factures” emerge, that map technology’s role within contemporary painting. Numerous practical research strands expand these investigations, exploring analogue and digital modes of production, using URLs as a

formal tenet to examine the fundamentally translative nature of post-digital painting. Key findings include paint(ing) as data, and skeuomorphism as a form of material and gestural simulacra. Synthesised from these enquiries is the “Hyperfacture”, which delineates liminal, polymorphic, and translative functions of post-digital painting.

Overall, this research remediates, to an extent, previously unclarified gestural trends, and classifications, allowing for a more cohesive understanding of contemporary painting’s formal and cultural conditions, by expanding its position within a broader media theory context.

**Keywords.** Post-digital, painting, gesture, medium, media, new media, translative, network, re-mediatised, technology, practice-based, mixed methods, inter-, multi-, trans-, discipline.

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# INTRODUCTION

## RESEARCH OVERVIEW

### **[a.] BACKGROUND**

For the past few years, through practice-based material and technical exploration, my research has aimed to re-evaluate what painting in the expanded field is. My study identified what I believed to be an impasse within the expanded field condition. I considered the Greenbergian paradigm of medium insularity and its definition as a reductive, singular, medium-specific pursuit. I perceived that even within an expanded field context, artists had entered a second state of insularity, albeit in a reconfigured way. I believed artists were self-referring to media in an expanded sense, or “meta-formalism” as I referred to this phenomenon; essentially, interdisciplinary media for the sake of itself. Fundamentally, I believed artists had reached the endgame of an expanded painting modality. Much like the modernist paradigm before it, so too did the model of expanded art production exhaust itself by focusing too much on the singular goal of cross-pollinating media and failing to keep up with a more critically and socially dynamic system of thought appropriate to a post-postmodernist<sup>1</sup> discourse. Ultimately, my research aimed to address how this second wave of insularity was capable of being overcome, by reassessing the current position of the visual arts through addressing the broader social index of painting in a globalised, new media framework. After further research, however, I realised that artists were employing expanded painting in a way that circumvented the

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<sup>1</sup> As shall be clarified later within this thesis, following post-postmodernism, altermodernism and metamodernism emerge as specific critical frameworks which situate my research context more precisely.

stagnation I perceived. This form of expanded painting aptly engaged with a more comprehensive social and cultural climate: I witnessed this within the technologically aware discourse of *post-digital* painting.

Several recent exhibitions which, through the advantages of readily available funding and publicity from being staged at distinguished art institutions have sought to exemplify painting's expansion into mainstream digital culture. Specific examples of such shows (all staged between 2014–2015, which curiously denotes a prevailing urgency for technologically imbued painting within a precise cultural moment) include: *Painting After Technology* (2015), curated by Mark Godfrey at Tate London, *The Forever Now: Contemporary Painting in an Atemporal World* (2014), curated by Laura Hoptman at New York's Museum of Modern Art, and *Painting 2.0: Expression in the Information Age* (2015), hosted by Munich's Museum Brandhorst, and curated by Achim Hochdörfer, David Joselit, Manuela Ammer, and Tonio Kröner. These exhibitions, which through slick production and an ostensible veneer of contemporaneity, showcase mostly higher profile painters, delineating a cultural progression of painting's mobilisation within a digital or technological discourse, focusing mostly on situating it within a canon of sorts. Through the primary focus of tying digitally engaged painting to a cultural legacy, I would argue that these exhibitions fail to illuminate the specific and current formal trends emerging from this form of painting. Moreover, I would argue that some of the most recent and exciting advancements being made within digitally aware painting operate at a grassroots level, through lesser-known emerging artists, whom have mostly been omitted by these widely exposed, high budget exhibitions hosted by established institutions. These emerging artists incorporate a manifold range of new production processes, pictorial content, morphological approaches, and modes of dissemination, that have not been afforded the attention deserved to them; attention which, when explored in more depth, situates the formal parameters inherent to the discourse of a "post-digital painted gesture" and how it is expanding.

Despite its germane critical engagement, I observed that painting within a post-digital context was not without its flaws. As a result of technological proliferation, there has followed a mass conflation of analogue and digital media. Consequently, contested and often conflicting assumptions on the nature and categorisation of formal terminologies have arisen in this ever-expanding field of art practice.<sup>2</sup> Artists and commentators widely accept, however, that digital

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<sup>2</sup> Omar Kholeif, *Goodbye World! Looking at Art in the Digital Age*, (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2018), p. 112.

technology has only strengthened paintings perennial importance as a medium; the curator Hans Ulrich Obrist asserts that the conflation of digital and analogue modes of production propose painting as an ‘urgent’<sup>3</sup> medium. This notion is mirrored in the view of fellow curator Laura Hoptman as she identifies the assimilation of digital languages into painting as an exciting area of development, asserting the importance of practitioners using different languages of digital painting.<sup>4</sup> Obrist and Hoptman confirm then, that not only is digitally engaged painting an essential and current discourse but that there exists a diversity of different *languages* of digital painting.

Following my enquiries into new media art, I observed painting and its relationship with technology was no new phenomenon: I noted this in several movements. These relationships ranged from the technological and scientific advancements of the High Renaissance, through to the pioneering interrelationships of computational and artistic practices witnessed in the exhibition *Cybernetic Serendipity* held at London’s Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in 1968. However, with the rise of digital technology, painting has entered new forms of expanded enquiry following new media art practices. Resulting from this condition, the term “digital artisan” has been used to describe artists engaged with digital and technological processes.

Emerging from the term “digital native” (which refers to the generation born after the Internet, c.1989), the digital artisan describes those who have more easily embraced the situation of technology within their practice due to its immediate and ubiquitous presence within their lives. Consequently, there has been an increased number of artists operating within a digital mode who were born after this time. In her article, *Paintings that Blur Pigment and Pixel* (2015) the writer Eve Perry, focuses on the role of this group of artists, referring to their work as ‘Post-Analog’.<sup>5</sup> Perry frames the context for these artists amidst the 2015 exhibition *Post-Analog Painting* hosted by New York’s The Hole Gallery, describing this recent manifestation of painting as: ‘... a genre defined by our current post-millennial moment where artists

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<sup>3</sup> Andrew M. Goldstein, ‘Curator Hans Ulrich Obrist on What Makes Painting an “Urgent” Medium Today’, in *Artspace*, (Artspace Online, 2016), in URL: <https://bit.ly/2MAW1La>, accessed 16/06/20.

<sup>4</sup> Dylan Kerr, ‘MoMA Curator Laura Hoptman on how to Tell a Good Painting From a “Bogus” Painting’, in *Artspace*, (Artspace Online, 2017), in URL: <https://bit.ly/2N2YDzG>, accessed 16/06/20.

<sup>5</sup> Eve Perry, ‘Paintings that Blur Pigment and Pixel’, in *Hyperallergic*, (Hyperallergic Online, 2015), in <https://bit.ly/2lt45LX>, accessed 16/06/20.

*grapple with the ubiquity of digital technology.*<sup>6</sup> Within this discourse, commonly referred to genres that contextualise technological painting are “post-internet” and “post-analogue.” These genres are extensions of the post-digital, which itself exists as a cultural entity that addresses humanity’s changing relationship with technology.

Tracing these genres back to their roots, 1989 saw a paradigm shift in cultural and political ideologies. A year marked by innovation and radical social change: events such as the collapse of the Berlin Wall heralded the dissolution of the Iron Curtain and the end of the Cold War. The invention of the World Wide Web set the stage for the Internet as we know it today, amidst the backdrop of a blooming Millennial generation. I was born in October 1989, placing me at the inception of the digital native demographic. This group, who along with subsequent generations, comprise more than half of the world's current population, are only just starting to have their creative voices heard.<sup>7</sup> As a digital artisan born of this generation, I have a personal stake to claim in contributing to the evolution of cultural and formal trends within the contemporary expansion of post-digital art.

Overall, the background terms and genres explored in this section fall under a new media art categorisation (as art forms that are created by practitioners with new media, or adjacent technologies), which itself emerges from an altermodern<sup>8</sup> movement. It is not within the remit of this thesis to address every possible discourse emerging from altermodern and new media umbrella categorisations, which would render this research project unwieldy. However, for broader contextual reference, I have mapped a loose overview of the relationships these genres and movements share in Tables 1 and 2.

## **[b.] RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

As a result of the continual expansion of information and the diversity of technology in a new media, altermodern social condition, contested, fragmented, and inconsistent definitions on the

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Simon Castets & Hans Ulrich Obrist, *89+*, (89+ Online, 2021), in URL: <https://bit.ly/3iWeFdU>, accessed 27/07/21.

<sup>8</sup> Coined by the curator Nicolas Bourriaud, altermodernism is summarised by him as ‘*the specific modernity according to the specific context we live in – globalization, and its economic, political and cultural conditions.*’ Bartholomew Ryan & Nicolas Bourriaud, ‘Altermodern: A Conversation with Nicolas Bourriaud’, in *Art in America*, (Art in America Online, 2009), in URL: <https://bit.ly/2OS8N9T>, accessed 16/06/20.

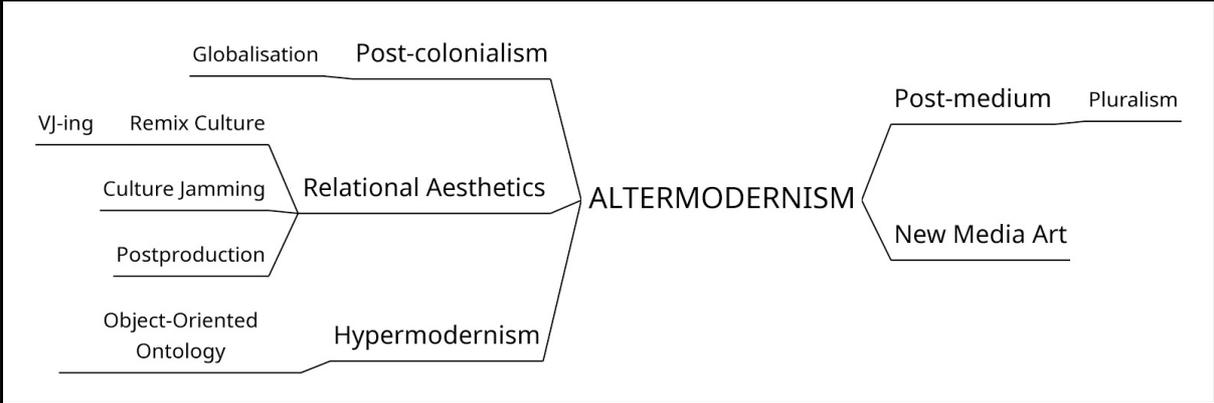


Table 1: *Altermodern Umbrella*.

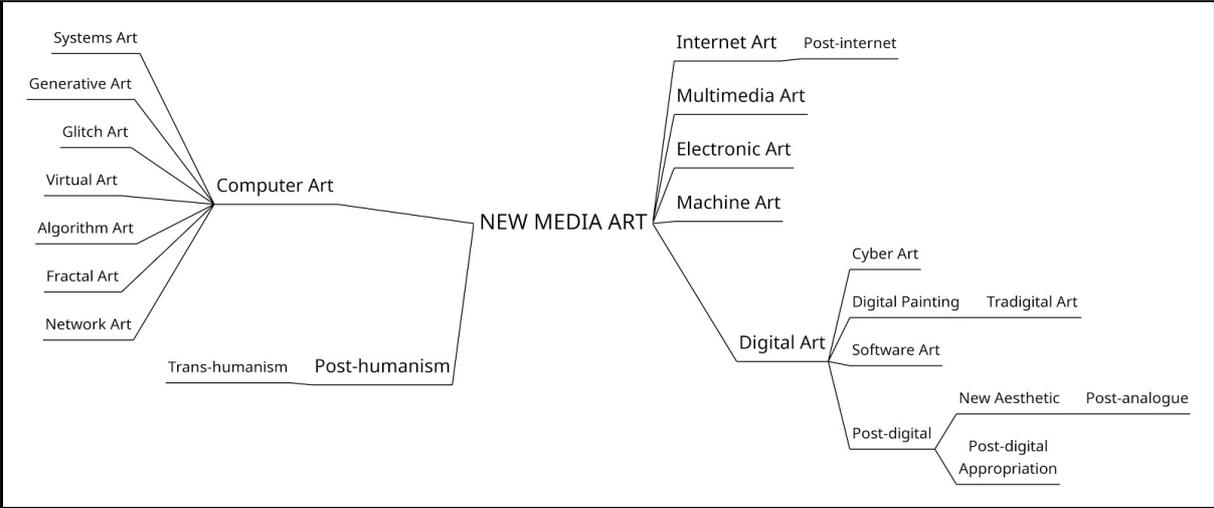


Table 2: *New Media Art Umbrella*.

nature of post-new media painting exist. This confusion perpetuates amongst critical commentators through binary terminologies such as “medium” (the means of a works’ construction) and “media” (the means of a works’ transmission). Consequently, there exists no definitive taxonomy that adequately articulates the *networked* (capable of existing in multiple contexts), *translative* (capable of translating into both medium and media), and *re-mediatised* (capable of adopting features of other media, or completely shifting material context) gestural phenomena evolving within post-digital painting. As such, this research investigates the painted gesture and its translative manifestations within recent digital and technological discourses. It does this by considering the primary question of *What is the position of expanded painting practices and processes within a perpetually shifting new media art discourse and how has this affected the translation of the painted gesture?* Specifically, the *polymorphic* (which this research identifies as a painting’s capacity to exist in multiple analogue and digital material states and locations simultaneously) capacity gesture presents amidst analogue and digital modes of production and reception, alongside its formal underpinnings

and classifications. This research also explores how the overall themes associated with new media art and the post-digital influence painting's reception, as well as the key practitioners and processes emerging from painting's mobilisation within a technologically embedded environment. As such, I aim to provide an original definition of the post-digital painted gesture. I shall do this by contextualising it against trending gestural phenomena I have termed "Digital Factures" that have emerged within post-digital painting enquiry; this expands upon the painterly languages hinted at by commentators such as Obrist and Hoptman.

Further expansion and contextualisation of these painterly languages is pertinent due to the often-contested nature of definition and classification within a new media art setting, that extends from a technologically embedded, altermodern social condition. I have determined that a structured taxonomy of new media painting styles should emerge due to limited classification into the specific yet manifold surface morphologies that have arisen from painting's translation from a singular analogue entity, into a networked, digital system. Specifically, the idea of surface *morphology* within my research centres around the ubiquity of digital artisans using computers and digital technologies alongside physical materials in their painting practices. Common attributes that represent these "morphologies" include manually rendering images found online using traditional painting strategies, making painterly gestures using proprietary software, applications, or technologies that extend the potential of the human hand, and using chance procedures to produce pictorial arrangements that act as materialised analogues of virtual spaces. As a result, what I refer to as surface morphologies arise from processes and materials that question traditional notions of expressive subjectivity. These modes of production are attached to painting as a discipline by frequently employing algorithmic strategies, that position contemporary painting as translative, unfixed, polymorphic, and as a form of data. By investigating the manifold yet specific attributes of these painterly approaches under the Digital Fracture term, I aim to provide further clarity within the discourse of new media painting as to what *processes* (the means of construction), *morphologies* (the physical surface properties), *interactions* (how the painting is assimilated and disseminated) and *surface content* (the composition and subject matter) artists are employing within their work. Overall, the impact I aim to achieve with this research is a broadening of how artists and commentators fundamentally understand paint(ing) within a contemporary context of post-digital art practices.

Through my research, I have perceived that a gap in current painting practice exists. Specifically, there is no definitive taxonomy of how the processes, morphologies, interactions, and surface content of the painted gesture have formally evolved in a contemporary, technologically imbued society. Instead, existing literature focuses on digital and technologically engaged painting practices as a cultural whole, rather than as a collective set of specific painterly entities, with distinct properties. As such, a complete definition of what constitutes as the post-digital painted gesture does not exist, which I believe adds to the uncertainty of formal terminology within new media painting. Accordingly, I aim to remediate, to an extent, the confusion surrounding the classification of the painted gesture's role amidst a conceptually incoherent body of technologically adept discourses. My research aims to assess and provide a useful contribution to this emergent field through a formal analysis of the relationships between pigment and pixel, the analogue and the digital, paint as pure data, the authenticity of the brushstroke, and painting's liminal status amidst analogue and digital modes of production. Furthermore, contrary to commonly held beliefs within the field of new media art study, I argue that the language to describe a post-digital condition in relation to painting already exists (albeit in a fragmented and incoherent state)—it just needs to be properly framed and articulated.

Arising from these gaps in knowledge, my Primary Research Question is:

- *What is the **position** of expanded painting practices and processes within a perpetually shifting new media art discourse, and how has this affected the **translation** of the painted **gesture**?*

Distilled from the Primary Research Question, the following sub-research questions have emerged:

- *What is the position of expanded painting within new media art?*
- *How is the Post-digital Painted Gesture defined?*
- *How is Translation defined and manifest in relation to post-digital painting?*
- *What are the manifestations of paint(ing) as a form of deconstructable and translatable data?*
- *What surface morphologies, interactions, processes, and surface content has emerged from a post-digital painting discourse?*

I distil the originality of my research contribution from the Primary Research Question tenets of *Position*, *Translation*, and *Gesture*. Fundamentally, what is at stake here is divided into three main lines of enquiry:

**Position**—The necessity to investigate the above research questions emerges from uncertain cultural and formal definitions, and the functions applied to painting practices in a new media art discourse. Within the contextual sections of this thesis (Chapters 2 and 3) I give an up-to-date appraisal of expanded post-digital painting's condition and the tensions that exist in the formal definition of practices within this field. I address this by considering the concept of *Translation*.

**Translation**—Within this body of research I define “Translation” as an investigation into the translative modes of painting within the post-digital, as a polymorphic strategy of painting production. I investigate my proposed concept of Translation by unpacking and aligning fundamental formal and critical theories, by producing an original body of studio works, and through gathering artist survey data. As part of this research, the term Translation qualifies as the mediated formal situation that provides a framework for the post-digital classification of *gesture*.

**Gesture**—This presents a tenet with which to situate this body of research as it anchors the role of painting both to its long history and technologically engaged present. The gesture is considered explicitly as a form of translatable information, and not just an autographic act, or a material precondition. Due to the manifold interpretations the term gesture presents, I shall precisely define its role in a post-digital era in Chapter 3. Accordingly, this investigation functions as an original definition of the post-digital painted gesture and the modes of gesture employed by post-digital referent artists. I explore these findings further through artist survey data, studio works, and by creating an original taxonomy of the Digital Factures I have identified within post-digital painting.

Following these three tenets, I present an original contribution to knowledge via the following research strands:

**Current Appraisal of the Post-digital**—Within Chapters 2 and 3 I carry out an up-to-date mapping of contemporary painting that is involved in technological and digital processes. I achieve this by surveying key literature from commentators ranging from the fields of critical art theory, post-structural and continental philosophy, and media theory. Within Chapter 2 I divide this enquiry into three separate investigations that consider the formal development of the digitally and technologically expanded brushstroke, the cultural trends emerging from new media painting practices, and the relationship painting shares with technology. Overall, this appraisal has noted a trend of confused and inconsistent formal, cultural, and media tendencies.

**Definition of the Post-digital Painted Gesture**—To investigate the translative nature of the painted gesture between analogue and digital modes, I believe that defining the attributes associated with its translation must be positioned. The post-digital exists as a prominent genre within which practitioners approach a wide range of current painterly ambitions. However, resulting from the conflated status of medium and media within a new media art discourse, there exists no comprehensive definition of the post-digital painted gesture. How then is this defined? This question is addressed in Chapter 3 by giving an original insight into what the post-digital painted gesture is, and the different types of painting that have emerged, setting a contextual anchor point with which to situate my research.

**Taxonomy of Digital Factures**—This investigation explores what surface morphologies, interactions, processes, and surface content has emerged from a post-digital painting discourse. Within Chapters 4 and 5 these painting phenomena are explored, initially by positioning a Theoretical Framework that provides an original epistemological paradigm generated from existing terms, axioms, philosophies and languages surrounding contemporary expanded painting and the technological; I build this from the contextual investigations carried out in Chapters 2 and 3. By combining this Theoretical Framework with practice-based material experimentation, as well as conducting an artist survey, I synthesise an original Taxonomy of Digital Factures [Table 3]. This taxonomy organises the characteristics of post-digital painting into four distinct categories: *Process*, *Content*, *Morphology*, and *Interaction*. Within each of these categories are sub-definitions that more specifically chart the expansion of the painted gesture. As is explored, the implementation of a taxonomy to map these gestures proves useful, yet in some ways potentially flawed. It demonstrates, however, that there are

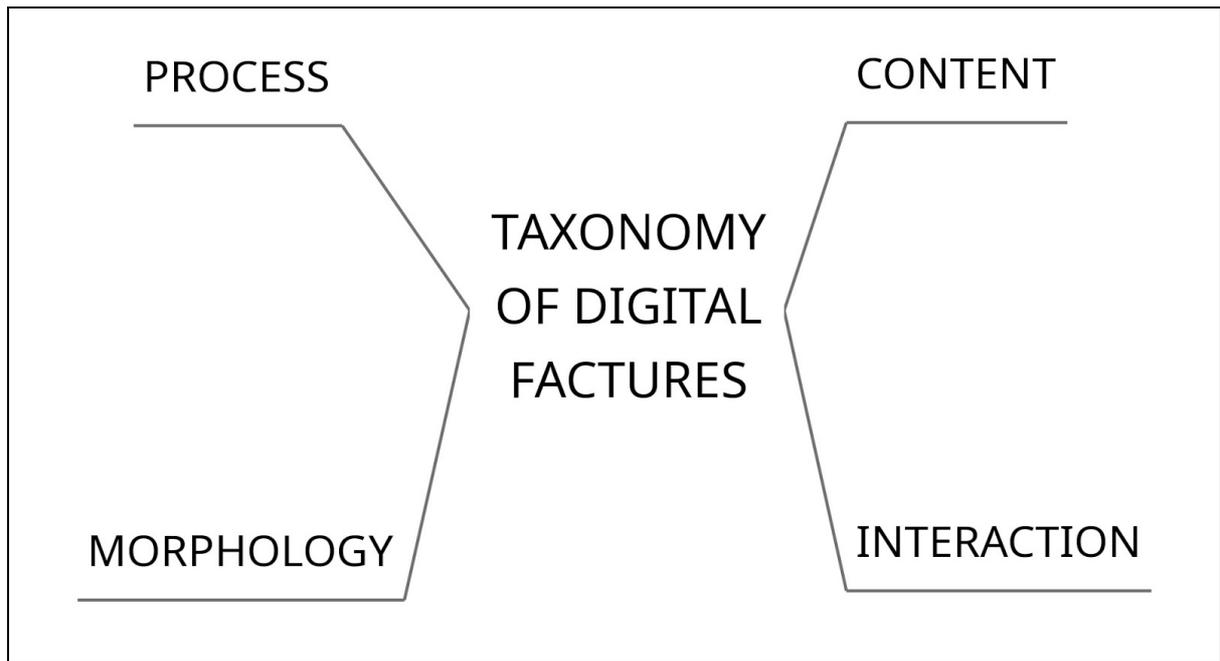


Table 3: *Taxonomy of Digital Factures Axiomatic Branches.*

a myriad of different languages and interrelationships of digital painting than previously documented. Furthermore, it organises how practitioners are embracing digital and technological means to carry out painting in a post-digital setting. Resulting from the artist survey data yielded, I position a wide range of distinctive digital artisans (both emerging and established) who implement my proposed Digital Factures. Prominent examples of artists included in this survey are Alex Israel, Juan Zurita, and Rómulo Celdrán [Figs. 1–3]. Following data gathered from my artist survey, I conduct a visual investigation into a broader range of digital artisans’ work to define and illustrate Digital Facture trends more precisely. Based on my research of the field, this investigation presents, to date, the most extensive mapping of post-digital painting trends and digital artisans operating within the discourse of painting.

***The Painted Gesture as a Form of Data***—Through an emphasis on my practice, Chapter 6 proposes the painted gesture as a form of deconstructable and translatable data. By working through a series of material investigations that consider a single image as starting reference, I investigate what forms of gestural dynamic emerge. Subsequently, I position the term “Translation” (built from the contextual investigations into the formal qualities of expanded painting set in Chapters 2–4) within my research into two original observations: *Quantification* and *Transmission*. Summarised briefly, these two terms describe the material qualities and polymorphic modes of post-digital painting reception resulting from painting’s status as a form of data, as an entity that can be quantified and transmitted.



Figure 1: Alex Israel. **Self-Portrait (Griffith Observatory)**. 2017. Acrylic and bondo on fiberglass. 243.8 x 213.4 cm. Collection: Private collection.

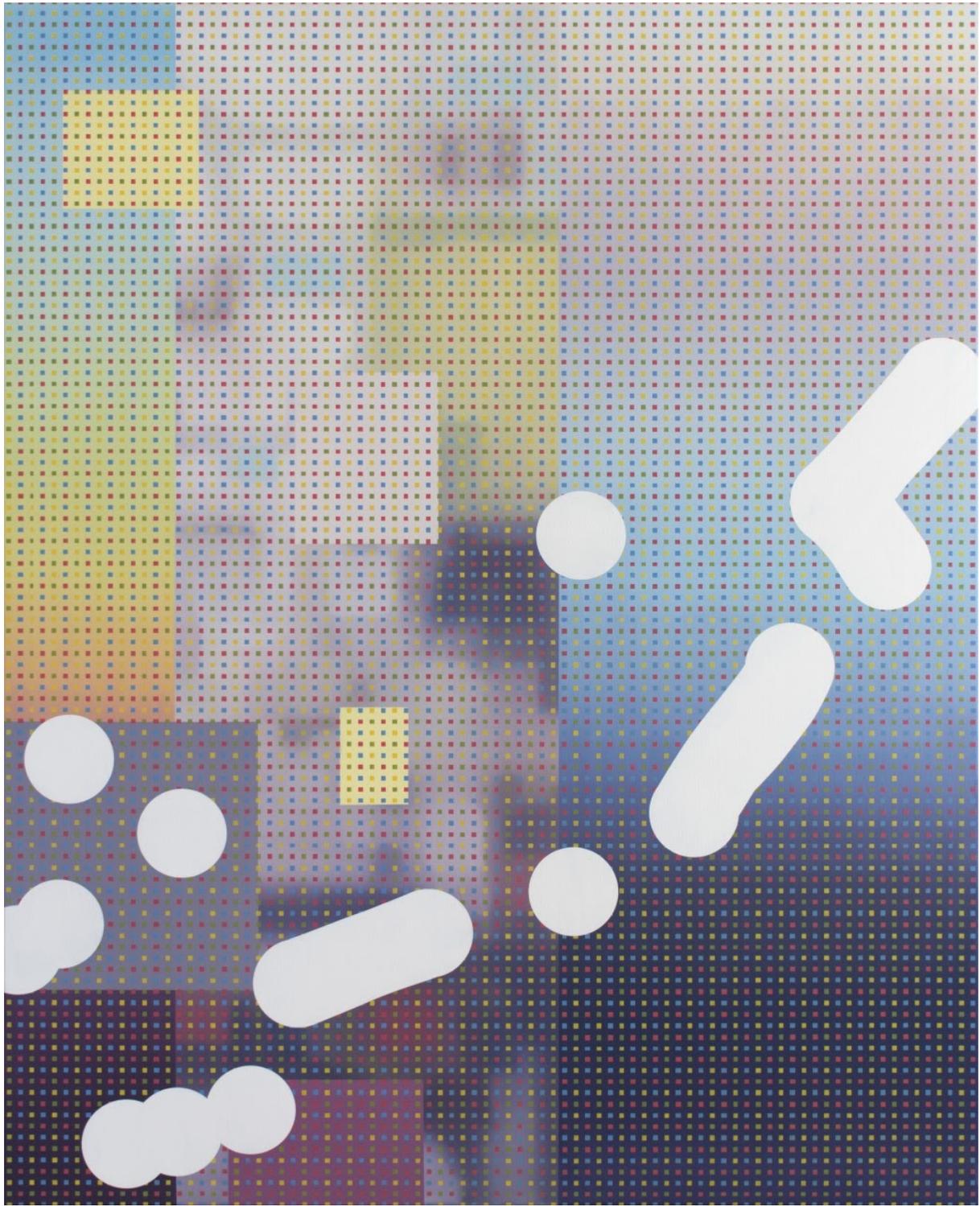


Figure 2: Juan Zurita. *Traffic\_42*. 2019. Oil on linen. 162 x 130 cm. Collection: Private collection.

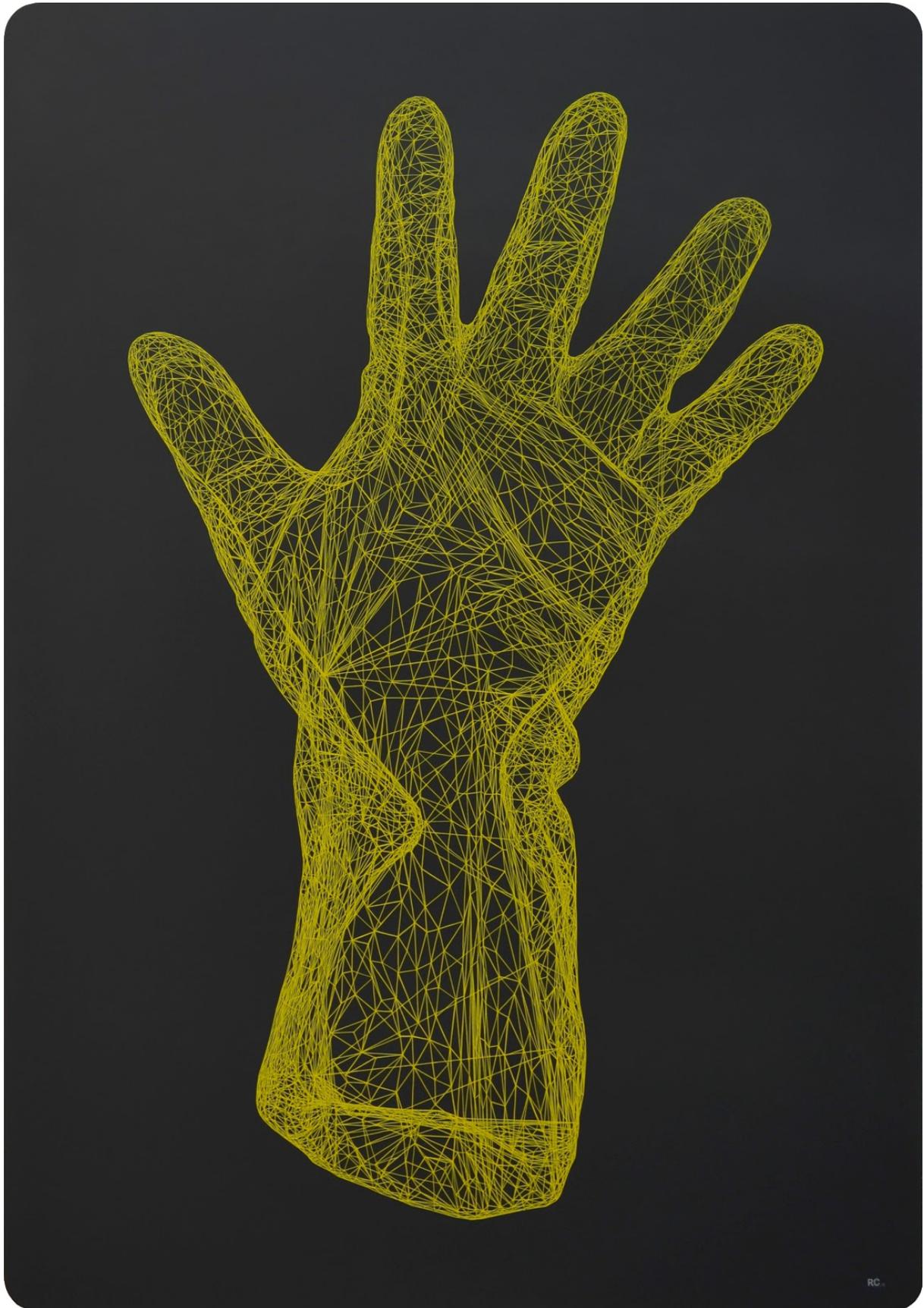


Figure 3: Rómulo Celadrán. **Mesh 2**. 2017. Felt-tip pen and enamel on board. 130 x 91 cm. Collection: Private collection.

***The Painted Gesture as a Translative Entity***—Building on the material explorations of the gesture as a form of data considered in Chapter 6, this enquiry, which comprises Chapter 7, is structured into four observations that emerge from a combination of material experimentation and an analysis of evolved postmodern cultural trends. Extending the findings of Chapter 6, I analyse in greater detail what I perceive as translative phenomena apparent within post-digital painting. My first observation as part of this enquiry proposes a progressed status of postmodern ideas of appropriation, hyperreality, and elements of posthumanism. These concepts emerge as forms of translation within a post-digital painting environment through painterly investigations into a computer-generated Instagram “influencer” known as Imma [Fig. 4]. My second observation posits the concept of skeuomorphism as an uncanny painterly tendency within post-digital painting, that has the capacity to simulate forms and materials. Alongside my own materially driven investigations, key artists such as Matthew Stone, Otto Ford, and Philip Gerald [Figs. 5–7] are analysed to support this theory. My third observation manifests as a series of works called *Interpolations*, that assesses the translative nature of the painted gesture as a purely digital entity and seeks to destabilise traditional perceptions of medium and media. Finally, through the continued analysis of my *Taxonomy of Digital Factures* alongside my studio practice, I propose a concept I call the “Hyperfacture”, as the synthesis of post-digital painting phenomena functioning as a translative form of painting.



Figure 4: Modeling Cafe. *Imma Instagram Photograph*. 2019. Source: Instagram.



Figure 5: Matthew Stone. **Being Reliant, Not Being Reliant, Being Not Reliant**. 2016. Digital print and acrylic on linen. 180.3 x 119.3 cm. Collection: Private collection.



Figure 6: Otto Ford. *Pablo in Pieces*. 2018. Digital Painting, archival ink, photo rag. 200 x 150cm. Collection: Private collection.



Figure 7: Philip Gerald. *Ass Diver*. 2018. Acrylic and airbrush on canvas. 100 x 130 cm. Collection: Private collection.

# CHAPTER I

## METHODOLOGY

### [1.1] INTRODUCTION

My research design utilises a *pragmatic* research paradigm, that follows a *mixed methods* approach to data gathering to address the position of expanded painting practices and processes within a perpetually shifting new media art discourse, and how this has affected the translation of the painted gesture. Consequently, I have employed *qualitative* and *quantitative* data gathering processes: these are *emergent* in their data generation structure: this adheres to a *grounded theory* approach. As the nature of my contribution to new knowledge rests on cultivating primary source data from material exploration, I have situated my research as *practice-based*. This research model is objectively rooted in the Theoretical Framework outlined in Chapter 4, to analyse the validity of the data gathered, as well as synchronising with the main research question and sub-questions positioned in the Introduction Chapter. I have utilised a pragmatic research paradigm due to its practical application in real-world research,<sup>9</sup> allowing heuristic, experimental investigations to yield data; this methodological approach is vital as my work primarily generates data from the creation and analysis of artefacts. I am aware that my overall methodological structure may at first appear strange in relation to traditional perceptions of the artist and researcher persona. Specifically, I employ painterly sensibilities and sustained practical enquiry within a fine art discourse, however, I

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<sup>9</sup> Sage Research Methods, 'Pragmatic Study', in *Sage Research Methods Online* (Sage Online, 2012) in URL: <https://bit.ly/2xFrOEi>, accessed 18/03/20.

approach my research in a manner akin to a design or scientific based methodological process. I have done this for two reasons. Firstly, to rigorously collect and unpack the material, contextual, and survey data that supports my work, ensuring I can apply a demonstrable quality of consistent, testable, and controllable frameworks to data collection and analysis. Secondly, to reflect the digital and technological themes that have guided the project, with my research design mirroring the precision of expanded technological processes and methods I have used. There have been clear advantages and limitations to approaching the project in this way, which I document in the Discussion sections of my empirical chapters. Overall, I believe this non-traditional, hybridised methodological structure reflects the changing perceptions, functions, and designations of art practice and research, that reflects the changing topography of epistemological enquiry. The following section defines in greater detail the rationale behind this methodology.

## **[1.2] RESEARCH DESIGN**

**Practice-based Research**—I have based this research on my artistic practice, functioning as an original body of work, carried out by myself. Praxis as research is the focus, that emerges from data collection in the form of material experimentation. Concerning my practice, and as defined by the researchers Linda Candy and Ernest Edmonds, practice-based research acts as an original investigation that leads to the production of new knowledge via practice and the outcomes of that practice.<sup>10</sup> Within this approach, the research adopts the methodology postulated by the academic Mika Hannula, as operating as an open-ended, conflictual task that is anchored within its structures.<sup>11</sup> As such, my research is cyclical, placing theoretical knowledge into practical application and revising my theories/questions based on the outcomes achieved. I create, observe, evaluate, and refine artefacts, and determine their success(es)/failure(s) in relation to the Theoretical Framework. Specifically, the artefact functioned as a validator and producer of hypotheses, as both a fertile site of *generating* and *supporting* new knowledge. By working through a sequence of series', future projects (or "Prototypes") evolved iteratively based on this emergent form of data gathering that expanded on the successes of former series. To carry out this research, I initially adopted a modified

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<sup>10</sup> Linda Candy and Ernest Edmonds, 'Practice-Based Research in the Creative Arts: Foundations and Futures from the Front Line', in *Leonardo*, Vol. 51, No. 1, (Leonardo: 2018), (63–69), p. 63.

<sup>11</sup> Mika Hannula, Juha Suoranta, and Tere Vadén, *Artistic Research Methodology: Narrative, Power and the Public*, (New York: Peter Lang 2014), p. 4.

version of the *hypothetico-deductive model*, whereby I structured my research as distinct questions, hypotheses, and outcomes. It followed this structure:

1. Question(s)
2. Background Research
3. Hypothesis
4. Research Intention
5. Experimentation (Studio Practice)
6. Analysis of Data
7. Communication of Results

Whilst useful for assigning a question that a researcher can answer following an *a priori* framework, this approach was inherently flawed when paired with my emergent research design, which generated data primarily following an *a posteriori* data gathering method. This linear approach was modified to become a cyclical research model as the research expanded [Table 4], consequently following the Theoretical Framework postulated in Chapter 4, allowing for a more fluid, emergent form of data generation. Despite dispensing with the rigid methodological structure of the hypothetico-deductive model, my research maintained a semi-scientific approach. This method of working was maintained due to the systematic and prototypical way I created my practical works, as I treated my studio like a laboratory where painterly gesture data was tested. Therefore, stylistically, the writing in this thesis mirrors the systematic and scientific approach applied to my practical endeavours.

As this research is practice-based, emphasis is given to the production and significance of artefact generation to extrapolate data. Accordingly, this thesis should be read in conjunction with the *Portfolio of Works* (submitted as a separate document) with which it is paired. Whilst attention is drawn to the specifics of the practical works I have created within this thesis, I visually elaborate on my practical research in greater depth within my Portfolio of Works. This will give a comprehensive understanding of the works produced as part of my research. It is important to note that, within the body of this thesis, I refer to the documentation of original practical works with the suffix “[PF]”—this refers to the figure numbers of works documented within the Portfolio of Works submission. By pairing this thesis with a portfolio of works, I ascribe equal weight to both theory and material praxis.

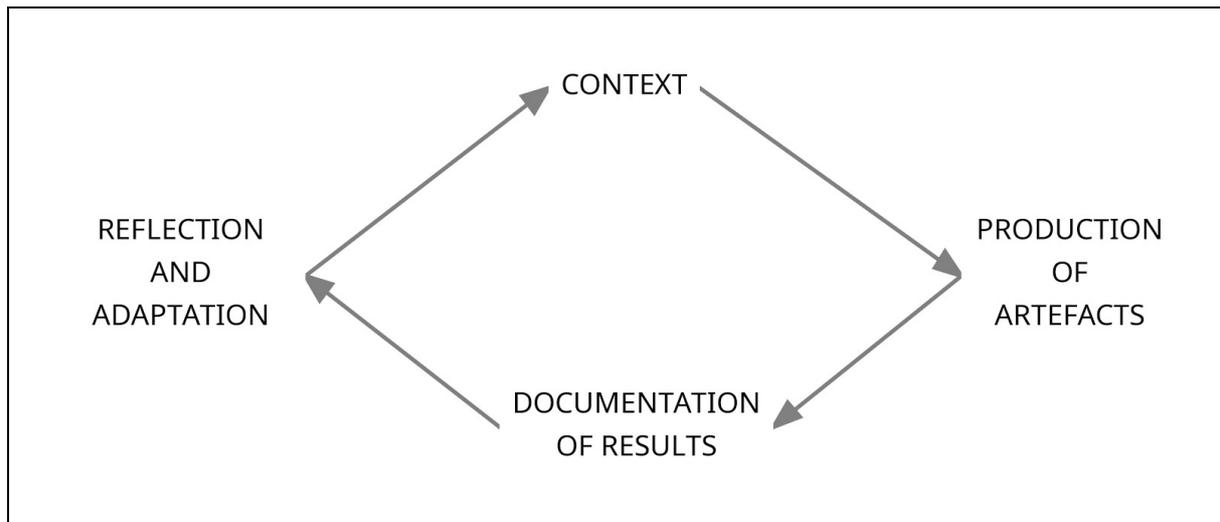


Table 4: **Cyclical Research Model.**

**Inter-, Multi-, Transdisciplinarity**—My methodology rests on an *Interdisciplinary*, *Multidisciplinary*, and *Transdisciplinary*<sup>12</sup> approach to research. Respectively, these disciplines are integrative, additive, and transformative.<sup>13</sup> Following these classifications, multidisciplinary characterises itself by its autonomy of disciplines consisting of working through a common theme utilising varying disciplinary modalities. Interdisciplinarity positions itself as transcending traditional discipline-based terminology. Finally, transdisciplinarity creates a homogenised, mutual interplay of disciplinary epistemologies.<sup>14</sup> As such, the combination of these three distinct modalities results in a hybridised practice that involves technological processes and disciplines not customarily ascribed to painting practice with which to arrive at painterly outcomes. Within my research, the concept of paint(ing) therefore acts as a mediator between traditional painterly practices and technologically expanded post-digital interrogations of Media<sup>15</sup> and medium. Increasingly, we exist in a world where digital technology and media are indistinct: this post-digital condition has extended into varying faculties of knowledge.<sup>16</sup> As such, an emergent, mixed methods methodological approach is best suited to contend with this discourse as it is flexible, can comprise of qualitative and

<sup>12</sup> I adopt this research model from Michael Gibbons, Camille Limoges, Helga Nowotny, Martin A. Trow, Peter Scott and Simon Schwartzman, *The New Production of Knowledge: the Dynamics of Science and Research in Contemporary Societies*, (London: Sage, 1994), pp. 28 - 29.

<sup>13</sup> John Marshall & Julian Blecker, 'Undisciplinarity', in *Digital Blur: Creative Practice at the Boundaries of Architecture, Design and Art*, eds., Paul Rogers & Michael Smyth, (Faringdon: Libri, 2010), (216–223), p. 216.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p. 216.

<sup>15</sup> Capitalised "M" Media within my research aligns with media studies in the McLuhanian sense.

<sup>16</sup> Jeremy Knox, Petar Jandrić, Tina Besley, Thomas Ryberg, Juha Suoranta, and Sarah Hayes, 'Postdigital Science and Education', in *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, (Routledge: 2018), (893–899), p. 893.

quantitative methods, and emphasises the interconnections between epistemologies.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, an inter-, multi-, trans-disciplinary approach to my research is justified.

**Studio Practice (Arts-based Praxis)**—Practical research emerges from the materially hybrid approach of inter-, multi-, trans-disciplinary practice positioned previously. As such, I employ a diverse range of methods and techniques in the prototyping of painterly artefacts. My data generation and documentation methods include research boards, reflective journals, digital image prototyping, and photographic documents. This mode of working acted as a form of iterative visual data generation and was vital to the heuristic nature of my research. As my approach to painting was one of material and processual hybridity, I implemented techniques not usually ascribed to the discourse of painting in the construction of what I termed painting “Prototypes.” I defined my Prototypes as objects that shared a relationship to painting through a process of formal mediation, despite what medium I used in their construction. These Prototypes did not function strictly as art objects but as a methodological means of extracting gestural data. As such, I generated my data by employing techniques such as software usage, laser cutting, 3D-printing, moulding and casting, oil painting, textile printing, and photography [Figs. 8–10] (I comprehensively map the techniques I used in Chapters 5–7, and within my Portfolio of Works). Consequently, the employment of painting strategies to explore the idea of the translated gesture has relied on empirical data gathering; the role of the artefact as a data generating entity is vital as an experimental apparatus. As such, the artefact acts as a form of knowledge that is original, in the world, and can be shared, as well as being challenged, tested, or evaluated.<sup>18</sup> The appropriateness of this research method emerges from the significant contribution to new knowledge creative practice can have. As such, the artefact acts as an integral and legitimate mode of original contribution to new knowledge.<sup>19</sup>

**Installation of Work**—Installing prototypical data I generated was an essential mode of reflecting upon and documenting work, allowing for the continued refinement of visual data created as part of the studio practice. These installations did not function as exhibitions, nor

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<sup>17</sup> Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy, ‘Introduction: Pushing on the Methodological Boundaries: The Growing Need for Emergent Methods Within and Across the Disciplines’, in *Handbook of Emergent Methods*, eds., Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy, (New York; London: Guilford, 2010), (1–16), p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> Linda Candy and Ernest Edmonds, ‘The Role of the Artefact and Frameworks for Practice-based Research’, in *The Routledge Companion to Research in the Arts*, eds., Michael Biggs and Henrik Karlsson, (London: Routledge, 2010), (120–138), p. 124.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 120 - 121.



Figure 8: Studio Practice Process: Textile Printing.



Figure 9: *Studio Practice Process: 3D-Printing Research Board.*



Figure 10: *Studio Practice Process: Laser Cutting Research Board.*

was the work I produced for my research intended for exhibition, at least in a traditional sense [Figs. 11 & 12]. Instead, my studio functioned more as a form of “laboratory”, where the emphasis was on experimentation into the generation and replication of specific Digital Factures, to work through and document the diverse morphological characteristics these gestures presented.<sup>20</sup>

**Reception**—Consideration was given to the reception my research would have when viewed or read. For me, there were several “audiences” I had to be aware of which is reflected in the objectives of each series of work I completed. There was a diversity of networks these audiences belonged to, that included academics, practitioners, and the general public, all from varying backgrounds and fields of study. Therefore, it was vital for me to question the practical application of my research when disseminated; specifically, *who* would benefit from my findings? My work is tailored primarily for academics and painting practitioners, particularly those engaged with contemporary art theory, media studies, and a post-digital mode of making. Accordingly, the function of my research is the epistemological advancement of contemporary, expanded painting enquiry, of most use to those who understand the complexities of painting practice and media theory. The level of intellectual comprehension required is reflected in my implementation of specialist language/terminology and analysis of theoretical structures and discourses.

Accordingly, I approached the reception of my research in two ways, defining these as: *access* (what background are the audiences coming from?) and *accessibility* (who will understand and benefit most from the work?). As such, I was cognisant of the multiple types of artistic and academic worlds that my work studied and targeted, ranging from fine art practice, media studies, historical and contextual enquiry, and the curatorial. Despite the specialist audience I had in mind, there are several points of access and accessibility to be had from my work, that includes general audiences, such as gallery goers, outsider artists, and digital natives. Required viewer skill sets varied from the academic, which demanded necessary pre-existing knowledge, to a more accessible general comprehension of art practice. In total I completed

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<sup>20</sup> Despite ascribing the function of these objects as experimental procedures, rather than as strict works of art, I nonetheless found it beneficial in the later stages of my research to generate digitised mock-exhibitions of these works. Consequently, these hypothetical installations acted as a functional way of visualising prototyped gestural data beyond the confines of the studio space, as a tool for potential research dissemination. However, it should be noted that exhibiting the work was not a key strategy in my research. Examples of this output can be viewed later in this thesis, within the Conclusion Chapter.



Figure 11: **Studio Test Installation.**



Figure 12: **Studio Test Installation.**

four distinct series of practical works, each with its own set of questions they aimed to resolve, that reflected the thematic complexity of their execution. My first body of work, the *Simulacra* series, was rooted in a purely formal exploration of material and its semiotic capabilities. As such, I believe this to be the most challenging series of works for a viewer to decode, as an awareness of the conceptual and philosophical parameters that influenced the works would be required to fully understand their meaning. Moreover, this series was created as a material test site, and not necessarily for exhibition, thus functioning more as a specialist, prototypical investigation of painterly facture. Within my second and third bodies of work, respectively entitled *Imma Gram* and *Developments*, I built upon key concepts from my *Simulacra* series. However, there was a broader implementation of pictorial content that made the viewing experience more accessible, as I referred to images and painterly motifs that were much more culturally approachable. My final series, *Interpolations*, I believe to be the most accessible of my investigations, both in terms of thematic comprehension and practical accessibility of the artworks themselves. This series manifested as a primarily online, mixed media experience that directly tapped into wider Internet image culture. These works could be easily accessed via the image sharing platform Instagram, appealing to a wide, online demographic.<sup>21</sup>

As a result of my practical work being received via digital, new media systems, I contemplated the importance of these platforms. By mainly dispensing with the modernist system of ascribing normative value to the “white cube” exhibition space, or the elitist, capitalist-consumer driven mainstream artworld, I gradually favoured the potential of a new media (specifically, social media) system of image circulation. As such, it was vital for me to be aware of the structures inherent to the algorithmic bias which negotiates the tensions between computation and physical reality.<sup>22</sup> Specifically, to navigate what the writer Ed Finn calls ‘*culture machines*’,<sup>23</sup> described by him as ‘*complex assemblages of abstractions, processes, and people*’,<sup>24</sup> that intersects ‘*computational space, cultural systems, and human cognition*.’<sup>25</sup> Effectively, the relationship between humans and the algorithmic structures they have created within a

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<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that I address in further detail within the Discussion sections of my empirical chapters the advantages and disadvantages my approach to constructing art objects poses for the viewer.

<sup>22</sup> Ed Finn, *What Algorithms Want: Imagination in the Age of Computing*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2017), p. 10.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, p. 5.

ubiquitous digital economy; this is the intersection where my practical work was most readily assimilated and disseminated.

**Dissemination of Research**—I have generated interaction with my research from disseminating it to my peers. I did this through presenting research papers at conferences, and from featuring in publications in the form of peer-reviewed book chapters and essays, which has initiated conversation and shaped my research strategies following either written or real-time oral feedback.

**Artist Survey**—I gathered primary source data using this method (obtaining both quantitative and qualitative data) to study the artistic practices of emerging and established artists who work with, or in relation to, digital and technological processes. I did this by contacting respondents via email and requesting them to complete a questionnaire that included specific questions related to the processes used in the production of their artwork. In total, over 160 practitioners were contacted, with approximately 17% of those approached providing data. As a result, I was able to produce “real world” artist data that bolstered my practical research. This dataset acted as the primary source in the further extension and contextual support of my Digital Fracture theory, following its synthesis in Chapter 4. Before conducting my survey research, I sought ethical approval and guidance, in-line with the Glasgow School of Art’s *Research Ethics Code of Practice*.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, I complied with the Glasgow School of Art’s *Research Data Management Policies*<sup>27</sup> and *General Data Protection Regulations* (GDPR).

**Contextual Research**—A contextual investigation is primarily manifest in Chapters 2 and 3, functioning respectively as a Review of Literature and an exegesis on the state of the post-digital painted gesture. I conducted further contextual research via attending exhibitions and academic conferences. A rigorous contextual awareness of current discourse was vital to the conceptual basis of my work, as well as lending credibility to the practice-based nature of my research. The secondary research carried out, that exhaustively maps key debates and issues related to my field acts as a framework with which to situate my practice, as well as to provide key tenets on which to base my original contribution. As such, contextual research functions

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<sup>26</sup> Glasgow School of Art, *Glasgow School of Art Research Ethics Code of Practice 2016*, (Glasgow: Glasgow School of Art, 2016).

<sup>27</sup> Glasgow School of Art, *Glasgow School of Art General Data Protection Regulation*, (Glasgow: Glasgow School of Art Website, 2020), in URL: <https://bit.ly/2U1go6C>, accessed 18/03/20.

as a reflective *and* reflexive dialogue *between* theory and praxis, as a mode of generating and disseminating a significant contribution to the field.<sup>28</sup> Whilst vital to my research output, I am aware of the limitations of the artefact,<sup>29</sup> and as such, written contextual support is crucial to the effective transmission of my research. However, as a practice-based researcher I find myself continually tensioned between theory and practice. Emerging from this conflict of the faculties, I position myself as both an involved practitioner, concerned with the complexities of material praxis, but also as a neutral facilitator of theoretical enquiry; a reflexive agent peering into the post-digital discourse and reporting its phenomena.

### **[1.3] CONCLUSION**

In summary, this methodology emphasises the importance of the artefact via an empirical, heuristic mode of data generation. It does this by utilising a pragmatic research design. As such, it follows a mixed methods approach to data gathering, wherein I have employed qualitative and quantitative data gathering processes. Resultantly, this is emergent in its data generation structure. Accordingly, the research is practice-based, which refers to the Theoretical Framework synthesised in Chapter 4, to analyse the gathered data. Several research activities have taken place as part of this research, involving processes that mediate between the practical and theoretical, and the analogue and the digital. These activities include studio-based material research, contextual data analysis (reading and responding to relevant literature), attending exhibitions, installing of work, attending and presenting at conferences and events, disseminating my research via book chapters and essays, and conducting artist surveys.

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<sup>28</sup> Stephen Goddard, 'A Correspondence Between Practices', in *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*, eds., Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), (113–122), p. 113.

<sup>29</sup> Specifically: '*Practice-based art research can be about the creation of new apprehensions but any art object made as part of that research does not, by itself, embody knowledge. However, the text that accompanies the work may indeed illuminate new apprehensions or a new way of creating apprehensions that we can claim as the new knowledge produced.*' Candy and Edmonds, 'The Role of the Artefact and Frameworks for Practice-based Research', p. 121.

# CHAPTER 2

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### [2.1] INTRODUCTION

This Review of Literature has been structured thematically into the following categories:

**Medium (Un)Specificity—On Formal Semantics**—This section emerges from the formal arguments, terminologies, philosophies, and definitions that have arisen within expanded field painting and traces how they have extended into a digitally and technologically engaged art environment, describing a vocabulary of translative painting practices post-new media. Specifically, this investigation sets a foundation for how re-mediatised and translatable aspects of traditional painting practices expand into a pluralised reconfiguration of themselves that exist between traditional perceptions of medium and Media.<sup>30</sup>

**Digital Embodiment**—This section proposes a clarification of overarching cultural and formal trends, terminologies, and discourses associated with digital art more broadly focusing on the relationship between the analogue and the digital. Furthermore, this section addresses medium-specific formal clarifications and inconsistencies, that ultimately percolate into new media painting practices.

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<sup>30</sup> Summarised briefly, “Translation” is defined within this research as the shift in material, morphological, processual, or interactive painterly value from one context into another.

**Facture 2.0**—This section considers the relationship painting has shared with technology, as well as more specifically looking at issues surrounding new media art and its relationship to the post-digital, appraising what progress painting has made in its conflation with the digital.

## **[2.2] MEDIUM (UN)SPECIFICITY—ON FORMAL SEMANTICS**

**Inter-, Multi-, Trans-discipline: Translation via discipline**—In their essay *Undisciplinarity* (2010) the writers John Marshall and Julian Bleecker ask: ‘*what might the implications of post-disciplinarity creative practice be?*’<sup>31</sup> Marshall and Bleecker situate this question against creative practitioners operating in an interdisciplinary manner. “Post-disciplinarity” is applicable to the vocabulary apparent within expanded digital painting as Marshall and Bleecker go on to state that within a creative context the use of “inter-”, “multi-” and “trans-” disciplinary (IMTD) practices ‘*enable collaboration, integrative problem solving, and development of new hybrid fields.*’<sup>32</sup> This disciplinary model (adopted from the writer Michael Gibbons), when considered within an expanded painting context, indirectly proposes a post-medium framework within a disciplinary-related paradigm. Consequently, IMTD practice is not only inevitable but necessary for the development of expanded, creative practices. Marshall and Bleecker situate the notion of *Interdisciplinary*, *Multidisciplinary*, and *Transdisciplinary*<sup>33</sup> as the three main categories of research that go beyond standardised singular disciplinarity.<sup>34</sup> They define these as follows: ‘*Multidisciplinarity is additive. Interdisciplinarity is integrative. Transdisciplinarity is transformative.*’<sup>35</sup> Through these definitions, Marshall and Bleecker set out a general series of relationships between formalist approaches to artmaking by clarifying the IMTD model’s epistemological positions. As such, they provide a blueprint for how media expands beyond itself. Resultantly, multidisciplinary characterises itself by its autonomy of disciplines. These disciplines work through a common theme of engaging with varying disciplinary modalities. Interdisciplinarity positions itself by transcending traditional discipline-based terminology. Finally, transdisciplinarity creates a homogenised, mutual interplay of disciplinary epistemologies.<sup>36</sup> Expanding upon this existing model, Marshall and Bleecker posit an original

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<sup>31</sup> Marshall & Bleecker, p. 216.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p. 218.

<sup>33</sup> Gibbons, et al, pp. 28 - 29.

<sup>34</sup> Applied to the fine arts this idea of singular disciplinarity can be thought of as an insular modality of medium specificity, exemplified in Greenbergian modernist painting, for example.

<sup>35</sup> Marshall & Bleecker, p. 217.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p. 216.

proposition in the form of *Undisciplinarity* as ‘a way of working and approach to creating and circulating culture that can go its own way.’<sup>37</sup> Marshall and Bleecker assume this method builds upon the IMTD model, that is proposed by them as archaic. Whilst an attractive approach to the possible expansion of discipline-related epistemological paradigms, it is short-sighted of the writers to assume these pre-existing models do not already encourage the means of formal hybridity. Furthermore, this assertion conflicts with the emphasis the writers place on the IMTD model at the beginning of their essay. “Undisciplinarity” positions a cultural shift, residing within how practitioners circulate their work, rather than a new disciplinary epistemological paradigm. However, by adopting the IMTD model alongside the categorisation of new media painting practices, an epistemological structure presents itself. This structure allows practitioners to identify the means with which they produce images, precisely due to the way digital expanded painting perpetually extends beyond itself; this resonates with the characteristics of new media image circulation within a post-digital condition. Taking these concepts further, philosopher Jacques Rancière’s *Indisciplinarity* (a modification of the term “interdisciplinary”) is a useful idea to consider. He describes indisciplinarity accordingly:

- It is not only a matter of going besides the disciplines but of breaking them. My problem has always been to escape the division between disciplines, because what interests me is the question of the distribution of territories, which is always a way of deciding who is qualified to speak about what.<sup>38</sup>

Rancière continues this summary as a ‘redistribution of the possible’<sup>39</sup> that represents ‘a world open to the possibilities and capacities of all.’<sup>40</sup> This mode of thought aligns perfectly with the IMTD model. However, for Rancière, this is a methodological strategy designed to elude disciplinary specialism, separation, or hierarchy, disavowing a perceived institutional division of labour that permeates the humanities.<sup>41</sup> In effect, indisciplinarity symbolically invalidates a predesignated social order of the faculties.<sup>42</sup> Rancière further applies this terminology to a broad plethora of examples that encompass aesthetic and cultural theory, politics, philosophy, art, pedagogy, and class, being deeply rooted socially, referring to democracy, social

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p. 219.

<sup>38</sup> Jacques Rancière Interviewed by Marie-Aude Baronian and Mireille Rosello, ‘Jacques Rancière and Indisciplinarity’, in *Art & Research: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods*, Vol. 2. No. 1. Summer 2008, Trans. Gregory Elliot, (Glasgow: Studio 55, 2008), (1–10), in URL: <https://bit.ly/2zp5Hjd>, accessed 27/08/19.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Richard Miles, ‘Indisciplinarity as Social Form: Challenging the Distribution of the Sensible in the Visual Arts’, in *Message Journal*, Edition 3.2/6, eds. Victoria Squire, Peter Jones and Esther Dudley, (Plymouth: University of Plymouth Press, 2016), (33–56), p. 36.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p. 36.

stratification, production, and labour.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, Rancière outlines indisciplinary as a philosophico-political method for rethinking society and, by extension, democracy itself.<sup>44</sup> It is worth noting Rancière's approach negates the idea of *a-disciplinarity* or *through-disciplinarity*, as particularly exemplified in modernist art practices, but also the social, political, and philosophical tenets associated with modernism.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, these wider considerations go beyond pure formalism, extending to the social conditions that foster expanded painting, positioning a more diverse framework with which to consider the epistemological basis for post-new media painting.

***Indexicality: Translation via the artist and medium***—It is useful to consider IMTD alongside art theorist Isabelle Graw's insights into expanded field painting and in particular the notion of *medium*. Graw begins her essay, *The Value of Painting: Notes on Unspecificity, Indexicality and Highly Valuable Quasi-Persons* (2012), by situating it against the post-medium backdrop outlined by art theorist Rosalind Krauss, to 'develop a medium-unspecific notion of painting.'<sup>46</sup> This post-medium sensibility acts as an antithetical rejoinder to the critic Clement Greenberg and his idealisation of an insular modernist formal paradigm. Graw removes painting from the archaic notion of medium specificity, commenting on its 'omnipresent'<sup>47</sup> condition amidst an expanded field model, positing painting as no longer being philosophically or ideologically tied to its own specificity. Graw builds on the topic of media acting in a non-self-referential mode from Krauss' seminal works *Sculpture in the Expanded Field* (1979) and *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-medium Condition* (1999). Specifically, Graw expands on Krauss by focusing on the idea of painting's 'indexicality.'<sup>48</sup> In this context, Graw uses this term as an indication, measure, and *sign*<sup>49</sup> specific to painting depending on its (expanded) context. Graw further defines indexicality as a semiotic extension of painting that refers to the latent

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, pp. 36 - 37.

<sup>44</sup> Jacques Rancière, *Thinking Between Disciplines: An Aesthetics of Knowledge*, Trans. Jon Roffe, (Parrhesia I, 2006), p. 1 - 12.

<sup>45</sup> Baronian, Rosello and Rancière.

<sup>46</sup> Isabelle Graw, 'The Value of Painting: Notes on Unspecificity, Indexicality and Highly Valuable Quasi-Persons', in *Thinking through Painting: Reflexivity and Agency Beyond the Canvas*, eds., Daniel Birnbaum and Isabelle Graw, (Sternberg Press, 2012), (45–58), p. 45.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p. 45.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p. 46.

<sup>49</sup> This is based on the dictionary definition of 'Index' to mean 'an indication, sign, or token.' Collins English Dictionary, 'Index', in *Collins English Dictionary*, (Collins English Dictionary Online, 2019) in URL: <https://bit.ly/2zqvEyG>, accessed 28/08/19.

presence of the artist,<sup>50</sup> attesting: ‘in my view, it is specifically in painting where one type of sign—indexical signs—predominates.’<sup>51</sup> This assertion positions painting directly as a semiotic activity that acts as a producer of signs, ascribing it a direct comparison to language.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, “indexicality” is a term that semiotically refers to the latent presence of an artist or discourse within a setting typically not ascribed to it. She builds this position from the philosopher Charles S. Peirce’s concept of the *Index*, described as: ‘The index is physically connected with its object; they make an organic pair.’<sup>53</sup> By aligning herself with this concept, Graw espouses the indexical capabilities of painting as a platform for evoking a physical connection to the maker of the work<sup>54</sup>—in effect, claiming authorship and labour (material and immaterial) are fundamental tenets for the expansion of painting. This connection does not need to involve touch between the artist and their work. Instead, a latent presence, or ‘anthropomorphic projection’,<sup>55</sup> is all that is required for indexicality to occur.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, considered with linguistic semiotics, an *Indexical* is a word whose reference changes depending on its context.<sup>57</sup> Graw expands this linguistic capability (initially proposed by Peirce) to ascribe a sign-based function to painting’s shifting contextual meaning. As such, the indexical (or, “indexicality”) is important when applied to post-digital painting to describe its ability to contextually mediate. Graw further elaborates on the concept of expanded painting, saying: ‘Do we mean painting in the sense of a medium, a technique, a genre, a procedure, or an institution?’<sup>58</sup> She specifies this concept further: ‘I will propose a less substantialist notion of painting: a form of production of signs that is experienced as highly personalised.’<sup>59</sup> By saying this, Graw positions painting as a semiotic activity that allows its categorisation to become less restricted.

**Re-mediatisation and Transitivity: Translation via hybridity**—For this thesis research, the most appealing part of Graw’s essay is in her use of the term ‘re-mediatisation’<sup>60</sup>—describing

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<sup>50</sup> Isabelle Graw, ‘The Value of Liveliness: Painting as an Index of Agency in the New Economy’, in *Painting Beyond Itself: the Medium in the Post-medium Condition*, eds., Isabelle Graw & Ewa Lajer-Burcharth, (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016), (79–102), p. 82.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p. 80.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p. 90.

<sup>53</sup> Charles S. Peirce, ‘What Is a Sign?’, in *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*, Vol. 2, 1893 – 1913, ed., The Peirce Edition Project, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), (4–10), p. 9.

<sup>54</sup> Graw, ‘The Value of Liveliness: Painting as an Index of Agency in the New Economy’, p. 95.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p. 92.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p. 93.

<sup>57</sup> David Braun, ‘Indexicals’, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2017 Edition), ed., Edward N. Zalta, (The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2017), in URL: <https://stanford.io/3joIgdK>, accessed 17/04/21.

<sup>58</sup> Graw, ‘The Value of Painting: Notes on Unspecificity, Indexicality and Highly Valuable Quasi-Persons’, p. 45.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, p. 45.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p. 47.

an art form that adopts a new configuration, occurring when ‘*different media relate to, refashion, and remodel each other.*’<sup>61</sup> This definition aligns with the idea of interdisciplinarity, as asserted by Marshall and Bleecker. Graw’s notions of re-mediatisation and indexicality find their roots in the work of art theorist David Joselit, specifically his essay *Painting Beside Itself* (2009). There, Joselit proposes an important question: ‘*How does painting belong to a network?*’<sup>62</sup> Adapted from Martin Kippenberger’s identification of painting as belonging to a network,<sup>63</sup> the fundamental idea Joselit proposes is painting’s ability to take place beyond the traditional constraints of the canvas, and its reference to the network of discourses that surround it, be these formal, social, or cultural. Ultimately proposing that painting does not exist in a formal vacuum, Joselit states: ‘*This [is a] late twentieth-century problem, whose relevance has only increased with the ubiquity of digital networks...*’<sup>64</sup> Joselit is aware of the implications a globalised, digitally engaged painting network proposes.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, he touches on the problematics of a digitally engaged mode of art practice when he asks: ‘*How might painting meet the challenge of mechanical reproduction?*’<sup>66</sup> Mechanical reproduction is a common concern among practitioners who use digital and mechanical extensions of the human hand, calling into question the idea of authenticity. As a result, immediate parallels arise between Joselit’s enquiry and that of the philosopher Walter Benjamin in his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1935), wherein Benjamin discusses the “aura” (and as such “authenticity”) lost in the replication of a work vis-à-vis mechanical intervention.<sup>67</sup> What defines Joselit’s analysis, however, is his application of Benjamin’s notion of aura to a broader cultural network of painting. Furthermore, a key theme found within new media painting is the concept of image translation from one format into another: Graw encounters this idea in her ruminations on re-mediatisation; however, Joselit proposes a similar theory:

- Instead of attempting to visualize the overall contours of a network, she [Jutta Koether] actualizes the *behavior of objects within networks* by demonstrating what I would like to call their transitivity. The Oxford English Dictionary gives one definition of “transitive” as “expressing an action which passes over to an object.” I can think of no better term to capture the status of objects within networks—which are

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p. 47.

<sup>62</sup> David Joselit, ‘Painting Beside Itself’, in *October*, Vol.130, (MIT Press Journals, 2009), (125–134), p. 125.

<sup>63</sup> Jutta Koether, “‘One Has to Be Able to Take It!’ excerpts from an interview with Martin Kippenberger by Jutta Koether, November 1990–May 1991’, in *Martin Kippenberger: The Problem Perspective*, ed., Ann Goldstein, (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art; Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), (310–340), p. 316.

<sup>64</sup> Joselit, ‘Painting Beside Itself’, p. 125.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, p. 128.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p. 125.

<sup>67</sup> Walter Benjamin, ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, in *Illuminations*, ed., Hannah Arendt, (Schocken: New York, 2007), (217–251), p. 220.

defined by their circulation from place to place and their subsequent translation into new contexts—than this notion of passage.<sup>68</sup>

From this excerpt emerges a key term: *transitivity*. Defined by Joselit in terms of “circulation” and “passage”, transitivity emphasises the role of painting as acting beyond the preconceived notions of the canvas. Joselit describes this further:

- Transitive painting, on the other hand, invents forms and structures whose purpose is to demonstrate that once an object enters a network, it can never be fully stilled, but only subjected to different material states and speeds of circulation ranging from the geologically slow (cold storage) to the infinitely fast.<sup>69</sup>

He goes on to say: *‘Transitivity is a form of translation: when it enters into networks, the body of painting is submitted to infinite dislocations, fragmentations, and degradations.’*<sup>70</sup> These statements align with the new media art paradigm of the ubiquitous, anti-static, and fluctuating nature of the image and its dispersion, assimilation, and processes within a digital environment. Crucially, Joselit acknowledges transitivity as a form of translation. Joselit linguistically appropriates transitivity<sup>71</sup> and uses it to posit painting as marked by continual mobility rather than stasis.<sup>72</sup> Alternatively, re-mediatisation, as summarised by Graw, considers media which reconfigure and refashion each other through relation.<sup>73</sup> Viewed from the perspective of media studies, re-mediatisation (and by association, transitivity) become an extension of the term “mediatisation.” The media theorist Darren G. Lilleker defines this term as: *‘a theory which argues that it is the media which shapes and frames the processes and discourse of political communication as well as the society in which that communication takes place.’*<sup>74</sup> Lilleker, aware of the McLuhanian capabilities of media,<sup>75</sup> approaches this concept from a political science perspective. However, when transposed to post-digital expanded painting, the engagement with mass media to “shape and frame” specific processes resonate with the objectives of transitive and re-mediatised painting production. Painting extends beyond itself in a

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<sup>68</sup> Joselit, ‘Painting Beside Itself’, p. 128.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, p. 132.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, p. 134.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, p. 128.

<sup>72</sup> André Rottmann, ‘Remarks on Contemporary Painting’s Perseverance’, in *Thinking through Painting: Reflexivity and Agency Beyond the Canvas*, eds., Daniel Birnbaum and Isabelle Graw, (Sternberg Press, 2012), (9–14), p. 11.

<sup>73</sup> Graw, ‘The Value of Painting: Notes on Unspecificity, Indexicality and Highly Valuable Quasi-Persons’, p. 47.

<sup>74</sup> Darren G. Lilleker, *Key Concepts in Political Communication*, (London: Sage Publications, 2006), p. 117.

<sup>75</sup> This directly aligns with McLuhanian media theory, particularly when McLuhan attests: *‘[...] the medium is the message. This is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium—that is, of any extension of ourselves—result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology.’* Marshall McLuhan, ‘The Medium is the Message’, in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, (London: Routledge, 2001), (7–23), p. 7.

transformative, networked capacity, as a form of communication when aligned with mediatisation, which has become a standard concept for defining how processes of communication can transform society.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, these media-driven approaches resonate with concepts outlined in philosopher Nicolas Bourriaud's *Altermodern Manifesto* (2009) and his proposition of altermodern art acting as a hypertext, which translates artistic information from one format into another.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, the semiotic capabilities of re-mediatisation and transitivity align with the Derridean process of *différance*, due to deferred and transitioned material and contextual meaning. In particular, the way philosopher Jacques Derrida proposes the deferral of meaning through a 'signifying chain'<sup>78</sup>—this being an endless sequence of signifiers in which meaning can be deferred infinitely.

**Network: Translation via cultural systems**—Transitivity is a term not exclusively used by Joselit. The writer Gene McHugh expands on this idea by taking the evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins' term *meme*<sup>79</sup> and applying it to the rapidly spreading and changing state of information found online.<sup>80</sup> McHugh asks: 'How would the painting meme be translated when a painting is still an object, but an object dispersed through the network is a mutable digital photograph as well?'<sup>81</sup> He continues:

- ... re-disseminating the mutated image through alleyways of the network which the painting's original creator could not anticipate. In other words, paintings here are a network of versions; a stream of evolving memes.<sup>82</sup>

Continuing his analysis of the meme by referring to it as: '... replicating, spreading, and mutating in response to the selective demands of the culture in which they [the meme] develop'<sup>83</sup> McHugh's alignment with transitivity therefore coincides with Graw's idea of re-mediatisation. Moreover, he acknowledges his concept of the "network" operates in the same fashion as

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<sup>76</sup> Andreas Hepp, Stig Hjarvard, Knut Lundby, 'Mediatization: Theorizing the Interplay Between Media, Culture and Society', in *Media, Culture & Society*, Vol. 37, (Sage Publications, 2015), (314–324), p. 314.

<sup>77</sup> Nicolas Bourriaud, 'Altermodern Manifesto', in *Altermodern Tate Triennial 2009*, (Tate Online Resource, 2009), in URL <https://bit.ly/2LHqXWH>, accessed 07/10/19.

<sup>78</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'Cogito and the History of Madness', in *Writing and Difference*, Trans. A. Bass, (London & New York: Routledge, 1978), (31–63), p. 75.

<sup>79</sup> This is defined as a unit of cultural data which acts like a gene, in which information is passed from one individual to another through non-genetic means. Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, (Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 352.

<sup>80</sup> There also exists the ubiquitous "Internet Meme" which takes its name from Dawkins' term.

<sup>81</sup> Gene McHugh, *Post Internet: Notes on the Internet and Art*, (Brescia: Link Editions: 2011), p. 258

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, p. 260.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, p. 258.

Joselit's. Defining his interpretation of 'transitivity'<sup>84</sup> as an in-between-ness of objects recirculating from one medium to another, with the artwork in the digital age occupying a constant state of flux once disseminated online.<sup>85</sup> A typical example of this is a physical painting which transmutes its analogue corporeality by becoming simultaneous iterations of itself via technological reproduction, such as a digital image, a photograph, or an Instagram post. The art theorist André Rottmann summarises this formal situation within painting:

- Instead of constituting self-contained entities, painterly works explicitly establish relations to the broader social, technological, and economical networks within which they come into existence and circulate.<sup>86</sup>

Therefore, painting does not affix to any one medium. In particular, the network term provides a key platform for painting to transfer itself into the realm of digitally engaged practice, whilst allowing the discipline to assimilate into varying social and cultural strata not customarily designated for it. This shifting surface structure becomes morphologically inter-contextual as it occupies an interdisciplinary mode of reception. As such, the image adopts a different morphology as it passes through these different formal modes. Overall, this modality aligns with the epistemological IMTD models of disciplinarity investigated by Marshall and Bleecker.

### **[2.3] DIGITAL EMBODIMENT**

In his book *Beyond New Media Art* (2013), the art and media theorist Domenico Quaranta provides a comprehensive summary of new media art. He clarifies the tenuous definitions of this discourse accordingly: *'The complicated background of the term New Media Art reflects both the uncertain definition of the arena it applies to, and the weakness of its affirmation strategies.'*<sup>87</sup> As a result, the term "new media art" encapsulates a multitude of creative practices situated within a digital and technological mode. Consequently, critics often misunderstand or misuse the term. Quaranta later states: *'Critics do not seem to have come to any kind of agreement on the chronological, philosophical or practical boundaries of the phenomenon [new media art].'*<sup>88</sup> This statement directly correlates to observations made by the art and media theorist Omar

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p. 258.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, p. 258.

<sup>86</sup> Rottmann, p. 11.

<sup>87</sup> Domenico Quaranta, *Beyond New Media Art*, (Brescia: Link Editions: 2013), p. 23.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, pp. 30 - 31.

Kholeif in his book *Goodbye World! Looking at Art in the Digital Age* (2018) where he states: 'The terminology that is used to discuss the relationship between art and the internet is contestable and often misunderstood.'<sup>89</sup> Quaranta goes on to identify the situation of new media art:

- All of these terms, like New Media Art, stress the medium used for making the art, or the characteristic held to be decisive. Which should be enough to deem New Media Art a genre rather than an art movement.<sup>90</sup>

Quaranta proposes that an increasing emphasis on the digital and technological media employed by recent artists defines new media art (and by extension new media painting) as a genre, and not a movement. Expanding on this idea, Quaranta goes on to point out a distinction between the difference of *medium* and *Media*:

- Further complicating the notion of "New Media" is the substantial ambiguity that surrounds the very concept of medium in the contemporary debate. The two aspects of "New Media" – the generic and the specific – indeed overshadow another distinction: that between medium as "artistic medium" and medium as a generic means of communication.<sup>91</sup>

This distinction separates the specificity of the two terms that, within a digital context, are often confused with one another. "Medium" in this instance refers to artistic media, most closely aligned with Greenbergian art criticism, whilst "Media" situates itself against a McLuhanian school of thought.<sup>92</sup> The art and media theorist Christiane Paul verifies this concept directly in her book *Digital Art* (2003). Therein, she asserts a firm definition between more traditional art made with digital technologies (print, photography, and sculpture) and new media art which takes as its medium the distributive quality of Media itself.<sup>93</sup> However, as shall be exemplified later in this thesis, painting within a new media discourse is inherently translative in its capacity, as a result of its relationship to new media, which is defined by its distribution via digital technologies.<sup>94</sup> Translative painting extends the relationship between new media and traditional media through IMTD practices. Whilst Quaranta and Paul provide a sound appraisal of the new media condition, this thesis will build upon their claims. Specifically, the relationship between medium and Media is becoming less distinct due to their growing interrelationship. As such, an as-of-yet undefined area between medium and Media is

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<sup>89</sup> Kholeif, p. 112.

<sup>90</sup> Quaranta, p. 24.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, p. 29.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, p. 29.

<sup>93</sup> Christiane Paul, *Digital Art*, (Thames & Hudson, London: 2015, originally published 2003), p. 8.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, p. 8.

emerging, resulting in compounded formal confusion which contests existing new media categorisation. It is precisely these binary distinctions of medium and Media that this thesis aims to destabilise to dispel formal confusion. By navigating the liminality separating medium and Media, classification within the field of new media painting will be allowed to grow, in an IMTD fashion. Moreover, the conflation of analogue and digital modes of art production naturally unifies medium and Media due to transitive and re-mediatised artwork production, that potentially follows a system of broader networks. As shall be exemplified later within this thesis, paint(ing) can operate as a form of communication, with Media (and not necessarily *medium*) as its material. As such, a definition of what resides between medium and Media is apt to emerge, not only for the sake of expanded new media painting practices but also for the sake of progressing media theory. Consequently, this liminal status points to a complex set of relationships between the concepts of medium and Media. Underpinning the assertion that new media art currently defines itself primarily in relation to a network Quaranta states:

- The only fact that seems to garner pretty much unanimous accord is the point we started out from: New Media Art is defined in relation to the media it uses, and sets out to draw forth the social, political and cultural implications of those media.<sup>95</sup>

Emerging from the new media art genre is the sub-category of the post-digital. This term encapsulates more comprehensive cultural and social positions which describe the humanisation of digital technologies. Moreover, the post-digital addresses the interplay between humanity and the digital, critiquing the virtual and its place in an analogue environment through the *'human relationships to technologies that we experience.'*<sup>96</sup> However, there are those who disagree with the post-digital as being an extension of new media. The writer Florian Cramer is highly critical of the post-digital term, stating it stands in *'direct opposition'*<sup>97</sup> to new media. This claim is contestable, as new media directly informs the various strategies of post-digital image production. "Post" digitality determines that we exist in a time *after* the digital has taken root within society, as a present fixture of the technological human lived experience, instead of being *beyond* or *fatigued* by the digital experience as Cramer attests. In contrast to Cramer, the digital studies theorist Jeremy Knox, and his team of

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<sup>95</sup> Quaranta, p. 31.

<sup>96</sup> Knox, et al, p. 896.

<sup>97</sup> Florian Cramer, 'What Is 'Post-digital'?', in *Postdigital Aesthetics: Art, Computation and Design*, eds., David M. Berry & Michael Dieter, (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), (12–26), p. 20.

researchers, in their paper *Postdigital Science and Education* (2018) define the post-digital this way:

- We are increasingly no longer in a world where digital technology and media is separate, virtual, 'other' to a 'natural' human and social life. This has inspired the emergence of a new concept—the postdigital—which is slowly but surely gaining traction in a wide range of disciplines including but not limited to the arts, music, architecture, humanities, (social) sciences, and in many inter-, trans-, and post-disciplines between them.<sup>98</sup>

This paragraph confirms Quaranta's observations concerning the confusion of medium and Media. For example, Knox and his team conflate digital technology, as a form of artistic media in a new media art situation, with Media (as a means of communication). However, despite this apparent confusion when related to Quaranta's position, from this assertion, post-digital art positions itself as a form of digitally imbued social and cultural hybridity. Moreover, it supports the claim that medium and Media are increasingly indistinct. It also directly mirrors the IMTD model cited by Marshall and Bleecker, as well as adopting elements of re-mediatised and transitive art practice. Furthermore, Joselit's network terminology extends to this appraisal of the post-digital. Knox goes on to say, however:

- The postdigital is hard to define; messy; unpredictable; digital and analog; technological and non-technological; biological and informational. The postdigital is both a rupture in our existing theories and their continuation. However, such messiness seems to be inherent to the contemporary human condition.<sup>99</sup>

In this instance, Knox and Quaranta's summaries of new media art and the post-digital calibrate, giving credence to the close relationship between the two genres as well as confirming the state of critical flux more widely apparent. Fundamentally, Knox's ideas are traceable to the work of Robert Pepperell and Michael Punt's *The Postdigital Membrane: Imagination, Technology and Desire* (2000) (this being one of the first enquiries which dealt directly with the idea of the post-digital). Therein, Pepperell and Punt describe the post-digital accordingly:

- ... the term Postdigital is intended to acknowledge the current state of technology while rejecting the conceptual shift implied in the "digital revolution"—a shift apparently as abrupt as the "on/off" "zero/one" logic of the machines now pervading our daily lives.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Knox, et al, p. 893.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, p. 895.

<sup>100</sup> Robert Pepperell & Michael Punt, *The Postdigital Membrane: Imagination, Technology and Desire*, (Bristol: Intellect, 2000), p. 2.

Whilst arguments surrounding the dichotomy of analogue and digital worlds persist, especially when considered with the post-digital, critical commentators are contesting the binary. Art historian Gloria Sutton, when describing the work of artist Dara Birnbaum, states:

- I want to assert that rather than proliferating the false binaries that typically structure considerations of media—such as analog vs. digital, technophilia vs. technophobia, commercial vs. critical—Birnbaum’s works broadly cast an unrelenting focus on our complex *relationship* with media technologies and their concomitant cultural and commodity forms in equal measure.<sup>101</sup>

Here, an intriguing analysis between the analogue and the digital (or, medium and Media) arises, exemplifying they are (or can be) the same, positing a blurred distinction between the “virtual” and the “real” as technology begins to encapsulate every facet of an analogue, human experience. It is easy to see why these “false binaries” between analogue and digital have begun to lose momentum, especially after considering artist and media theorist James Bridle’s idea of a “New Aesthetic”, raised in his essay *The New Aesthetic and its Politics* (2013). Therein, Bridle proposes an increased amalgamation of visual languages and digital technologies that emerge from Internet culture blending the virtual and the physical, ultimately evincing the manifestation of digital tropes in a physical world.<sup>102</sup> Whilst not the first to propose this idea, Bridle makes a compelling case for the intrusion of the digital into an analogue experience. However, this blurring of the virtual and the real does not always dispel the notion of a binary terminology; an *interface* is required to experience the virtual, as a conduit between the digital and the analogue.

In his book *Postdigital Artisans: Craftsmanship with a New Aesthetic in Fashion, Design and Architecture* (2015), the writer Jonathan Openshaw addresses the idea of the interface. He presents a case for the screen acting as a fundamental form of interface (or conduit) between typical preconceptions of the analogue and the digital: ‘*The screen may absorb our attention, but it’s the concept of the interface that best describes our experience of digital media.*’<sup>103</sup> He continues: ‘*They [the screen-based interface] are fertile zones that don’t just facilitate behaviour: they constitute it.*’<sup>104</sup> Accordingly, whilst hybridity exists between the virtual and the real, to access the digital,

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<sup>101</sup> Gloria Sutton, ‘CTRL ALT DELETE: The Problematics of Post-Internet Art’, in *Art in the Age of the Internet: 1989 to Today*, ed., Eva Respini, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), (58–65), p. 59.

<sup>102</sup> James Bridle, ‘The New Aesthetic and Its Politics’, in *You Are Here—Art After the Internet*, ed., Omar Kholeif, (Manchester: Cornerhouse, 2014), (20–27), p. 22.

<sup>103</sup> Jonathan Openshaw, *Postdigital Artisans: Craftsmanship with a New Aesthetic in Fashion, Design and Architecture*, (Frame, 2015), p. 6.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*, p. 6.

there must be a channel between the two, at least in certain circumstances. Kholeif expands on this notion of a blurred distinction between the virtual and the real when he says:

- So what we have here is a condition that is ever evolving, constantly shifting, a world of “cross embedded media,” as cultural historian Norman M. Klein described it. Our perceptions are now evermore heightened toward these details, of how physical reality is blurred into the seemingly intangible digital realm.<sup>105</sup>

Kholeif goes on to say: ‘... *this blurring of boundaries creates a series of divergent spaces for art—ones that are stimulating and others that are increasingly polemical, even invasive, and would require further inquiry and attention.*’<sup>106</sup> As such, Kholeif further substantiates the assertions of Quaranta and Knox: these assertions being the problems of postulating a distinct critical model with which to assess digitally based art. By describing this discourse as incorporating “cross embedded media” Kholeif aligns the formal visions of digitally engaged practitioners with the IMTD model referenced by Marshall and Bleecker. Based on the terms analysed in Section 2.2, the discourse Kholeif describes, categorised loosely as “post-internet,” is saturated with transitive, networked, and re-mediatised art practices that extend digitally engaged processes, yet also inherently complicate them. Kholeif defines post-internet art as producing ‘*works that could not be possible without its [the Internet] context or its tools.*’<sup>107</sup> Within this mode of art production, a key issue has arisen amongst commentators that emerges from debates surrounding the analogue and digital: the question of authenticity. Kholeif states: ‘... *we must seek to redefine authenticity. In a globalized world, representations of an original work can take on different forms - they can be cropped, filtered, recreated. But without an original, a copy has no point of reference.*’<sup>108</sup> He goes on:

- But a different question looms over the authenticity of an original digital work, which relies on technology rather than a particular so-called artist’s hand, and instead of being reproduced, can be replicated verbatim. How to value the originality of such works has been a question artists and organizations have had since the advent of the internet.<sup>109</sup>

The curator Eva Respini mirrors this notion. Commenting on art within a post-internet condition she says: ‘*We can easily create our own content from the available mass of images and information online through reposts, retweets, and reblogs, eroding the distinction between copy and*

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<sup>105</sup> Kholeif, pp. 114 - 115.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, p. 119.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, p. 113.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, p. 102.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, p. 102.

*original*.<sup>110</sup> Whilst Kholeif thinks that an “original” entity must exist as a point of reference, Respini proposes that due to mass image propagation the attribution of “original” and “copy” is contestable. Fundamentally, the concerns Kholeif and Respini share about authenticity conflate medium and Media. Ultimately, this state of formal confusion emerges from a post-medium, postmodern condition,<sup>111</sup> enhanced by an altermodern discourse of remix culture. The altermodern is summarised by Bourriaud as: ‘*Global culture today is a giant anamnesis, an enormous mixture whose principles of selection are very difficult to identify*’.<sup>112</sup> Overall, a justification of a particular set of conditions which adequately define new media art and its subgenres is a contended subject: this has been the case since the inception of the terminologies that constitute new media art. With no sign of clarification emerging, a condition of confusion exists as the status quo. This state of contention extends to classifications of medium and Media, the position of the analogue in relation to the digital, and how the artwork within a post-digital situation retains authenticity.

## **[2.4] FACTURE 2.0**

Whilst commentators such as Bridle, Kholeif, and Sutton have emphasised the increasingly blurred distinction between the analogue and the digital, the writer Luke Smythe in his essay *Pigment vs. Pixel: Painting in an Era of Light-Based Images* (2013) proposes the importance of the division between the two. Initially framing his enquiry by assessing the works of Gerhard Richter, he states that paint(ing) acts in opposition to the digital:

- While his [Richter’s] earliest forays into photo painting in the early 1960s helped open a new chapter in the century-long relationship between painting and photography, the Silikat paintings [Richter’s “Silicate” series of 2003] align with a more recent and less familiar turn in the history of image relations: the growing prominence of light-based images in our digital image ecology, at the expense of their more established pigment-based counterparts.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Eva Respini, ‘No Ghost Just a Shell’, in *Art in the Age of the Internet: 1989 to Today*, ed., Eva Respini, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), (13–41), p. 14.

<sup>111</sup> Specifically, the notion of *Simulation* postulated by Jean Baudrillard, wherein a *hyperreal* state blurs the distinction between objects and their representations. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1994), p. 1.

<sup>112</sup> Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World*, (Lukas & Sternberg: New York, 2002), p. 89.

<sup>113</sup> Luke Smythe, ‘Pigment vs. Pixel: Painting in an Era of Light-Based Images’, in *Art Journal Open Online*, (Art Journal Open Online, 2013), in URL: <https://bit.ly/3hMFuA0>, accessed 23/02/20.

Smythe proposes a tension between the pigment and the pixel, stating that light-based, digital image production proliferates “at the expense” of analogue pigment. Smythe takes this a step further, as he asserts the relationship between pigment and pixel is one of ‘*conflict*.’<sup>114</sup> He attests: ‘*today’s painters are driven by the urge to retain a vital and meaningful role for pigment in a light-based environment whose need for its services is waning.*’<sup>115</sup> Smythe contradicts the assertions of commentators such as Obrist and Hoptman, who propose digital, light-based interpolation within painting is essential to its continued vitality. Furthermore, the proliferation of artists who employ hybrid modes of production that Kholeif, Quaranta, and Sutton refer to undermine Smythe’s assertion that contemporary painters are predisposed to retain a firm analogue hold on pigment. In his essay, Smythe charts painting’s relocation from the insularity of modernist paradigms: this is a common justification for the emergence of digitally based art amongst art and media commentators, (as exemplified by Quaranta and Graw) in an ostensible attempt to emphasise the IMTD status of media. In his assertions Smythe comments on the limiting factors of Abstract Expressionist painting, yet ironically posits the materiality of pigment as needing to reserve its own value:

- What these [Abstract Expressionist] artists stress above all, however, are the material and organic properties of pigment, in ways that call attention to features of their work that light-based image-makers are either unwilling or unable to replicate.<sup>116</sup>

He continues:

- ... today it is the broader category of pigment that in the work of Tuymans, Oehlen, and their cohort is insisting on the value of its own materiality, in the face of a staggering onslaught of crisp and cheery pixelation.<sup>117</sup>

These statements adopt the narrative of insular modernist material practices yet, instead of reducing painting to a singular formal materiality, Smythe extends the sentiment of Greenbergian formalism. He applies this to the expanded, analogue, “organic” properties of pigment, which he deems more favourable to the notion of a light-based, digital hybridity of paint. By saying pigment must seek to retain its own analogue identity, Smythe mirrors the reductive formal language used by Greenberg, who also proposed painting retain its own

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

intrinsic value.<sup>118</sup> Reductive value systems such as this oppose the key formal parameters shared by commentators of post-digital and new media art and IMTD. Re-mediated, transitive, and networked practices are displaced in Smythe's estimations in favour of preserving pigment (albeit in an expanded, analogue sense) as a physical pursuit, as he says:

- As the sheer quantum of screen-mediated imagery has continued to balloon, painting has been faced with the challenge of reinventing itself once more, this time in dialogue with forms of imagery in which pigment plays at most a very minor role.<sup>119</sup>

He goes on to say:

- ... the materiality of pigment has come to stand instead for all that the hubris of the virtual disavows—to wit, the laws of time and space, the forces of gravity and accident, and the fixities, limits and constraints of physical form; everything, in sum, that the prevailing powers of our light-based image-world would like to believe they can suspend in the name of a ceaselessly intensifying commercial imperative.<sup>120</sup>

Based on the digitally expanded definitions of painting laid out by commentators such as Graw, Joselit, and Sutton, Smythe's statements propose a narrow definition of what constitutes pigment, ascribing the authenticity of paint to analogue formal terminologies and parameters. Overall, Smythe considers the analogue/digital binary situation of painting and its development, however, this is expressed in a standardised, linear fashion, with no deeper insight into the emergence of what the pigment is doing *in relation to* the pixel. Instead, Smythe encourages a division between the two entities. He even mirrors Paul's binary estimations of medium and Media when discussing analogue and digital media, respectively describing these as “*pigment-based*” and “*light-based*.”<sup>121</sup> Crucially, Smythe references artists whose work engages with the image in both analogue and digital contexts, such as Luc Tuymans and Gerhard Richter. However, he extends his enquiry to consider the practitioner's Wade Guyton, Fabian Marcaccio, and Albert Oehlen, who are arguably more suitable examples of practitioners operating within a digital and technologically engaged art practice. Nonetheless, Smythe's query does not extend beyond these artists into more recent advancements within post-digital painting. Like commentators before him, he charts, in a standardised fashion, painting's

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<sup>118</sup> Specifically, when Greenberg attests: *Three-dimensionality is the province of sculpture and for the sake of its own autonomy painting has had above all to divest itself of everything it might share with sculpture.* Clement Greenberg, 'Modernist Painting', in *Art in Theory 1900 - 2000*, eds., Charles Harrison & Paul Wood, (Malden, Mass Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), (773–778), p 776.

<sup>119</sup> Smythe.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

migration from the insular modernist paradigms which dogmatised American art practices in the 1940s and 1950s, without placing a new context on this narrative. Ultimately, this emerges as a trope amongst commentators to justify the interdisciplinary development of practices situated within and beyond postmodernity, as well as more recent arguments surrounding the analogue and the digital.

In opposition to Smythe, Alex Bacon in his essay *Surface, Image, Reception: Painting in a Digital Age* (2016) considers a broader range of artists including Ken Okiishi, Simon Denny, and Michael Staniak, who employ a more expanded idea of how pigment relates to (and *as*) pixel. Bacon explains this idea further:

- In a sense, painting has always existed in relation to technology, when the term is understood in its broad definition as the practical application of specialized knowledge: the brush, the compass, the camera obscura, photography, or the inkjet printer. However, it is only now that, along the lines of physical presence and a shared role as content-delivery systems, painting is so closely affiliated—morphologically, aesthetically, and conceptually—with the (digital) technologies it engages with.<sup>122</sup>

He goes on: *‘Today both artist and viewer share the experience of digital technologies as familiar, available, and omnipresent.’*<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, Bacon directly critiques the formal vision that Smythe adheres to:

- These artists are using the medium as a frame, tool, or focal point by which to address a number of pressing issues related to, among other things, labor, technology, the body, and perceptual experience—rather than, as is often dismissively and reductively suggested, approaching it as a reflexive, medium-specific extension of modernism.<sup>124</sup>

By saying this, Bacon’s interpretation sits in direct opposition to Smythe, who advocates the specificity of analogue pigment, by attempting to propagate the notion of a “medium-specific extension of modernism.” Furthermore, by clearly considering the work of Staniak, Bacon mirrors Bridle and Sutton’s belief that digital languages and the virtual now encompass analogue life, amalgamating the previously divided structures of medium and Media:

- Staniak’s paintings thus very effectively demonstrate that today the distinction between the image and the object is not simply blurred or reversed, but rather that they now operate in the same functional reality, and retain a nostalgia for their former ontological separation.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Alex Bacon, ‘Surface, Image, Reception: Painting in a Digital Age’, (Rhizome Online, 2016), in URL: <https://bit.ly/2GrBXG5>, accessed 23/02/20.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

He later attests:

- Because the dialogue it is entering into is hybrid, in a way that is ultimately indistinguishable, between painting and digital devices there is not much functional difference between paint brushed onto canvas, and ink printed onto panel.<sup>126</sup>

This statement directly correlates with Graw's definition of re-mediatisation and Joselit/McHugh's transitivity, whilst simultaneously dispelling the notion of a purely analogue pigment in relation to pixel as proposed by Smythe. Furthermore, Bacon mirrors elements of Joselit's network concept:

- All objects exist in this dual way today, [in reference to the work of Jesse Stecklow] as both discrete and networked—present and dispersed at the same time—and it is in this dual way that the most astute artists working today recognize any art object must be addressed.<sup>127</sup>

Bacon confirms the network as a significant formal and cultural term when applied to digital painting. He continues:

- Painting is, as I have been arguing, equally beholden to the conventions of digital technology as it is to those of art history, and as such, we bring to bear our expectations of interactivity and malleability, which have been cultivated by the former.<sup>128</sup>

By saying this, Bacon, again opposes Smythe, asserting the close formal network paint(ing) shares with technology. However, much like Smythe, Quaranta, and Graw before him, Bacon bases his progression of paint in a digital arena on the formal shortcomings of Abstract Expressionism. Using this as a formal basis, Bacon comes close to a taxonomy of digitally engaged painting, presenting his essay in three sections: *surface*, *image*, and *reception*. Employing this tripartite formal approach, he attempts to deconstruct, on a material level, what comprises contemporary painting, specifically, its morphological concerns:

- However, how exactly in our present moment painting functions as a frame, and in doing so enables an artist the effortless and unquestioned ability to use the space of the wall for the accumulation and presentation of materials and objects, is one of the primary questions we must ask.<sup>129</sup>

He continues:

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

- This suggests that we consider that the proliferation in the past decade or so of laptops, tablets, smartphones, and flatscreen televisions—all of which are interfaces housed in slender casings—has done many things to the presentation of images, and consequently to our perception and consumption of them, while also activating a whole new array of materials and means of display.<sup>130</sup>

By addressing the interface (as the means of digital experience), Bacon considers the same formal enquiries previously considered by Openshaw. Specifically, Bacon goes on to examine the morphological gestures apparent within digital painting:

- Recent work by Aaron Bobrow and Mary Ramsden also references the gestures inherent in the action of swiping and other tactile manoeuvres of digital devices. That they do so with paint on panel suggests an analogy with the familiar path made by the brush as it traverses a receptive surface. Staniak has also engaged with this, noting that the “element of touch” is synonymous with digital media and also primitive image making.<sup>131</sup>

Alongside a digital framing of opticality, haptics is proposed as a principal concern among new media painters. Examining this idea, Bacon comments on the work of artists Laura Owens, Trudy Benson, Michael Williams, Jamian Juliano-Villani, and Josh Reames. He states:

- These things [the analogue appropriation of digital qualities] combine to create a new pictorial vocabulary for artists who import digital conventions like drop shadows, the harsh and arbitrary lines of cut-and-paste actions, and digital color schemes like gradients into painting.<sup>132</sup>

The curator Kathy Grayson mirrors such language, attesting: *‘the more interesting shift in painting has nothing to do with media used but instead the forms, composition and content in painting.’*<sup>133</sup> Terminology such as “forms”, “composition” and “content” in relation to technologically embedded painting strongly resonate with Bacon’s assertions, as he proposes a similar categorisation by using the terms “surface” (the material the painting is comprised of), “image” (imagery that follows the spatial and optical occupation of the painting) and “reception” (the critical and social relevance of the painting).<sup>134</sup> It is also interesting to note Bacon assesses the formal ambitions of the artists he cites, using specific terminology. Phraseology such as “cut-and-paste” and “drop shadows” hints to a new type of language with which to apply to painting, implementing formal qualities proposed by Graw, Joselit, and McHugh, that re-mediatise themselves from analogue interpretations and definitions of paint and extend into a digital vocabulary. In a continuation of this idea, Bacon says: *‘I would suggest many*

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Kathy Grayson, *Post-Analog Painting (Exhibition Catalogue)*, (The Hole: Anteism, 2015), p. 1.

<sup>134</sup> Bacon.

of the younger artists working with painterly means are addressing the distinction between the image status and the object status of the work.<sup>135</sup> By saying this, Bacon dismantles the binary of analogue and digital painting into the terms “image” (digital) and “object” (analogue). He continues: ‘... since most [artworks] are simultaneously in existence as objects and also as jpegs circulating through the internet, in ways intentional and otherwise.’<sup>136</sup> This idea aligns with McHugh’s analysis of painting circulating in a meme-like fashion. As such, this exemplifies the consensus of painting as operating in a digitally networked mode. In a continuation of this idea, the writer John Kelsey, in his essay *The Sext Life of Painting* (2015), mirrors fellow commentators such as Bacon, Kholeif, and Bridle, by affirming the notion of technology’s omnipresence within an expanded, digital network:

- Seeing how painting has colonized social media lately, it’s hard to feel that there’s a sort of leaking away from the medium at the very moment it’s taking on a weird and happy new life. Cellularized and abstracted as screen content via apps like Instagram, painting instantly sheds the material skeleton that has always given it body and scale while also escaping the social and institutional contexts that once positioned and grounded it in the world.<sup>137</sup>

In the same manner as Smythe, Kelsey also argues there is a loss of analogue, material authenticity, in favour of digital painterly hybridity. Continuing his assessment of the situation of painting in the age of social media, he goes on to say: ‘Picking up speed within digital networks, it becomes virulently retinal again, shamelessly Op no matter its genre or style.’<sup>138</sup> Kelsey, critically, states that a digital network serves to detract from the physical encounter of the painted work, in what Bacon again describes as an expanded “medium-specific extension of modernism.” Commenting further on the idea of the network, Kelsey attests: ‘The network is a kind of temporal Pastebin where such moments and paintings pile up and forget themselves.’<sup>139</sup> This statement positions the network (and as such, networked painting) as a messy conflation of its digital and social status. As such, Kelsey mirrors the commentary provided by Kholeif and Quaranta, in that the discourse of new media painting is conflicted and hard to define, whilst at the same time positing Joselit’s idea of the network is itself a locus of formal critique. Commenting further on the social media status of the artwork, Kelsey says: ‘... the work, once posted, is already ahead of itself and other than itself...’<sup>140</sup> This idea, whilst valid, is not new, as

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> John Kelsey, ‘The Sext Life of Painting’, in *Painting 2.0: Expression in the Information Age: Gesture and Spectacle, Eccentric Figuration, Social Networks*, eds., Ammer, Manuela, et al, (Mumok, 2015), (268–270), p. 268.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid, p. 268.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid, p. 269.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, p. 268.

it has been positioned previously by the philosopher Marshall McLuhan. In particular, his pioneering insights into the broader social relationship of art and technology, as well as the relationships between artist and material, specifically how changing media and technology changes the scale, pace, and pattern of human perception.<sup>141</sup> Expanding on the idea of painting acting “ahead of itself”, Kelsey goes on to say: *‘[Painting] gains a power to radically reconstellate itself in relation to other kinds of information, other experiences, and other bodies.’*<sup>142</sup> Here, Kelsey aligns the capabilities of painting with transitive and re-mediatised formal terminologies cited by Joselit and Graw, within a digital, social media network. However, he goes on to say: *‘Operating on that border, [between art and non-art/context of social media] painting is able to experiment with the loss of distinction between mark making and promotion, branding and sharing, hanging out and selling, seeing and speculating.’*<sup>143</sup> By operating in such a fast-paced, digitally present manner, Kelsey attests that the presence of painting has short-circuited amidst the light-based, transitive, digitally networked context of social media,<sup>144</sup> resonating with the assumptions of Smythe. Whereas Smythe’s argument was a formal concern, Kelsey takes issue with the wider contextual appropriation of painting’s dissemination and assimilation. Kelsey continues this criticism of the social media network that painting adopts when he states: *‘Meanwhile, even the most dandyish gestures come off a bit half hearted under the current regime of likes. There is no black or blank or bad painting on Instagram because all there is is content, and even a quasi refusal to communicate communicates, at the end of the day.’*<sup>145</sup> Kelsey is critical of the digital democratisation of painting, construed as a longing of the analogue, archaic intermediaries associated with painting’s past, such as the gallery, the art market, and the physical object. Kelsey confirms this assertion when he states: *‘... painting is liked and at the same time cast into situations where it must immediately contend with other information, involved in a sort of rebus of likes and lifestyle signifiers, adrift in a situation that immediately complicates the work’s meaning, value and place.’*<sup>146</sup> He continues: *‘Repeating and reposting itself, painting now gets around in a meme-like way...’*<sup>147</sup> Delving further into this idea, Kelsey states:

- But now that the work and time of painting have become so immersed within the 24-7 temporality of digital networks, it can only operate in an immanent and immediately participatory way, without the luxury of any clearly demarcated temporal or spatial gap between the proper time and place of its own

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<sup>141</sup> McLuhan, p. 7.

<sup>142</sup> Kelsey, p. 268.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid, p. 269.

<sup>144</sup> Kelsey refers to this apparent phenomenon as ‘an ever-shrinking present tense’, Ibid, p. 268

<sup>145</sup> Ibid, p. 269.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid, p. 269.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid, p. 269.

work and the no-time and nonplace of info networks that seem to abolish these. So it involves itself in boundary confusion, haunting and stalking itself, happily confusing itself with its selfie.<sup>148</sup>

By positioning the digital nature of painting as overtaking its temporal, analogue self, Kelsey implies the loss of the object as a physical intermediary has sped up the consumption of painting. In this way, the dissemination and assimilation of artworks happens rapidly, algorithmically, in a form of *hyper-transitivity*.

Whilst the sources cited in this section go into detail about charting painting's evolution within a digital network, they are all missing a crucial aspect: specifically, charting the development of painting's translation from an analogue entity into a digital and technological formalism. Furthermore, several fundamental problems emerge. Firstly, little exists within these texts that describe the emerging digitally engaged forms of painted gesture. Secondly, there exists scarce literature which reflects post-digital painting: a crucial development in this field. However, the beginnings of a digitally engaged painting taxonomy have emerged, particularly in the work of Bacon, but only in a general sense. Nearly all these commentators rehash the problems inherent to Greenbergian Abstract Expressionism as justification for the formal development of painting in a digital setting: this has emerged as a trope, however, and does little to substantiate the formal vocabulary relevant to painting's continued development. Finally, it is apparent the confusion surrounding terms within post-new media painting arise from an incoherence of terminology and a conflict in basic formal attributions. Fierce polemics saturate the discourse, with several commentators arguing for the tactile specificity of the analogue in relation to the digital. Others affirm the conflation between the two, whilst some reject the digital's impact altogether, thus compounding the complicated discourses that are inherent to the post-digital.

## **[2.5] CONCLUSION**

Based on the research conducted in this Review of Literature, observation has shown there exists no definitive taxonomy of how the analogue painted gesture's specific morphological properties have formally evolved in relation to a digital, new media art painting discourse. Post-digital painting is an emergent discourse at the forefront of utilising digital technologies; however, there exists little in the way of academic literature to appraise emerging painted

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid, p. 270.

surface gestures. Instead, existing literature only focuses on these painting practices as a whole; at times, these broader arguments are convoluted and complicated. As a result, the need for a taxonomy of digitally and technologically engaged painting emerges from the existing confusion found within the new media art and post-digital genres. To posit contemporary painting solidly within these fields, contestable and often confused archetypes need to be clarified. Specifically, in their relationship to post-digital painting, which, from the research conducted herein, has been observed as establishing itself as the preeminent field which has emerged from new media art. Accordingly, the post-digital genre situates itself as the vehicle with which new media painting most successfully proliferates. By assessing the formal arguments, terminologies, philosophies, and definitions which have arisen within expanded field painting and how they have extended into a digitally and technologically engaged art environment, the formal language with which to begin to assemble a taxonomy of digitally engaged painting practices already exists. Through analysis of overarching trends, terminologies, and discourses associated with digital art and the technological, it has been observed that an agreed set of conditions which adequately define new media art and its subgenres is a contended subject. Resultantly, there is no sign of a more definitive clarification emerging. These disputes extend to the tactility of physical pigment vs intangible light-based image production, medium-specific formal classifications, the dichotomy of medium and Media, the analogue and its relationship to the digital, and how the art object within a post-digital discourse adopts authenticity. As such, commentators have reached only a limited consensus on what occupies the space between medium and Media, with no concrete articulation. By considering the relationship painting has shared with technology, the issues surrounding new media and the post-digital, the conflation of painting and the digital, and the role of painting and its place within a social media network, inconsistent formal classifications have been highlighted. Moreover, whilst the beginnings of a digitally engaged painting taxonomy has emerged in rare instances, this is only in a general sense. As a result, the emerging forms of digitally engaged painted gesture present within a post-digital condition have yet to be precisely mapped. The uncertainty surrounding post-digital, new media painting arises from a confusion of terminology and conflict when contextualising basic formal attributions, specifically those relationships between the analogue and the digital. Overall, this Review of Literature has outlined the position, translative formal situation, and preliminary terminologies of gesture, as a fundamental condition with which to assess the position of expanded painting

practices and processes within a perpetually shifting new media art discourse, specifically the translation of the painted gesture within a post-digital condition.

## CHAPTER 3

### WHAT IS THE POST-DIGITAL PAINTED GESTURE?

#### [3.1] INTRODUCTION

Paint(ing) has been stripped of attributes inherent to its origin (as a mere material or performative classification) to retain its cultural validity, and gradually replaced with indexical instances of its expansion (semiotic appropriations, skeuomorphic representations of material, and networked manifestations, for example). This concept is rooted in one of the oldest thought experiments in Western philosophy: *The Ship of Theseus*. In the same way every rotten plank of Theseus' vessel was gradually replaced until none of the original ship remained, paint(ing) has functionally become a changed analogue of its former self. Shedding the formal "planks" of its past, paint(ing) slowly transmutes in a bid to expand its boundaries. As such, the gradual supplanting of processes and materials that emerged from an expanded field and post-medium format has allowed painting to adopt a new identity, whilst retaining a link to its long history, albeit through an indexical, networked format. The processes and materials may have changed, but the vocabulary of painting's implementation has remained largely the same.

As shall be exemplified in this chapter, traits that define paint(ing) also define other formalisms with considerable overlap. As such, materials and processes are replaced with semiotic prescriptions of medium attribution. Ultimately, through approaching formalisms using these criteria, a demonstrable malleability and fluidity of formalisms emerges, broadening perceptions of contemporary expanded painting.

Within the post-digital world, the gesture moves beyond its traditional function of autographic enactment upon a surface. Instead, it functions as an objective, translative, mediated form of information.<sup>149</sup> Philosopher Vilém Flusser's definition of gesture as an 'expression of intention'<sup>150</sup> is applicable to frame this phenomenon concisely. This statement frees painting from archaic material and performative constraints of gestural action and instead resonates with Graw's term *anthropomorphic projection*, whereby an artist does not need even touch the material they encounter. Gesture in Flusser's terms extends beyond mere causal phenomena. Instead, contextual gestural meaning occurs via symbolic mediation;<sup>151</sup> accordingly, a gesture operates as a translative form of symbol and thus a semiotic entity<sup>152</sup> (as shall be exemplified later in this chapter translation and semiosis are prerequisites for post-digital gestural operation). Following the research carried out in Chapter 2, an adequate summation of what constitutes as the *Post-digital Painted Gesture* (PDPG) does not yet exist. Accordingly, this chapter will present a more substantial definition, that will unify the historical act of analogue picture making with contemporary, expanded technological modes of painting production. Moreover, a clear identity to the role of expanded, digitally engaged painting shall be presented, clarifying its functional inconsistencies, post-new media. Here, gesture acts as the anchor point between medium<sup>153</sup> and Media,<sup>154</sup> functioning as a form of translatable data. Accordingly, an analysis of gesture presents a way to build on the epistemology and taxonomy of translated<sup>155</sup> painting within the post-digital. To define the painted gesture within a post-digital painting discourse, it is necessary to chart the formal, social, and philosophical aspects of painting's development from an insular modernist ideal, through to its redefined status as an expanded, materially malleable form of expression. By analysing the historic pretext of the painted gesture, a vocabulary with which to assess post-digital painting emerges from its analogue beginnings. By defining the PDPG in this way, a formal armature will become evident, allowing a comprehensive enquiry into what the position of expanded painting practices and processes within a perpetually shifting new media art discourse are, and how this has affected the

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<sup>149</sup> This assertion shall be later supported by the research within this chapter.

<sup>150</sup> Vilém Flusser, *Gestures*, Trans. Nancy Ann Roth, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), p. 1.

<sup>151</sup> Flusser, p. 4.

<sup>152</sup> Flusser confirms this, stating: 'To account for what one actually sees, any analysis of a gesture has to be an analysis of meaning.' Ibid, p. 64.

<sup>153</sup> The material used in the production of a painting.

<sup>154</sup> The mode of dissemination/communication.

<sup>155</sup> "Translation" is defined within this research as the shift in *material, morphological, processual, or interactive* painterly value from one context into another.

translation of the painted gesture. The following three investigations emerge from the main research question, with which to arrive at a definition:

**Expanded Classifications**—This section will address how the *position* of painting has evolved from an insular practice into an expanded state, following the characteristics of its development.

**Painting and Technology**—This section will *formally* contextualise the historical use of technology in relation to painting and how technology itself is defined when applied to painting practices.

**The Post-digital Condition**—This section will chart the broader cultural and social narratives associated with the PDPG, detailing the movements and cultural hegemonies responsible for the development of post-digital painting, through an analysis of its *position* and *translative properties* ultimately arriving at a definition of the PDPG.

### **[3.2] EXPANDED CLASSIFICATIONS**

The *position* of expanded painting practices and processes within a perpetually shifting new media art discourse and how this has affected the translated painted gesture begins with the traditional notion of painting as a *material* and an *act*. However, within a post-digital environment, this is formally limiting. Nevertheless, historically, some aimed to secure the status of painting as a materially pure pursuit, most prevalently within late modernism, where commentators emphasised the material specificity of paint and media. In his 1961 essay *Modernist Painting*, Greenberg argues the essence of modernism lies within the characteristic use of methods of a set discipline ‘to criticise the discipline itself’,<sup>156</sup> asserting this entrenches the discipline more firmly in its area of competence.<sup>157</sup> He goes on to state this self-criticism grew out of the Enlightenment era:

- The self-criticism of Modernism grows out of, but is not the same thing as, the criticism of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment criticized from the outside, the way criticism in its accepted sense

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<sup>156</sup> Greenberg, p. 774.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, p. 774.

does; Modernism criticizes from the inside, through the procedures themselves of that which is being criticized.<sup>158</sup>

Following this statement, Greenberg claims art had to demonstrate the encounter it offered provided value in its own right, in a way that could not emerge from any other activity.<sup>159</sup> Furthermore, he states each artform must display what is unique about its particular material parameters, thus applying exclusivity to each discipline and the materiality associated with it, positioning material purity as a guarantee of quality and independence.<sup>160</sup> Additionally, this means painting must analyse itself to realise its uniqueness. This argument is secured when he says:

- Three-dimensionality is the province of sculpture and for the sake of its own autonomy painting has had above all to divest itself of everything it might share with sculpture.<sup>161</sup>

Here, Greenberg limits the concept of painting to an application on a flat surface, advocating this limitation as a positive attribute. As a result, this confines artistic faculties into distinct categories, denouncing a blending of formalisms that would detract from the quality of art. However, Greenberg's reductive value system is a formal impasse, that limits the expansion of painting due to its insular ambition of material purity. Despite the utopian aspirations of Greenberg's formal narratives, a synthetic, networked presence within painting embeds itself within modernist art practice. Following the capitalist ideals of Fordist labour models, which integrated humanity's relationship with technology in unprecedented ways,<sup>162</sup> the art critic Hal Foster states:

- Today, this view might strike us as almost quaint, and certainly the body and the machine are no longer seen as so discrete. Yet this double logic governed the machinic imaginary of high modernism in the first decades of the twentieth century—underwrote its utopias of the body extended, even subsumed in new technologies, as well as its dystopias of the body reduced, even dismembered by them. In this way, this logic also circumscribed the cultural politics of the machine: for the most part, modernists of this time could only hope to resist new technologies in the name of some given natural body, or to accelerate them in the search for some imagined postnatural body. More complementary than opposite, this restrictive advocacy of resistance or acceleration was as pronounced in modernist art as it was in critical theory, and it marks a structural limitation of both formations.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid, p. 774.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, p. 774.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid, p. 775.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid, p. 776.

<sup>162</sup> Hal Foster, *Prosthetic Gods*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: MIT Press, 2004), p. 109.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid, pp. 109 - 110.

Foster continues: *'Many machinic modernisms made a fetish of technology: they treated it apart from the mode of production and turned it into a subject of art, and in this way it became a force in its own right, an agent of l'esprit moderne (as Le Corbusier and others termed it).'*<sup>164</sup> This notion is substantiated by the writer Esther Leslie, as she attests on the subject:

- Scientific and technological developments resonated in art in a thematic sense, and also in a material sense in the new century. Now nature was reinvented in laboratories, art too founded new forms, embracing the metallic, shiny, industrial, synthetic and analytic. There was a certain predilection in some modernist practice for nasty colours, chemical colours.<sup>165</sup>

Consequently, the idea of Taylorist and Fordist mechanised labour techniques informed the production of modernist painting methods. However, this utopian ideal of Western, capitalist production skews in alignment with postmodern conviction, exemplified in Krauss' diametric opposition to the reasoning of Greenberg. Krauss argues that many artists found themselves situated *'successively'*<sup>166</sup> in different areas within what she defined as an *'expanded field.'*<sup>167</sup> She maintained this *'continual relocation'*<sup>168</sup> of artistic energy was entirely logical, stating the modernist ethos would call it *'eclectic.'*<sup>169</sup> Krauss goes on to say that a *'suspicion'*<sup>170</sup> of moving beyond specific media is a modernist response for the purity and separateness of the different faculties of art. She continues:

- For, within the situation of Postmodern, practice is not defined in relation to a given medium – sculpture – but rather in relation to the logical operations on a set of cultural terms, for which any medium – photography, books, lines on walls, mirrors, or sculpture itself – might be used.<sup>171</sup>

She argues this provides an expanded field for artists to occupy that is *'not dictated by the conditions of a particular medium.'*<sup>172</sup> Krauss further exemplifies this idea as she goes on to state that the logic of postmodern practice is no longer defined by any given medium *'on the grounds of the material.'*<sup>173</sup> Krauss approaches the interdisciplinary from the perspective of sculpture. Still, her multidisciplinary sensibility is apparent, advocating emancipation from the singularity

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid, p. 110.

<sup>165</sup> Esther Leslie, *Synthetic Worlds Nature, Art and the Chemical Industry*, (London: Reaktion, 2005), p. 16.

<sup>166</sup> Rosalind Krauss, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', in *October*, Vol. 8. (Spring, 1979), (MIT Press Journals), (30–44), p.42.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid, p. 37.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid, p. 42.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid, p. 42.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid, p. 42.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid, p. 42.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid, pp. 42 - 43.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid p. 43.

of media posited by Greenberg, for the concept of a pluralised, multidisciplinary expanded field of art practice. Supporting Krauss, Graw further illustrates what an expanded field constitutes in a contemporary context, by asserting:

- Since the borders between different art forms have become permeable, at least since the 1960s, we have found ourselves in a situation where different media relate to, refashion, and remodel each other.<sup>174</sup>

She critiques Greenberg's notion of medium specificity by commenting that the modernist concept of art being defined by *'the essence of its medium'*<sup>175</sup> has *'clearly lost its relevance.'*<sup>176</sup> Graw shares Krauss' notion of an interdisciplinary expanded field, dismissing Greenberg's argument of material purity. Both Krauss and Graw's argument is in precise alignment with the fact that during the 1960s and 1970s there was an obvious point of trauma for painting, a formal impasse that radically changed how it was to develop. As Krauss attests: *'... it is diversified, split, factionalized...'*<sup>177</sup> She continues: *'its energy does not seem to flow through a single channel...'*<sup>178</sup> It is apparent the condition of painting had to change to evolve beyond the insular, modernist mechanics orchestrated by Greenberg; this severing from the Greenbergian ethos had begun to find momentum amongst cultural theorists in the early 1970s.<sup>179</sup> Vitaly, one of the significant structural changes to art at this time, was a disregarding of the overall sense of the avant-garde.<sup>180</sup> Furthermore, the social and economic transformation of what had now become a postmodern situation bred a *'pluralist'*<sup>181</sup> cultural ideology in which artistic practice continued without any agreed agenda or goals, free from the elitism of a commodified, modernist hegemony. Consequently, a proliferation of interdisciplinary approaches extended painting, driving it into sculptural, performative, and conceptual fields. As such, the term "expanded field" applies to artworks which cross-pollinate with other disciplines, blending artistic faculties whilst retaining elements of their original selves in a multidisciplinary fusing of media. Moreover, the proposition of an expanded field of painting provides the first point of development for the painted gesture, moving it beyond the material confines of pigment and binder which is placed upon a surface, leading to a newfound linguistic and semiotic position.

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<sup>174</sup> Graw, 'The Value of Painting: Notes on Unspecificity, Indexicality and Highly Valuable Quasi-Persons', p. 47.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid, p. 48.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid, p. 48.

<sup>177</sup> Rosalind Krauss, 'Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America', in *October*, Vol. 3. (Spring 1977), (MIT Press Journals), (68–81), p. 68.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid, p. 68.

<sup>179</sup> David Hopkins, *After Modern Art: 1945 – 2000*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 197.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, p. 197.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid, p. 197.

Resulting from this linguistic expansion, the painted gesture redefined itself in terms of its morphological properties, diametrically opposing the dogmatic purity Greenberg espoused. Painting began to embrace a pluralised state, establishing itself on a new set of anti-formal terms as early as the 1960s with the rise of Conceptual art, adopting language as its formal armature. As such, conceptually, an infinitely diverse range of marks upon any given surface can constitute as a painted gesture: consequently, the question of how a gesture is classified arises. In an attempt to narrow this definition, the artist and writer Julian Bell speaks of the semiotic capabilities of painting as: ‘A mark is a sign you can see.’<sup>182</sup> If a painted gesture is a visible sign, then this positions painting as a carrier of *signification*, that is to say, a conduit for meaning. Accordingly, if a sign is linguistically based, yet is also a component of painting, then the semiotic connection between both entities proposes that language augments the potency and possibilities for the painted gesture. Consequently, painting emancipates itself from the confinement of being a purely physical medium relegated to pigment and binder, emerging as a conceptual activity deeply entrenched within language. As a result, the painted gesture becomes a semiotic entity as a series of signs which are open to conceptual manipulation. Moreover, considered linguistically, traditional perceptions of the painted gesture begin to collapse as language radically expands *and* complicates how it is defined. For example, one can describe paint (as a material) as “a viscous liquid residing within a tube which is applied to a brush.” This description can simultaneously be a *signifier*<sup>183</sup> for toothpaste as much as it does paint; similar interpretations apply to melted chocolate, honey, or even blood. This same exercise applies to any word synonymous with paint, for example: “gesture”, “pigment”, or “liquid”—fundamentally, the result would yield an endless sequence of deferred linguistic iterations, becoming a continually shifting cycle of metonymies. This concept emerges from a Derridean process of ‘*différance*’<sup>184</sup> wherein meaning is deferred through language via a ‘*signifying chain*.’<sup>185</sup> Capitalising on language’s capability to extend the practice of painting, the conceptual artist Joseph Kosuth, aware of the archaic traditions of Western painting, stated:

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<sup>182</sup> Julian Bell, *What is Painting?* (Thames & Hudson: London, 1999), p. 29.

<sup>183</sup> I assume this semiotic stance by considering the work of Roland Barthes who builds on the study of signs from Ferdinand de Saussure. Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, (Atlantic Books: Reissue edition: 31 Dec. 1997), p. 35.

<sup>184</sup> This idea is first introduced by Jacques Derrida when he states: ‘*The economy of this writing is a regulated relationship between that which exceeds and the exceeded totality: the *différance* of the absolute excess.*’ Derrida, ‘p. 75.

<sup>185</sup> This term originates with Jacques Lacan, as a series or association of signifiers which are connected in a diversity of ways. Jacques Lacan, ‘Seminar on “The Purloined Letter”’, in *Ecrits*, Trans. Bruce Fink, (W.W. Norton & Company: New York: London, 2006), (6–50), p. 6.

- The word art is general and the word painting is specific. Painting is a kind of art. If you make paintings you are already accepting (not questioning) the nature of art. One is then accepting the nature of art to be the European tradition of a painting-sculpture dichotomy. But in recent years the best new work has been neither painting nor sculpture, and increasing numbers of young artists make art that is neither one. When words lose their meaning they are meaningless. We have our own time and our own reality and it need not be justified by being hooked into European art history.<sup>186</sup>

Here, Kosuth renounces the labour of the painter and sculptor<sup>187</sup> and as a result, positions the conceptual with painting as a matter of questioning the nature of making art itself. By the late 1960s, Kosuth considered it a necessity to work in media ‘*other than the inherently tainted, corrupted ones of the Old Masters*’.<sup>188</sup> One of the earliest examples of his “post-painterly” works include black and white photographic blow-ups of the dictionary word “painting” [Fig. 13]. These large photostats (later referred to as his *First Investigations*), were ‘*systematic transfigurations*’<sup>189</sup> of the Abstract Expressionist painter Ad Reinhardt’s earlier black square abstract paintings [Fig. 14]. Here, it is apparent that Kosuth’s conceptual agenda arises from a painterly discourse: vitally, however, is the introduction of language—something altogether foreign to the tradition of late modernist painting.

Linguistic intervention radically transformed the function of the painted gesture. It was no longer a mere formal preoccupation which adhered to European formalist traditions, or a materially pure endeavour as espoused by modernist commentators. From this, a pattern is clear: the idea of what constitutes as painting (and by extension the painted gesture) is in a perpetual state of flux. Specifically, until the mid-nineteenth century painting as a form of mimesis reigned supreme, however, the objectives of representation advanced with the dawn of photography.<sup>190</sup> As such, early modernist painting aimed to exploit that which photography could not accomplish.<sup>191</sup> Formal reactions included bold, colourful brushwork, demonstrated within the work of Impressionist and (to a much greater extent) Fauvist painters, and then within abstracted pursuits witnessed with Cubism and Surrealism (whereby artists directly critiqued representation itself). Late Modernist painting gave rise to material purity, and as a

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<sup>186</sup> Joseph Kosuth, under the pseudonym of Arthur R. Rose, ‘Four Interviews’, in *Arts Magazine*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (New York: Arts Magazine, 1969), (22–23), p. 23.

<sup>187</sup> Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity*, (Cambridge, Mass. London: MIT 2003), p. 29.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid*, p. 29.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid*, p. 30.

<sup>190</sup> This advancement followed the initial development of photographic procedures in 1826 when Joseph Nicéphore Niépce created the first modern conception of a photograph using the heliograph method (and its later commercial expansion by Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre).

<sup>191</sup> Paul Levinson, *The Soft Edge; a Natural History and Future of the Information Revolution*, (Routledge: London and New York, 1997), p. 47.

**pāint'ing, n.** 1. the act or occupation of covering surfaces with paint.  
2. the act, art, or occupation of picturing scenes, objects, persons, etc. in paint.  
3. a picture in paint, as an oil, water color, etc.  
4. colors laid on. [Obs.]  
5. delineation that raises a vivid image in the mind; as, *word-painting*. [Obs.]

Figure 13: Joseph Kosuth. *Titled Art as Idea as Idea [Painting]*. 1966. Photostat, mounted on board. 121.9 x 121.9 cm. Collection: Guggenheim Museum, New York.

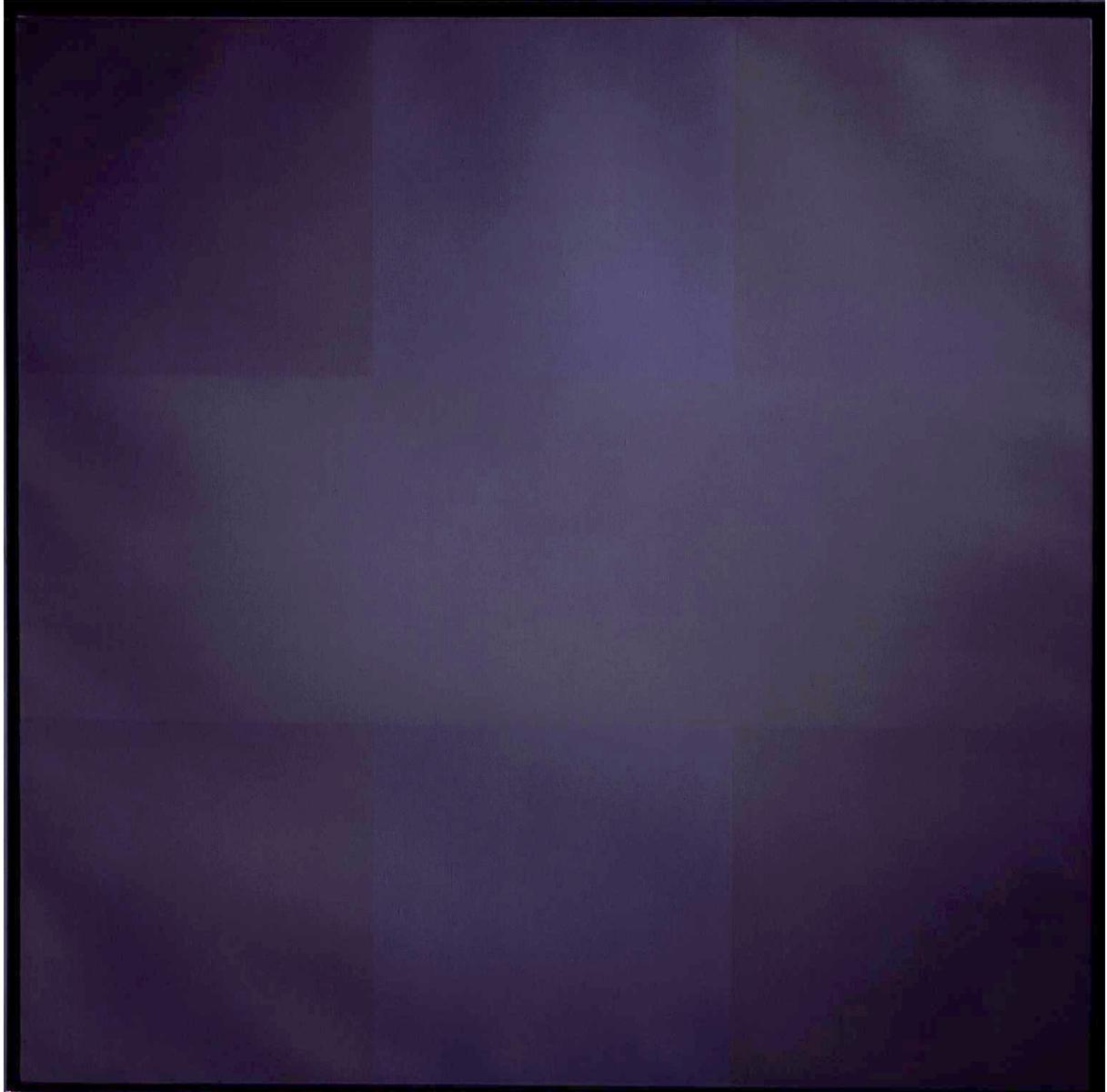


Figure 14: Ad Reinhardt. **Abstract Painting No. 5**. 1962. Oil on canvas. 152.4 x 152.4 cm. Collection: Tate Modern, London.

result, undiluted pictorial abstraction proliferated, characterised by Abstract Expressionist artists such as Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock, Robert Motherwell, and Franz Kline. Following this, the meta-narratives and material singularity proposed by modernism diminished with the post-medium dissent of postmodernity, embodied through pioneering expanded and conceptual approaches to media by practitioners including Kosuth, Marcel Broodthaers, John Baldessari, and Sol LeWitt. Ultimately, this diversity of postmodern material strategies set the stage for a globalised, altermodern state of formal pluralism. Obrist validates painting's ability to mobilise within the shifting topography of the zeitgeist:

- There is discussion that nothing new will enter anymore... but I still believe that new things do arrive... Even in very old mediums. We're in the post-medium condition, you know, so I think it's interesting when a new medium arrives, but when television was invented it didn't necessarily mean that radio was dead.<sup>192</sup>

By saying this, Obrist affirms painting's continual aspiration to reflect the cultural climate that surrounds it and firmly asserts that new means are achievable through old methods. Accordingly, the only change painting has adopted in its historical development is the translation from an analogue to a digital (and "digilogue"<sup>193</sup>) means of production. Consequently, what defines a medium depends on the societal backdrop it operates within. Therefore, painting becomes what the culture it occupies needs it to become: as such, painting tethers itself to a broader social network. Krauss confirms this notion when she attests:

- ... it is obvious that the logic of the space of postmodernist practice is no longer organized around the definition of a given medium on the grounds of material, or, for that matter, the perception of material. It is organized instead through the universe of terms that are felt to be in opposition within a cultural situation.<sup>194</sup>

The painted gesture develops not in isolation, but through a system of re-mediatisation. Krauss would later comment on this status of media as '*post-medium*'<sup>195</sup> wherein a given choice of media no longer matters in the production of an artwork. Instead, media is an entity which

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<sup>192</sup> Goldstein.

<sup>193</sup> The Futurist Anders Sorman-Nilsson defines this as '*the convergence of the digital and the analogue.*' Anders Sorman-Nilsson, *Digilogue: How to Win the Digital Minds and Analogue Hearts of Tomorrow's Customer*, (John Wiley & Sons: Melbourne, 2013), Prologue.

<sup>194</sup> Krauss, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', p. 42.

<sup>195</sup> Krauss summarises this accordingly: '*Whether it calls itself installation art or institutional critique, the international spread of the mixed-media installation has become ubiquitous. Triumphantly declaring that we now inhabit a post-medium age, the post-medium condition of this form traces its lineage, of course, not so much to Joseph Kosuth as to Marcel Broodthaers.*' Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, (Thames & Hudson: New York, 1999), p. 20.

re-mediatises, appropriates, and assimilates the cultural situation it occupies. This expanded media situation naturally allows for an interconnected network with which the painted gesture evolves. Kippenberger reiterates this: *'When you say art, then everything possible belongs to it. In a gallery that is also the floor, the architecture, the colour of the walls.'*<sup>196</sup> Painting is not an isolated practice; it is intrinsic to not only its environment but to the other disciplines that surround it. Bringing this argument into the 2000s, the writer's Robin van den Akker and Timotheus Vermeulen posit the genre of *Metamodernism* as a critical relocation of the strategies employed within both modernism and postmodernism, that ultimately precede altermodernism,<sup>197</sup> acting as a formal bridging point between postmodernity and altermodernity. They state: *'Meanwhile, we witness the return of realist and modernist forms, techniques and aspirations (to which the metamodern has a decidedly different relation than the postmodern).'*<sup>198</sup> However, metamodernism does not mean a return to Greenbergian material specificity.<sup>199</sup> Instead, it is an attempt to reconcile and maximise the conventions of modernist and postmodernist formalisms which go beyond and rearticulate both periods *vis-à-vis* a post-postmodern model as a playful form of pastiche, that transcends the worn-out sensibilities of each movement.<sup>200</sup> Specifically, by oscillating *'between irony and enthusiasm, between sarcasm and sincerity, between eclecticism and purity, between deconstruction and construction and so forth.'*<sup>201</sup> Thus, metamodernism presents a formal bridging point between Greenbergian formalism, postmodern appropriation, and altermodern translation; ostensibly, metamodernism acts as a "rebooting of (painting's) history" defying a post-historical stance adopted by philosophers such as Jean Baudrillard or Francis Fukuyama.<sup>202</sup> Overall, this illustrates that painting, and by extension, the painted gesture, is a continuously redefined phenomenon dictated not only by cultural hegemony but through the technologies of its time.

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<sup>196</sup> Koether, p. 316.

<sup>197</sup> Specifically, when they state: *'As we have defined it, metamodernism is a structure of feeling that emerged in the 2000s and has become the dominant cultural logic of Western capitalist societies. We use the term metamodernism both as a heuristic label to come to terms with a range of aesthetic and cultural predilections and as a notion to periodise these preferences.'* Robin Van den Akker & Timotheus Vermeulen, 'Periodising the 2000s, or, the Emergence of Metamodernism', in *Metamodernism: Historicity, Affect and Depth After Postmodernism*, eds., Robin van den Akker, Alison Gibbons & Timotheus Vermeulen, (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), (1–20), p. 4.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid*, p. 3.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 9 - 10.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11.

<sup>202</sup> Metamodernism is not without its limitations, however. Mainly because it describes a social and historical quantity delineating a time of hyper consumption rather than a technological or cultural engagement. Alan Kirby, *Digimodernism: How New Technologies Dismantle the Postmodern and Reconfigure Our Culture*, (Continuum: New York, 2009), pp. 42 - 43.

### **[3.3] PAINTING AND TECHNOLOGY**

The position of expanded painting practices and processes has emerged from a perennial relationship with technology. From its Palaeolithic inception through to its digital intervention, however, this proposes the concept of how technology defines itself in relation to painting. Humanity tethers itself to technology<sup>203</sup>—arguably, the simplicity of the human finger classifies as a form of technology used in the production of painting. The philosopher Martin Heidegger corroborates this, saying: ‘... *the essence of technology is by no means any-thing technological.*’<sup>204</sup> By saying this, the idea of technology as a “concrete” entity far precedes industrialised conceptions stemming from the radical expansion of mechanisation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He continues: ‘*Technology is a means to an end.*’<sup>205</sup> In the case of the painter, this end being the transmission of *gestural data*. Expanding on this idea, Heidegger proposes: ‘*The current conception of technology, according to which it is a means and a human activity, can therefore be called the in-instrumental and anthropological definition of technology.*’<sup>206</sup> “Instrumental” entities such as the finger, brush, lens, and computer screen all share an anthropological relationship to painting, as a “means” of production. They act as an extension of the human hand, eye, and brain, akin to the posthuman expansion of human experience and perception.<sup>207</sup> Flusser reiterates Heidegger’s point when discussing the mechanical means of the painted gesture, by stating:

- We have learned that we cannot live without the apparatus or outside the apparatus. Not only does the apparatus provide us with our bodily and “intellectual” means of survival, without which we are lost, because we have forgotten how to live without them, and not only because it protects us from the world it obscures. It is primarily because the apparatus has become the only justification and the only meaning of our lives.<sup>208</sup>

This idea is further expounded upon by the writer John Roberts:

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<sup>203</sup> I adopt this idea from Heidegger when he states: ‘*Everywhere we remain unfree and chained to technology, whether we passionately affirm or deny it.*’ Martin Heidegger, ‘The Question Concerning Technology’, in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, Trans. William Lovitt, (New York: Harper Perennial, 1977), (3–35), p. 4.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid*, p. 5.

<sup>207</sup> McLuhan, p. 7. See also, John Culkin, who summarised McLuhan’s idea thusly: ‘*We shape our tools, and thereafter our tools shape us*’, in ‘A Schoolman’s Guide to Marshall McLuhan’, in *Saturday Review March 1967*, (*Saturday Review*: 1967), (51–53, 70–72), p. 70.

<sup>208</sup> Flusser, p. 16.

- There is no point, no place, where the artistic self is free of the constraints of prosthetic devices (be it paintbrush or digital camera), the demands of copying (identification and reclamation), and as such the performative voice or persona (recognition of the split between work and authentic self).<sup>209</sup>

Accordingly, the artist as the singular “authentic” auteur diminishes in favour of postmodern tactics of replication and simulacra. From this, *prosthesis* emerges as a key framing device with which to apply to the technological expansion of human labour, *vis-à-vis* the painterly transmission of intention. Furthermore, referring to the artist as a ‘*monteur*’,<sup>210</sup> Roberts positions the artist as a mechanic, identifying intermedia practice as a translative form of technological production. Additionally, Roberts indirectly encapsulates a post-digital labour value system (which resonates with Bridle’s proposal of a New Aesthetic) when he states:

- Hence in a system where the continuity of production is based on technological forms of replication and duplication, the technical conditions of social and cultural life will necessarily be based on forms of iteration (the neo-effect). Social reproduction and technical reproducibility become indivisible.<sup>211</sup>

Consequently, painting acts as a cultural force that inevitably redefines itself alongside the technological capabilities of its time. When applied to painting, Heidegger’s philosophy manifests itself in the forms of gestural application employed by artists. Based on this, technology (in relation to painting) classifies itself as anything that allows the transmission of a painted gesture, no matter how far removed from painting that gesture is, as well as how the painter can affect their presence upon a painterly context. This revised classification coincides directly with Graw’s theory of anthropomorphic projection. As a result, the key technological advancements that have redefined the tools employed in the production of the PDPG exist in two distinct stages:

**Stage I: Early Computation, Digital Art, and Mechanisation (Late-Modernity—Postmodernity: 1950—1989)**—Marking the beginning of the Information Age, the Digital Revolution of the mid-twentieth century signalled a turning point for computational art, for, as early as the 1950s artists were working with mechanical devices and analogue computers,<sup>212</sup> even within the realm of painting. However, the true artistic potential of both digital and analogue technologies was not fully recognised until the 1968 exhibition *Cybernetic Serendipity*,

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<sup>209</sup> John Roberts, *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art After the Readymade*, (London: Verso, 2007), p. 15.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid*, p. 9.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid*, p. 15.

<sup>212</sup> Victoria & Albert Museum, ‘A History of Computer Art’, in *V&A Online*, (V&A Online, 2019), in URL: <https://bit.ly/1cadgYt>, accessed 25/09/19.

curated by Jasia Reichardt and held at London's Institute of Contemporary Art. Cybernetic Serendipity was the first international exhibition in the United Kingdom dedicated to the relationship between art and emerging technology.<sup>213</sup> Considered a benchmark exhibition for computer arts, it brought the role of the computer as an artistic tool to a wider audience.<sup>214</sup> Following the pioneering forays into the world of digital electronic computers in the late 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s, Cybernetic Serendipity showcased the ways artists were engaging with emerging technologies.<sup>215</sup> Impact printers and plotters became mechanical extensions of the human hand, whilst rudimentary software allowed artists to remove themselves from either the mechanical or cognitive aspects of image production.

The 1970s saw an economic shift in production in America and Europe in which information and communication industries replaced a Fordist model of integrated production. As a result, companies expanded to cater to a global market which included computer industries.<sup>216</sup> Following this were the births of tech giants Apple and Microsoft. Consequently, accessible personal computers were manufactured, alongside early inkjet printers that allowed easy and affordable image (re)production, and as such these tools entered the pop culture of the time creating a new "computer aesthetic."<sup>217</sup> Crucially, it was in 1971 that the computer artist Herbert W. Franke published his seminal book *Computer Graphics: Computer Art*, establishing an early formal benchmark for computer art to develop. Following this, the 1980s saw the widespread use of digital technologies within everyday life; it was at this time that digital special effects were beginning to be used in films such as *Tron* (1982), and early computer games were also being developed; as such, computer technology became a fixture of domestic and professional life. Gaining momentum within the art world, the term "Digital Art"<sup>218</sup> flourished in the 1980s. A key development which set the stage for this new artform was the computer painting programme AARON.<sup>219</sup> Invented by the pioneering digital artist Harold Cohen in 1973 to investigate the question: 'What are the minimum conditions under which a set of marks

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<sup>213</sup> Institute of Contemporary Art, 'Cybernetic Serendipity: A Documentation', in *ICA Online*, (ICA Online, 2014) in URL: <https://bit.ly/2nkkzg3>, accessed 25/09/19.

<sup>214</sup> Catherine Mason, 'Cybernetic Serendipity: History and Lasting Legacy', in *Studio International Online*, (Studio International, 2018), in URL: <https://bit.ly/2mhZcLM>, accessed 25/09/19.

<sup>215</sup> Jasia Reichardt, *Cybernetic Serendipity: the Computer and the Arts*, (Studio International: London, 1968), p.5.

<sup>216</sup> Hopkins, p. 197.

<sup>217</sup> Victoria & Albert Museum.

<sup>218</sup> "Digital Art" today can refer to computer animations, multimedia installations, and digitally edited videos, however, the term more frequently refers to work created using a computer.

<sup>219</sup> Carol King, 'Digital Art', in *Art: the Whole Story*, ed., Stephen Farthing, (Thames & Hudson: UK, 2010), (548–549), p. 548.

functions as an image?<sup>220</sup> initial versions of AARON created abstract drawings. However, as Cohen developed the programme further, it became capable of producing more complex, representational, and painterly images [Fig. 15]. These images, constructed using a series of machines such as plotters and digital painting devices, acted as a technological extension of the human hand.<sup>221</sup> By the late 1980s, artists were embracing new forms of commercially available software (such as GraphiCraft, MacPaint, Adobe Photoshop, and AutoCAD), as well as teaching themselves how to programme.<sup>222</sup> Of particular note, the artist Andy Warhol, using the Amiga 1000 personal computer, produced digital paintings [Fig. 16] in 1985; this positions Warhol as a pioneer of digital painting, perhaps even as the first artist to have established a digital art studio.<sup>223</sup>

**Stage II: New Media and Beyond (Altermodernity: 1989—Present)**—This stage is manifest in two key developments, the first of which being *New Media*. The computer scientist Tim Berners Lee created the World Wide Web in 1989<sup>224</sup> as an information space that allowed users to navigate the Internet, that built upon the early, aggregated iterations of the Internet which, until the late 1980s were commercially unavailable. Following Berners Lee’s creation, this global, interconnected digital network allowed the rapid development of new media, as forms of media that are native to computers or rely on computers for redistribution.<sup>225</sup> Examples of which include social media, human-computer interfaces, mobile phones, and computers. However, in relation to art practice, Paul defines new media in relation to digital art as such:

- One of the basic but crucial distinctions made here is that between art that uses digital technologies as a tool for the creation of more traditional art objects – such as a photograph, print, or sculpture – and digital-born, computable art that is created, stored, and distributed via digital technologies and employs their features as its very own medium. The latter is commonly understood as ‘new media art.’ These

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<sup>220</sup> Harold Cohen, ‘The Further Exploits of AARON, Painter’, in *Stanford Humanities Review*, Volume 4 Issue 2, July 1995, (Stanford: 1995), (141–158), p. 141.

<sup>221</sup> Cohen’s enquiries follow on from the invention of the first graphical manipulation pad, dubbed “Sketchpad.” Created by Ivan Sutherland in 1963 this became the precursor to the modern graphics tablet. Moreover, Cohen was making his pioneering works during the invention of Richard Shoup’s “SuperPaint” system of 1973 which predated software packages such as Microsoft Paint and Photoshop.

<sup>222</sup> Pioneering artists who adopted digital technologies to a painterly effect at this time include Richard Hamilton, Mark Wilson, and Manfred Mohr.

<sup>223</sup> Speaking to *Wired Magazine*, Michael Dille, a member of the team who helped recover the Warhol digital paintings, says: “It’s a really early instance of a professional digital art studio,” says Dille. “Perhaps the first.” Liz Stinson, ‘An Amazing Discovery: Andy Warhol’s Groundbreaking Computer Art’, in *Wired Magazine Online*, (Wired Online, 2014), in URL: <https://bit.ly/2mLBMyq>, accessed 25/09/19.

<sup>224</sup> CERN, *The Birth of the Web*, (CERN, 2019) in URL: <https://bit.ly/2QCew09>, accessed 30/09/19.

<sup>225</sup> Lev Manovich, ‘New Media From Borges to HTML’, in *The New Media Reader*, eds., Noah Wardrip-Fruin & Nick Montfort, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2003), (13–28), pp. 16 - 23.

two broad categories of digital art can be distinctly different in their manifestations and aesthetics and are meant as a preliminary diagram of a territory that is by its nature extremely hybrid.<sup>226</sup>

Paul positions this as a crucial formal distinction, attributing the respective terms “tool” and “medium” to digital and new media processes.<sup>227</sup> Furthermore, new media capabilities marked a turning point in how artists were able to assimilate, disseminate, and create painterly styles. Notable examples of painting dissemination are evident within the image sharing platform *Instagram*, which has come to function as a form of online gallery. In a more structured and direct format, the application *Google Arts & Culture* offers a virtual gallery feature, that allows users to remotely “visit” exhibition installations at many major collections<sup>228</sup> via an interactive navigation feature. Vitaly, the idea of communication is critical for creating paintings via new media: social media platforms such as *Facebook*<sup>229</sup> have facilitated immediate mass communication between artists and spectators, allowing new networks of painterly appropriation to develop. A key artist embracing the social media platform to create his work is “Jim’ll Paint It.” Jim’s painting practice involves an ongoing collaboration between him and his social media followers, whereby he paints compositions with the programme Microsoft Paint, usually to humorous and often disturbing effect [Fig. 17]. Another key example of a practitioner operating within this format is Robin Eley who, with his *Binary Project* (2016–2017) [Fig. 18] combines elements of traditional oil painting with digital and new media intervention. He achieves this through crowd-sourced editing and recreation of his paintings.<sup>230</sup>

The second key development within this stage is the *Screen*. As it exists currently, the screen is a ubiquitous entity, manifest in a variety of iterations, including televisions, watches, dashboards, mobile phones, tablets, and computer monitors. Vitaly, the screen acts as the locus for software interaction. Without it, users cannot access forms of new media.<sup>231</sup> As such, it is the vehicle for new media interaction and proliferation. The semiotician Ugo Volli expands on the idea of the screen stating: ‘... *the screen in the way we understand it, did not emerge*

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<sup>226</sup> Paul, p. 8.

<sup>227</sup> However, as shall be later expanded upon in this thesis, a blending of the distinction between “tool” and “medium”, or digital and new media, is vital for the enhanced classification of post-digital painting.

<sup>228</sup> Such as The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

<sup>229</sup> And historically, sites such as *MySpace* and *Bebo* which performed similar functions.

<sup>230</sup> The process involves dismantling an original painting, sending the pieces to thousands of participants via a *Kickstarter* campaign, and having all the image pieces returned as a jpeg via an email. The result yields an analogue example of corrupted, missing, and changed visual data. Eley describes the work as ‘*a statement about the power of technology to both destroy and create.*’ Robin Eley, *The Binary Project: Robin Eley*, (Robin Eley Artist, YouTube video upload, 2017), in URL: <https://bit.ly/2mq5BE0>, accessed 30/09/19.

<sup>231</sup> This expands on the idea of the *Interface* explored in Chapter 2.



Figure 15: Harold Cohen. **Untitled Computer Drawing**. 1982. Ink and textile dye on paper. 57.5 x 76.5 cm. Collection: Tate Modern, London.



Figure 16: Andy Warhol. **Untitled Computer Painting**. 1985. Amiga and GraphiCraft digital drawing. Collection: The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh.



Figure 17: Jim'll Paint It. *This Morning*. 2018. Microsoft Paint painting.

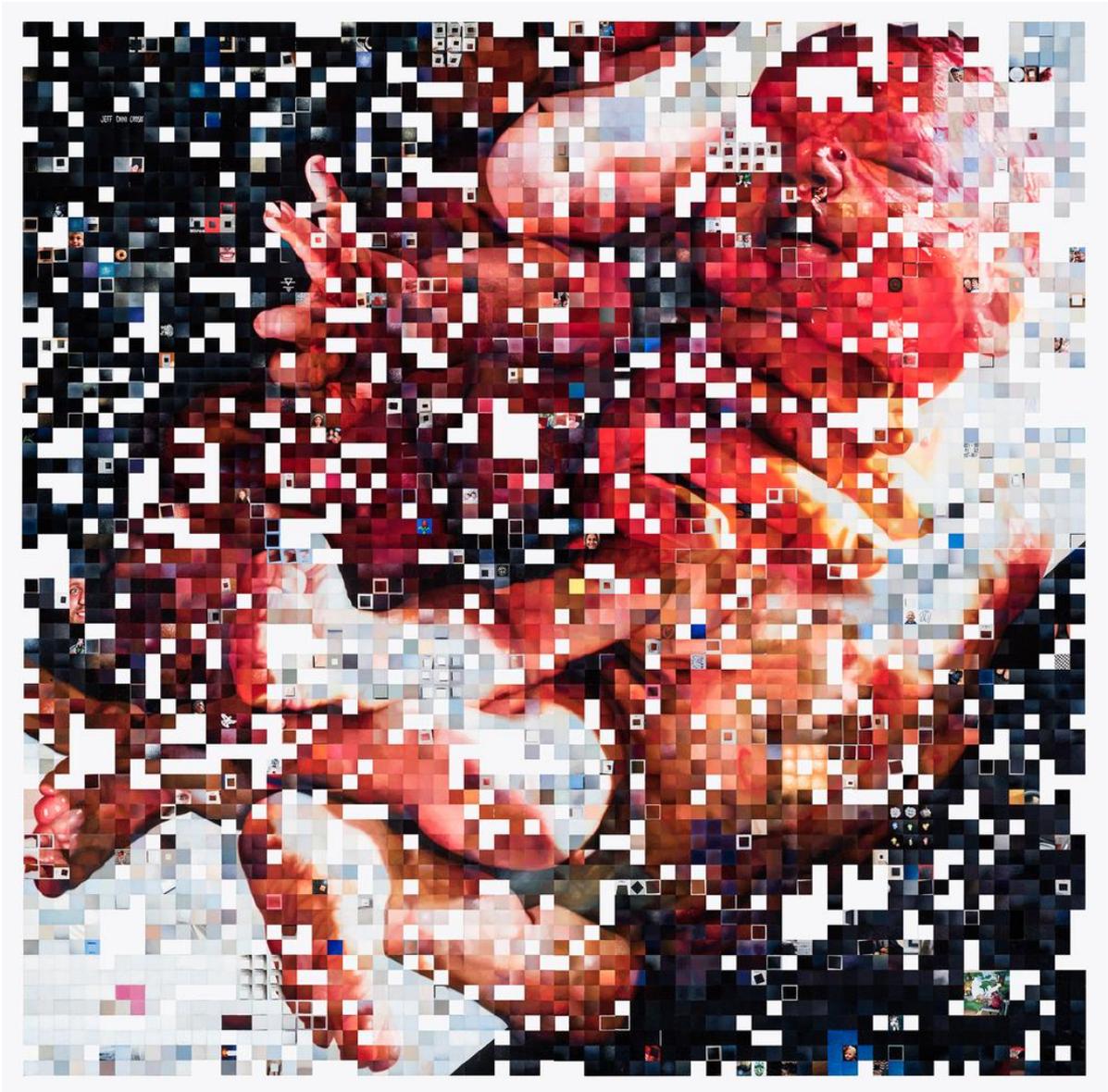


Figure 18: Robin Eley. *Binary.jpg*. 2017. Oil on dibond, epoxy, MDF and steel connectors. 177.8 x 177.8 cm.  
Collection: Private collection.

until the invention of projections – that is, with cinema and its immediate antecedents.<sup>232</sup> He continues:

- So it is not an object, but rather a function: in the first phase, a screen could be just about anything – a wall, a bed, a sheet of paper – as long as it was sufficiently flat, smooth and light-coloured. Even objects that were usually painted on, old supports like canvas and walls, could readily become screens if still virgin.<sup>233</sup>

Here, painting shares a narrative with the screen by virtue of its (relative) flatness: the canvas itself functioning as a screen. If the screen acts as ‘a target for images,’<sup>234</sup> then a relationship between it and painting is inevitable. However, in a digital sense, the screen is definable as an immaterial support for use in communication, made purely of luminous material.<sup>235</sup> Following Volli’s assertions, “old” screen media such as television have seen renewed status as forms of new media following digital intervention, evolving into digital, web-based platforms such as *Netflix* and *Amazon Prime Video*. Accordingly, as legacy media moves from the status of “old” to “new” media, painting, due to digital osmosis, has as well. A key artist to embrace painting in such a manner is David Hockney who, with his *iPad Paintings* (2011) [Fig. 19] has updated the painterly narrative between the painted gesture and the screen, witnessed with Warhol and his Amiga 1000 paintings in the mid-eighties. Resulting from the cultural circulation of such technologies, a new era of how painting is created, disseminated, assimilated, and manipulated has ushered forth, setting the stage for a post-digital mode of image reception.

### **[3.4] THE POST-DIGITAL CONDITION**

The position of expanded painting practices and processes within a perpetually shifting new media art discourse and how this has *translated the painted gesture* is most apparent within a post-digital condition. Ostensibly, painting currently faces a new “crisis” of identity, due to a post-medium, pluralised, non-dominant formal structure which affects contemporary art practice. The ubiquitous proliferation of images has never been greater<sup>236</sup>—this arises from a multicultural, globalised, digital context, following the rapid dissemination of information. This phenomenon results in painting not being restricted to a singular formal output, occurring as

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<sup>232</sup> Ugo Volli, ‘The Screen – ‘General Equivalent’ of Contemporary Art’, in *Vertigo: A Century of Multimedia Art, from Futurism to the Web*, eds. Germano Celant & Gianfranco Maraniello (Milan: Skira, 2008), (263–268), p. 265.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid, p. 265.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid, p. 266.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid, p. 265.

<sup>236</sup> James Gleick, *The Information: A History; a Theory; a Flood*, (New York: Pantheon, 2011), pp. 349 - 351.

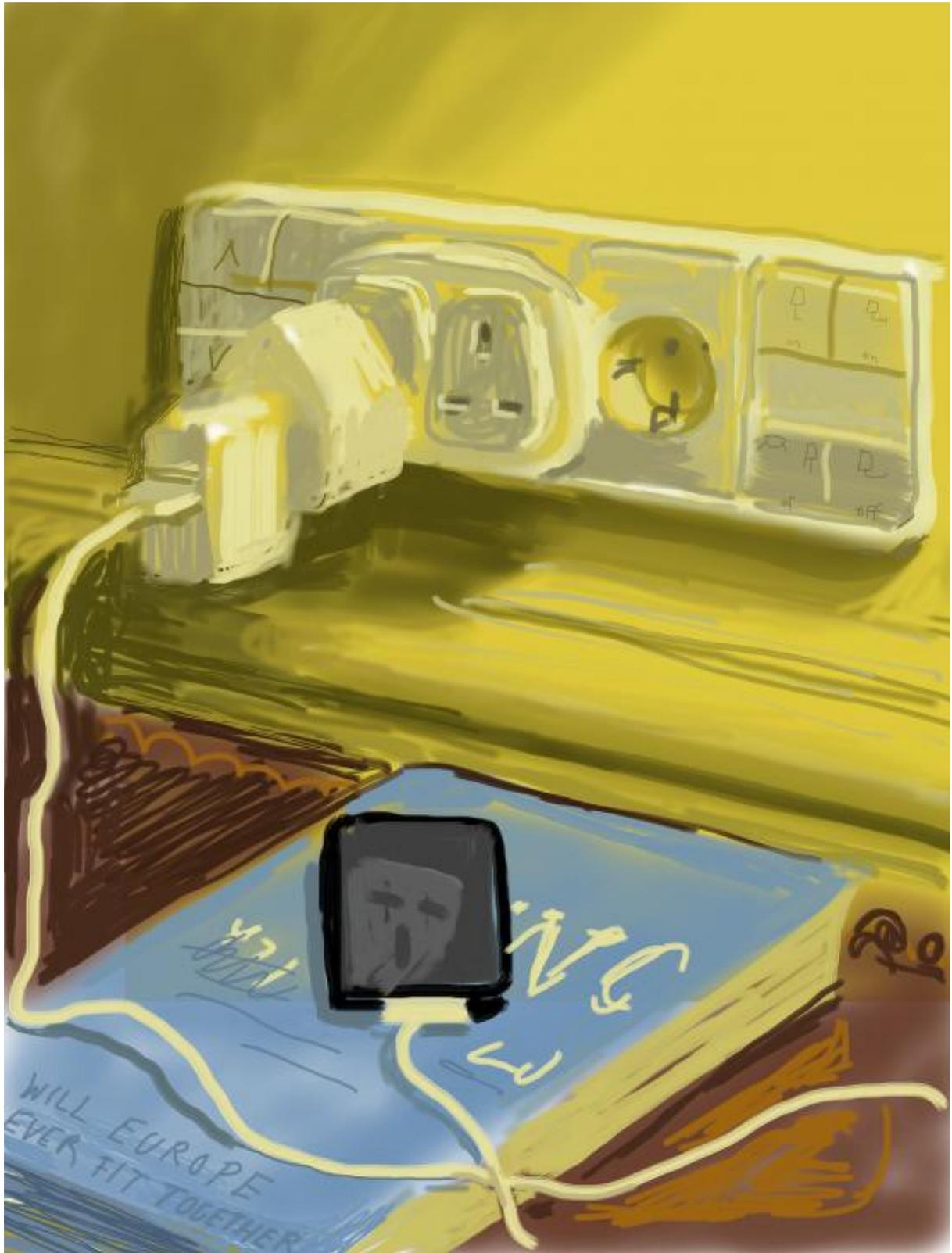


Figure 19: David Hockney. *Untitled, 655*. 2011. iPad painting.

the image becomes a ‘...dynamic form that emerges out of circulation.’<sup>237</sup> Bourriaud describes circulation<sup>238</sup> and plurality in this context as: ‘Being lost is our condition now [due to a] hyper production of artworks.’<sup>239</sup> He continues: ‘There is no dominant idea, there is no dominant form, there is no dominant discipline, there is no dominant medium ... [it is] a globalisation of differences.’<sup>240</sup> From this “lost condition”, a globalised, networked aggregate of disciplines remodels the technological pretext of a globalised culture: this is an ever-evolving dynamic which, itself, is a dominant form. As a result, this “globalisation of differences” acts as the catalyst from which the PDPG proliferates, framed within an altermodern classification. Coined by Bourriaud in 2009, altermodernity is perfectly positioned as an umbrella term to situate post-digital painting.

Fundamentally, altermodernism, as a new modernity that delineates a globalised interconnectivity of art practices, comprises four main facets. According to Bourriaud, these include the end of postmodernism;<sup>241</sup> the hybridisation of cultures (heterogeneity);<sup>242</sup> travelling (nomadism) as a means of production, both temporally (heterochrony) and geographically;<sup>243</sup> and finally, the expansion of art formalisms (postproduction).<sup>244</sup> These tenets distil into a decolonised global language (creolisation) with the idea of passage and journey at its core; a translating of artistic forms; a wandering of time and place; an exploration of medium and context; and a “lost condition” where the rules that governed the cultural hegemonies of the past are dissolved in a heterogeneous and heterochronic alternative to the linear unfolding of history. Key to Bourriaud’s analysis in relation to the PDPG is the translative formal expansion of art. Specifically, when he states: ‘All modernity [altermodernism] is vehicular, exchange-based, and translative in its essence.’<sup>245</sup> Echoing the network terminology positioned by Joselit and McHugh, Bourriaud builds on this idea further:

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<sup>237</sup> David Joselit, *After Art*, (Princeton University Press: New Jersey, 2013), p. 12.

<sup>238</sup> Bourriaud’s reference to “circulation” exists here as a key term which is corroborated by Joselit in ‘Painting Beside Itself’, p. 132, and McHugh, pp. 258, 260.

<sup>239</sup> Judith Benhamou-Huet & Nicolas Bourriaud, *Nicolas Bourriaud Speaks About the Actual Art Scene*, (Judith Benhamou-Huet Reports, January, 2017), in URL: <https://bit.ly/2ABJZci>, accessed 03/10/19.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>241</sup> Nicolas Bourriaud, ‘Altermodern’, in *Altermodern: Tate Triennial 2009*, ed., Nicolas Bourriaud, (London: Tate Publishing, 2009), (11–24), p. 12.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 14 - 15.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

- Contemporary art identifies translation as a privileged operation... in our increasingly globalized world, all signs must be translated or translatable... translation is at the center of an important and ethical and aesthetic issue: it is a question of fighting for the indeterminacy of the code, of rejecting any source code that would seek to assign a single origin to works and texts. Translation, which collectivizes the meaning of a discourse and sets in motion an object of thought by inserting it into a chain, thus diluting its origin in multiplicity, constitutes a mode of resistance against the generalized imposition of formats and a kind of formal guerrilla warfare.<sup>246</sup>

Accordingly, the benchmarks of altermodernism, alongside its wider formal procedures, calibrate perfectly with a translative, perpetually shifting post-digital painting environment, situating it as a wider cultural framing device. For the purposes of this thesis research, the most interesting part of Bourriaud's altermodernism is the expanding formats of art production. In particular, the translative capacity he ascribes to divergent forms of art practice, that align with post-digital painting phenomena. However, whilst Bourriaud is responsible for coining the altermodern term, it should be noted that other critical commentators have made important explorations into the phenomena inherent to its cultural validity. Of note, the political philosophers Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri approach the subject from a Neo-Marxist viewpoint. They provide an explication of altermodernism as a "commonwealth", framing this term specifically as '*a return to some of the themes of classic treatises of government, exploring the institutional structure and political constitution of society.*'<sup>247</sup> However, in relation to the post-digital expansion of painting, the cultural and formal interests of Bourriaud are most useful, as opposed to the socio-political position of altermodernism situated by Hardt and Negri. Furthermore, Hoptman, in her book *The Forever Now: Contemporary Painting in an Atemporal World* (2014) (which accompanied the 2014 exhibition of the same name at New York's Museum of Modern Art), positions a distinct term, *atemporality*, to describe contemporary painting. Borrowed from the science fiction writer William Gibson, Hoptman defines this term as '*a new and strange state of the world in which, courtesy of the Internet, all eras seem to exist at once.*'<sup>248</sup> Hoptman's usage of this term to position recent painting advancements directly aligns the key structures of altermodernism with a post-digital awareness. Specifically, Bourriaud's usage of the term "heterochrony" '*in which temporalities and levels of reality are intertwined*'<sup>249</sup> as a form of art making that is devoid of linear progression, operating rather as an amalgamation of all times and influences.

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<sup>246</sup> Nicolas Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2009), p. 131.

<sup>247</sup> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009), Preface, p. xiii.

<sup>248</sup> Laura Hoptman, *The Forever Now: Contemporary Painting in an Atemporal World*, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2014), p. 13.

<sup>249</sup> Bourriaud, 'Altermodern', p. 21.

Fundamentally, Bourriaud's perception of the formal expansion of art practices follows a Kraussian, post-medium sensibility,<sup>250</sup> as such, within the canon of contemporary painting the formal mechanics of altermodernism have undoubtedly taken root. Bringing this wider contextual enquiry into the post-digital, due to its ubiquitous and technological state, the PDPG is given the necessary framework to thrive within the globalised, post-colonial context of which it operates. Bourriaud says of this:

- Let's face it: artists now have access to information, and they all use the same toolbox, from Stockholm to Bangkok. Or shouldn't they? We have to get out of this dialectical loop between the global and the local, to get rid of the binary opposition between globalization and traditions.<sup>251</sup>

Specifically, Bourriaud elaborates on altermodernity as:

- [It is] an attempt to reexamine our present, by replacing one periodizing tool with another. After 30 years into the 'aftershock' of modernism and its mourning, then into the necessary post-colonial reexamination of our cultural frames, 'Altermodern' is a word that intends to define the specific modernity according to the specific context we live in – globalization, and its economic, political and cultural conditions. The use of the prefix "alter" means that the historical period defined by postmodernism is coming to an end, and alludes to the local struggles against standardization. The core of this new modernity is, according to me, the experience of wandering — in time, space and mediums. But the definition is far from being complete.<sup>252</sup>

Following this assertion, a re-examined, post-colonial cultural framework, coupled with a globalised cultural setting, are tenets that frame the conditions for the post-digital to operate. Accordingly, post-digitality and altermodernity both act as interconnected entities, free from any geographical centre.<sup>253</sup> They are provisional, transitional, and continuously updated forms of cultural hybridity.<sup>254</sup> The themes of altermodernity expand from Bourriaud's proposition of Relational Aesthetics, which he defines as: '*A set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space.*'<sup>255</sup> This definition extends to encapsulate the pluralised, global status of the PDPG, as it breaks with traditional physical and social parameters of art practice, proposing instead a dynamic formal and social environment for the proliferation of the art object within a technological and, more specifically, digitally engaged discourse. As such,

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<sup>250</sup> Bourriaud, *The Radicant*, p.136.

<sup>251</sup> Ryan & Bourriaud.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> As opposed to historical art world centres such as New York, Paris, or London.

<sup>254</sup> Laura Cumming, 'The World as a Waste of Space', in *The Guardian*, (The Guardian Online, 2009), in URL: <https://bit.ly/2KH6aTe>, accessed 07/10/19.

<sup>255</sup> Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, (Dijon: Presses du Réel, 2002), p. 113.

painting in this setting manifests as ‘art as information exchanged between the artist and the viewers.’<sup>256</sup> Finally, the term ‘translation’<sup>257</sup> is cited by Bourriaud as a key descriptor of altermodernity. Emerging as a broader term with which to house the main theoretical and formal underpinnings of post-digital painting previously explored in Chapter 2,<sup>258</sup> altermodernism summates the translating of information from one aspect into another via mediated formal, social, or cultural manifestations.

In social media’s wake, the artwork has been mediated by the digital, surpassing the physical encounter, and is accessed primarily through a network of links, digital reproductions, and reblogs.<sup>259</sup> This modality is summarised by the art historian Julian Stallabrass as the Internet cutting ‘through the regular systems of media dissemination.’<sup>260</sup> It is evident an online presence undoubtedly acts as a primary stage for painting to now operate. Graw says of this situation: ‘Painting is well suited in a digital economy, which includes social media, as it imbues the indexicality of the artist is made present.’<sup>261</sup> As a result, social media poses a split between the analogue and digital arenas of art consumption, yet with no real hindrance in the way a wider audience assimilates painting. Consequently, the Fourth Industrial Revolution has taken root amidst the backdrop of post-net capitalism. As such, social media paradoxically embodies and disavows the idea of the market<sup>262</sup> bypassing traditional market strategies and gallery systems;<sup>263</sup> it instead supplants them with digitally fabricated ones. The artist and writer Brad Troemel states of this: ‘Social media functions as a form of capital.’<sup>264</sup> Painting, too, proliferates within this new digital economy. Furthermore, this “online” assimilation of painting has come to form the cultural landscape of painting’s operation and perception within an altermodern or post-digital condition. Bridle states of this phenomenon: ‘Computation does not merely augment, frame and

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<sup>256</sup> Tate Modern, ‘Art Term: Relational Aesthetics’, in *Tate Modern Website*, (Tate Modern Online, 2019) in URL: <https://bit.ly/2KM794e>, accessed 07/10/19.

<sup>257</sup> Described by Bourriaud as: ‘This new universalism is based on translations, subtitling and generalised dubbing ... Artists are responding to a new globalised perception. They traverse a cultural landscape saturated with signs and create new pathways between multiple formats of expression and communication.’ Bourriaud, ‘Altermodern Manifesto’.

<sup>258</sup> These terms being: *inter-, multi-, trans-discipline, indexicality, re-mediatisation/transitivity, and network.*

<sup>259</sup> Brad Troemel, ‘Art After Social Media’, in *You Are Here: Art After the Internet*, ed., Omar Kholeif, (Manchester: Cornerhouse, 2014), (36–43), p. 39.

<sup>260</sup> Julian Stallabrass, *Internet Art: The Online Clash of Culture and Commerce*, (Tate Publishing, 2003), p. 9.

<sup>261</sup> Graw, ‘The Value of Liveliness: Painting as an Index of Agency in the New Economy’, p. 83.

<sup>262</sup> Troemel, p. 42.

<sup>263</sup> The art dealer Jean-David Malat says of this current situation: ‘More often than not, I’ll come across some really interesting artists who wouldn’t have come onto my radar without social media.’ Charli Morgan & Jean-David Malat, ‘The Social Art Revolution’, in *The Huffington Post*, (The Huffington Post Online, 2017), in URL: <https://bit.ly/33nBn5r>, accessed 11/10/19.

<sup>264</sup> Troemel, p. 41.

shape culture; by operating beneath our everyday, casual awareness of it, it actually becomes culture.<sup>265</sup> Computational media, in this sense, becomes the focus, following a McLuhanian interpretation. Ultimately, a digital, post-truth era which sustains the rapid proliferation of technology and imagery, situated within an altermodern globalisation of formal and cultural differences, has confused how the post-digital (and as a result, the PDPG) is defined. Coined by the composer Kim Cascone, the *Post-digital* is summarised by him as: ‘*The revolutionary period of the digital information age has surely passed. The tendrils of digital technology have in some way touched everyone.*’<sup>266</sup> Following this assertion, and the definition(s) of the post-digital as analysed in Chapter 2, in relation to painting the post-digital appears as a term that encapsulates a variety of art practices that emerge from a new media art umbrella term. It is a hybridisation of the analogue and digital experience that occurs as something altogether different from constituent analogue and digital classifications. This theory follows Knox’s idea of humanity’s increasingly indivisible relationship to digital technology, and more recently Bridle’s concept of a New Aesthetic. More comprehensively, the artist Mel Alexenberg defines the wider indexical position of the post-digital condition as:

- Of or pertaining to art forms that address the humanization of digital technologies through interplay between digital, biological, cultural, and spiritual systems, between cyberspace and real space, between embodied media and mixed reality in social and physical communication, between high tech and high touch experiences, between visual, haptic, auditory, and kinesthetic media experiences, between virtual and augmented reality, between roots and globalization, between autoethnography and community narrative, and between web-enabled peer-produced wikiart and artworks created with alternative media through participation, interaction, and collaboration in which the role of the artist is redefined.<sup>267</sup>

Following these definitions, the post-digital qualifies as the current embodiment of technologically engaged painting. Accordingly, post-digital painted images read as a sequence of processes and networks which come together to form a whole. As a result of the often confusing and interchanged terminology associated with new media art (and, more specifically, post-digital art practice), Tables 1 and 2 outlined in the Introduction Chapter cohesively organise the fundamental movements, discourses, and terminologies that percolate from altermodernism, through to new media art and the post-digital. Several of the terms featured in these tables also belong to other historical discourses (for example, the term “new media” is applicable to the early development of photographic offshoots such as the Zeotrope as far

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<sup>265</sup> James Bridle, *New Dark Age: Technology, Knowledge and the End of the Future* (London: Verso, 2018), p. 39.

<sup>266</sup> Kim Cascone, ‘The Aesthetics of Failure: ‘Post-Digital’ Tendencies’, in *Contemporary Computer Music*, (Computer Music Journal, Vol. 24, No. 4, Winter 2000), (12–18), p. 12.

<sup>267</sup> Mel Alexenberg, *The Future of Art in a Postdigital Age: From Hellenistic to Hebraic Consciousness*, (Intellect: Bristol, 2011), p.10.

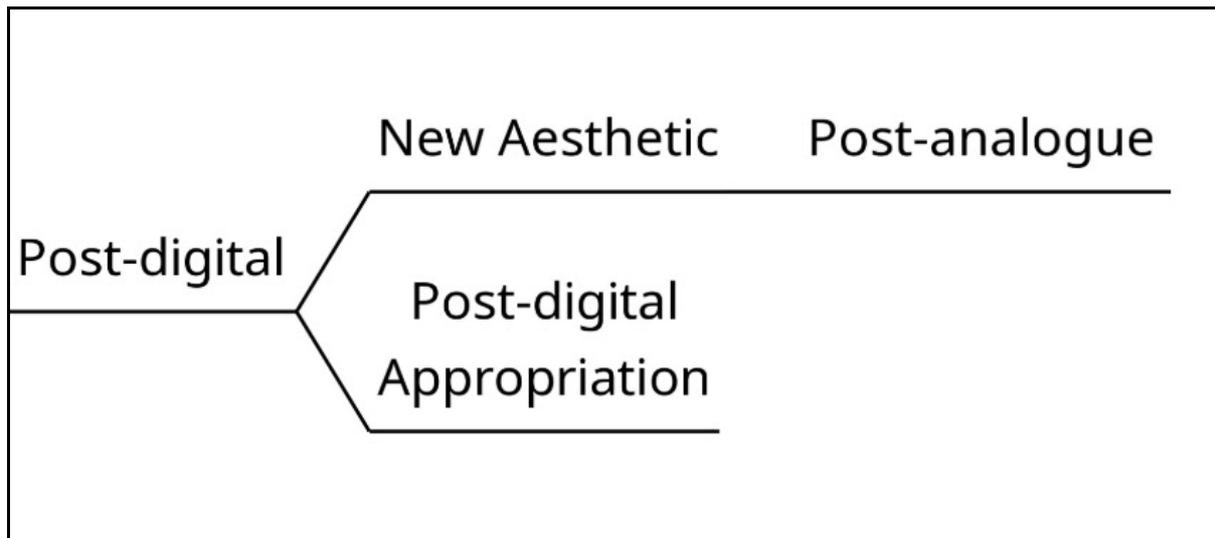


Table 5: *Post-digital Sub-branch.*

back as the mid-nineteenth century), however, they are integral offshoots of altermodernism and, particularly, new media art. From this, a list of the key strands leading to the development of post-digital painting are identifiable.<sup>268</sup> Visualised in Table 5, these deconstruct into the following categories:

**New Aesthetic**—Bridle’s concept of a New Aesthetic proposes a merging of the analogue and the digital that aligns with the cross-pollination of digital and analogue techniques witnessed within the formal tactics of post-digital painters. Bridle says of this condition: ‘We don’t have a language for discussing not just physical and digital, but the entire process by which our culture is mediated by these technologies.’<sup>269</sup> Bridle’s claim proposes not only an urgency for the development of such a language (especially in relation to post-digital painting) but presents technology as a cultural mediator. Furthermore, the notion of a New Aesthetic calibrates itself with the cultural and formal situation of the post-digital, and specifically with the ambitions of post-analogue painting, as Bridle attests:

- The New Aesthetic stands not for the artefacts of this technological progression but the experience of living in a world where our cultural objects are spread through all the devices that we have, where our memory is outsourced to the network, and is kind of partially retrievable but it is also just kind of out there and formed out of everything.<sup>270</sup>

<sup>268</sup> Whilst all the branches emerging from the altermodern and new media art umbrellas are closely interconnected, for the purposes of this research, the post-digital sub-branch of the new media art umbrella is key in defining the formal and cultural tenets of the PDPG.

<sup>269</sup> James Bridle, ‘A New Aesthetic for the Digital Age’, in *TED Talent Search* (TED London, 2012), in URL: <https://bit.ly/2NbxRVs>, accessed 25/10/19.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid.

**Post-analogue**—Grayson has championed this emerging genre with several exhibitions at her New York based gallery, The Hole.<sup>271</sup> Grayson says of this painting condition: *‘The long and complex shift in culture from analog media to digital is the most significant transformation of our generation, and it has long-reaching and manifold effects that continue to permeate all modes of visual expression.’*<sup>272</sup> She continues: *“‘Post-Analog’ is meant to suggest that the paintings in this show [Post-Analog Painting] were not even conceivable before digital imaging changed the structure of our images.’*<sup>273</sup> Accordingly, post-analogue defines itself as a cultural epoch that marks a turning point in the production of digitally engaged painting, following digital technology.

**Post-digital Appropriation**—Pop iconography from the 1950s onwards occupied a cultural fascination with technological production methods, as well as the artefacts produced by consumer industries. From the mechanically reproduced silkscreen prints of Warhol, whereby an emphasis on the exactitude of mechanical replication is apparent, to the reverence for the commodity as a technological, industrialised entity in the paintings and collages of Richard Hamilton and Eduardo Paolozzi. It is no surprise, then, that contemporary forms of appropriation have developed alongside digital and mechanical technologies, embodied in the current “Post-digital Pop” lexicon through the reproduction of popular digitally native visuals and iconography. “Post-digital Appropriation” emerges from the term *Post-digital Pop*, coined by the artist Oli Epp in 2017. It acts as a post-digital resurgence of appropriation tactics employed by the Pop artists of the 1950s and 1960s. Specifically, it has emerged as a genre which convenes *‘creatives that are directly responsive to technological novelties and social trends of the twenty-first century.’*<sup>274</sup> However, it is more appropriate to refer to this genre as *Post-digital Appropriation*, as it builds on broader postmodern themes of appropriation, largely dispensing with the commercialised sensibilities of its Pop predecessor. Instead, it inverts a Pop ideology in favour of a utilitarian, open-sourced, and predominantly anti-capitalist approach to media and production, resulting from the ubiquity and democratisation of the tools and content used in the creation of post-digital artists’ works. It reflects a rapid system of constantly new and (re)cycled information due to a technological omnipresence. As such, appropriation within a post-digital setting is classifiable as a semiotic entity due to formal translation, as a perpetually

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<sup>271</sup> Most notable of which include *Post Analog Painting* (2015), *Post Analog Painting II* (2017), *Post Analog Studio* (2019), and *Once Twice* (2021).

<sup>272</sup> Grayson, p. 1.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2.

<sup>274</sup> Editors of Juxtapoz, ‘Post Digital Pop: A Digital Fuelled (Painting) Reality @ The Garage, Amsterdam’, in *Juxtapoz Magazine* (Juxtapoz Online, 2019), in URL: <https://bit.ly/2MJByT3>, accessed 24/10/19.

shifting cycle of metonymic cultural and visual data, echoing McHugh's assertions of painting acting as a unit of cultural transmission, or a meme. Moreover, whilst the iconography of 1950s Pop art preoccupied itself with consumption and the market,<sup>275</sup> Post-digital Appropriation is concerned more with the aesthetic of the ubiquity of images, signs, and information, specifically exemplifying a tenacity for exploiting digital mass media imagery. No cultural stone is left unturned in this new wave of appropriation: everything from computer games, social media, technology, and current world events to the canon of art history itself are all parodied, appropriated, and reflected upon as a painting tactic. This appropriation of trends is engrained in contemporary digital culture. Popular mobile phone applications such as *Vine* or *TikTok* are platforms whereby users copy trending activities, such as dances, songs, and cultural motifs, reusing formats, content, and themes, building a collective form of social media content appropriation. This follows Bourriaud's assertion that contemporary culture is built on sampled forms of production,<sup>276</sup> and as such sets the altermodern context for an updated Pop discourse. This new Pop aesthetic is given an updated digital sheen in the form of artist Philip Gerald's work [see Fig. 7]. With his use of analogue painted marks, he alludes to the simulated gestures investigated by artists Roy Lichtenstein and Sigmar Polke [Figs. 20 & 21], instead emulating and translating the fluid textures of computer-drawn marks, as opposed to the mimetic depiction of painted gestures in print, and the hand-painted screen-printed halftone dots of Lichtenstein and Polke, respectively. Furthermore, pertinent cultural reflection is exemplified in the work of Epp [Fig. 22] with his pared-down figurative compositions, abound with the signifiers and motifs of Millennial and Gen Z pop culture. The 2019 exhibition, *Post Digital Pop*, hosted by Amsterdam's The Garage gallery and co-curated by Sasha Bogojev and Mark Chalmers, was described accordingly:

- Their [Post-digital Pop artists] vision of a modern day world, contemporary art, social interactions, and self-awareness, are influenced by social media, gaming, TV shows, and popular culture. They use everything from abstraction to realism and deconstructivism to reconstructivism when experimenting with paint on canvas. From spray paint, acrylic paint, oils, airbrush, enamel paint, all the way to the use of nontraditional materials, these artists are creating their own rules on-the-go. Or to put it more precisely, they are breaking the traditional rules, just as the old socio-economical norms are becoming quickly outdated by the fast-paced, digitally-powered, and interconnected world around us.<sup>277</sup>

From this description, it is evident that Post-digital Appropriation emerges from a wider altermodern background, which, by its context, is saturated with the formal language of

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<sup>275</sup> Bourriaud, *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World*, p 85.

<sup>276</sup> Ryan & Bourriaud.

<sup>277</sup> Editors of Juxtapoz.



Figure 20: Roy Lichtenstein. **Brushstroke**. 1965. Screenprint on paper. 56.5 x 72.4 cm. Collection: Tate Modern, London.



Figure 21: Sigmar Polke. **Bunnies**. (Detail). 1966. Acrylic on canvas. 150 x 100 cm. Collection: Hirshhorn Museum, Washington DC.



Figure 22: Oli Epp. **Sun Angel**. 2017. Acrylic and spray paint on canvas. 95 x 81 cm. Collection: Private collection.

Bourriaud.<sup>278</sup> Specifically, painters operating within a Post-digital Appropriation context act like cultural re-programmers, remixing, (re)appropriating, and sampling the digital economy which surrounds them. Bourriaud indirectly applies a formal armature with which to consider Post-digital Appropriation (and by extension, the PDPG) by attesting:

- ... artists manipulate social forms, reorganize them and incorporate them in original scenarios, deconstructing the script on which the illusory legitimacy of those scenarios was grounded. The artist de-programs in order to re-program, suggesting that there are other possible usages for techniques, tools and spaces at our disposition.<sup>279</sup>

Bourriaud goes on to use the term '*formal collectivism*'<sup>280</sup> to describe this phenomenon of artists who select cultural objects and insert them into new concepts, which emerges from an altermodern state of "remix culture." In these circumstances, a decontextualisation of images occurs, allowing a new, malleable form of appropriation to operate. Furthermore, Bourriaud again indirectly solidifies Post-digital Appropriation within the altermodern canon by stating: '*Altermodern art is thus read as a hypertext; artists translate and transcode information from one format to another...*'<sup>281</sup> Vitaly, the concept of translation emerges here as a critical process by which the PDPG operates. As such, translation materialises from an altermodern situation, as Bourriaud attests:

- Artists are looking for a new modernity that would be based on translation: What matters today is to translate the cultural values of cultural groups and to connect them to the world network. This "reloading process" of modernism according to the twenty-first-century issues could be called altermodernism, a movement connected to the creolisation of cultures and the fight for autonomy, but also the possibility of producing singularities in a more and more standardized world.<sup>282</sup>

Consequently, translation again becomes a key term in defining the formal and cultural aspects of the PDPG. Within a post-digital setting, translation is, therefore, definable as a form of appropriation, which includes: the movement of meaning from one material to another; the transference of analogue gestures to digital (and vice versa) via technological processes; and

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<sup>278</sup> To expand, Bourriaud compares altermodern artists to a DJ and computer programmer, as one who samples and remodels existing ideas, remixing forms, and making use of data, replacing (to a degree) the notion of singular authorship with collective ownership. Bourriaud, *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World*, pp. 17 - 20, 35.

<sup>279</sup> Ryan & Bourriaud.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> Bourriaud, 'Altermodern Manifesto.'

<sup>282</sup> Nicolas Bourriaud, *Keynote Speech to the 2005 Art Association of Australia & New Zealand Conference*, in URL: <https://bit.ly/2JcUL8>, accessed 30/10/19.

as a mode of cultural transference of data. This notion is more keenly defined by media theorist Lev Manovich accordingly:

- On the material level, the shift to digital representation and the common modification/editing tools which can be applied to most media (copy, paste, morph, interpolate, filter, composite, etc.) and which substitute traditional distinct artistic tools erased the differences between photography and painting (in the realm of still image) and between film and animation (in the realm of a moving image). On the level of aesthetics, the Web has established a multimedia document (i.e., something which combines and mixes different media of text, photography, video, graphics, sound) as a new communication standard. Digital technology has also made it much easier to implement the already existing cultural practice of making different versions of the same project for different mediums, different distribution networks and different audiences.<sup>283</sup>

As outlined in Chapter 2, there has been a historical distinction between medium and Media. However, based on these assertions by Bourriaud and Manovich, the beginnings of Media functioning as a painterly medium unto itself has become ever apparent. Manovich deconstructs this blending of medium and Media in the above excerpt as he begins to articulate a language between the analogue and the digital, positioning a form of categorisation which includes a digital language that applies to post-digital painting. Painting becomes a form of data, or information, which transfers from one format into another. The art theorist John Berger commented on this idea as early as the mid-1970s, attesting:

- In the age of pictorial reproduction the meaning of paintings is no longer attached to them; their meaning becomes transmittable: that is to say it becomes information of a sort, and, like all information, it is either put to use or ignored; information carries no special authority within itself. When a painting is put to use, its meaning is either modified or totally changed. One should be quite clear about what this involves. It is not a question of reproduction failing to reproduce certain aspects of an image faithfully; it is a question of reproduction making it possible, even inevitable, that an image will be used for many different purposes and that the reproduced image, unlike an original work, can lend itself to them all.<sup>284</sup>

He continues: *'Reproduced paintings, like all information, have to hold their own against all the other information being continually transmitted.'*<sup>285</sup> By aligning Bourriaud, Manovich, and Berger with the proposition that the characteristics of the medium used and not necessarily its content functions as the focus, as espoused by McLuhan,<sup>286</sup> means technology acts as a delivery system that facilitates the translation of the painted gesture, serving not just as a tool but as an influence. Therefore, it is the *character* of digitally engaged media which operates as the cultural translator with which the PDPG proliferates. As a result, the immediacy and ubiquity

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<sup>283</sup> Lev Manovich, *Post-media Aesthetics*, (Manovich.net, 2001), in URL: <https://bit.ly/330eUf0>, accessed 20/10/19.

<sup>284</sup> John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, (London: BBC and Penguin, 1972), pp. 24 - 25.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid, p. 28.

<sup>286</sup> McLuhan, p. 7.

of the Internet allows digitally saturated painting to become globally unified, translating, iterating, and transmuting perpetually. Therefore, the painted gesture operates as culturally transferable data, but morphologically acts as quantifiable data, specifically in the construction of an image. This feature of image production is no new phenomenon, as for centuries artists have been deconstructing images into manageable units of information [Fig. 23] to understand the components of what constitutes a picture.

With the dawn of digital technology, however, image compartmentalisation has been approached in new, and more calculated ways, both conceptually and formally: whether this is the 8-Bit computer aesthetic adopted by the artist Robert Otto Epstein [Fig. 24] or the direct use of accumulated geographical data to visualise weather patterns evident in the work of Refik Anadol [Fig. 25]. Accordingly, a painting becomes a sequence of signifiers which build up a unified whole. The brushstroke has reconfigured itself as a reducible, quantifiable, and complex sequence of optical data streams that reflect the digital ubiquity of its surroundings; this atomising of the image is a notable feature of post-digital painting. Another fundamental proposition of post-digital painting is the concept of analogue media and its relationship with the digital. As technological and digital means of production expand, paint no longer confines itself to pigment as the primary vehicle of its transmission. As a perennial medium, paint has evolved to keep up with the challenges and advantages technology has provided. The Internet and new media have changed how the painted gesture becomes deciphered. Following material translation and media interpretation in the McLuhanian sense, Media has shaped painting in a contrary bid to the analogue beginnings of the painted gesture and its focus on tactility. Rottmann summarises this condition accordingly: *'Paradoxically, the medium [of paint], in the process, appears to have dispelled its own once-uncontested material basis: at the cost of its survival, in other words, it ultimately has become bereft of its formal substance.'*<sup>287</sup> As a result, the PDPG describes a malleable form of painterly interpretation which can be non-haptic and intangible. This phenomenon results from an interaction of software and hardware; accordingly, within an expanded post-digital setting, the painted gesture exists as both non-physical and hyper-corporeal, or a combination of both. Following the amalgamation of analogue and digital processes in the production of painting, questions of authenticity arise. Specifically, these pertain to the way artists are responding to machine automation to create paintings. Graw confronts the notion of authenticity and authorship in relation to how labour

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<sup>287</sup> Rottmann, p. 11.

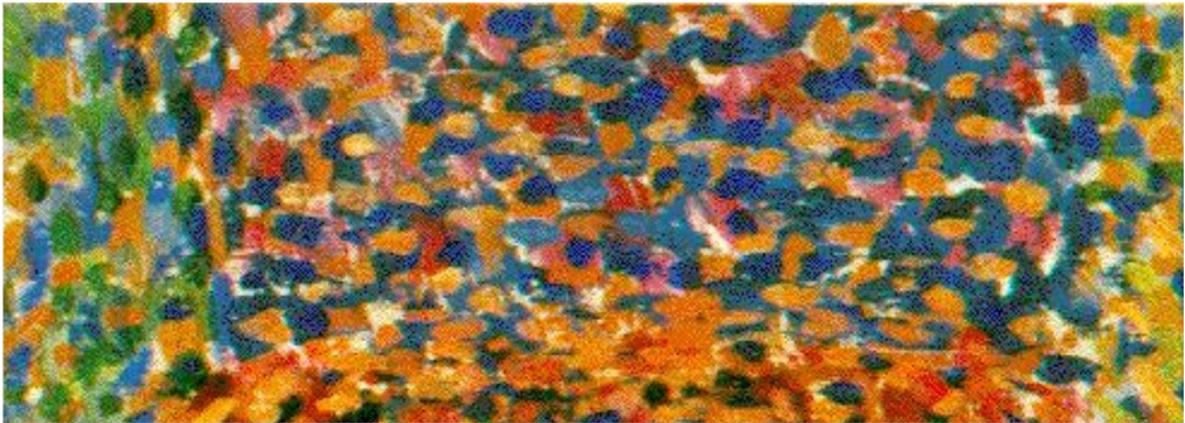


Figure 23: *Historical Examples of Painting Deconstructed into Units of Data.*

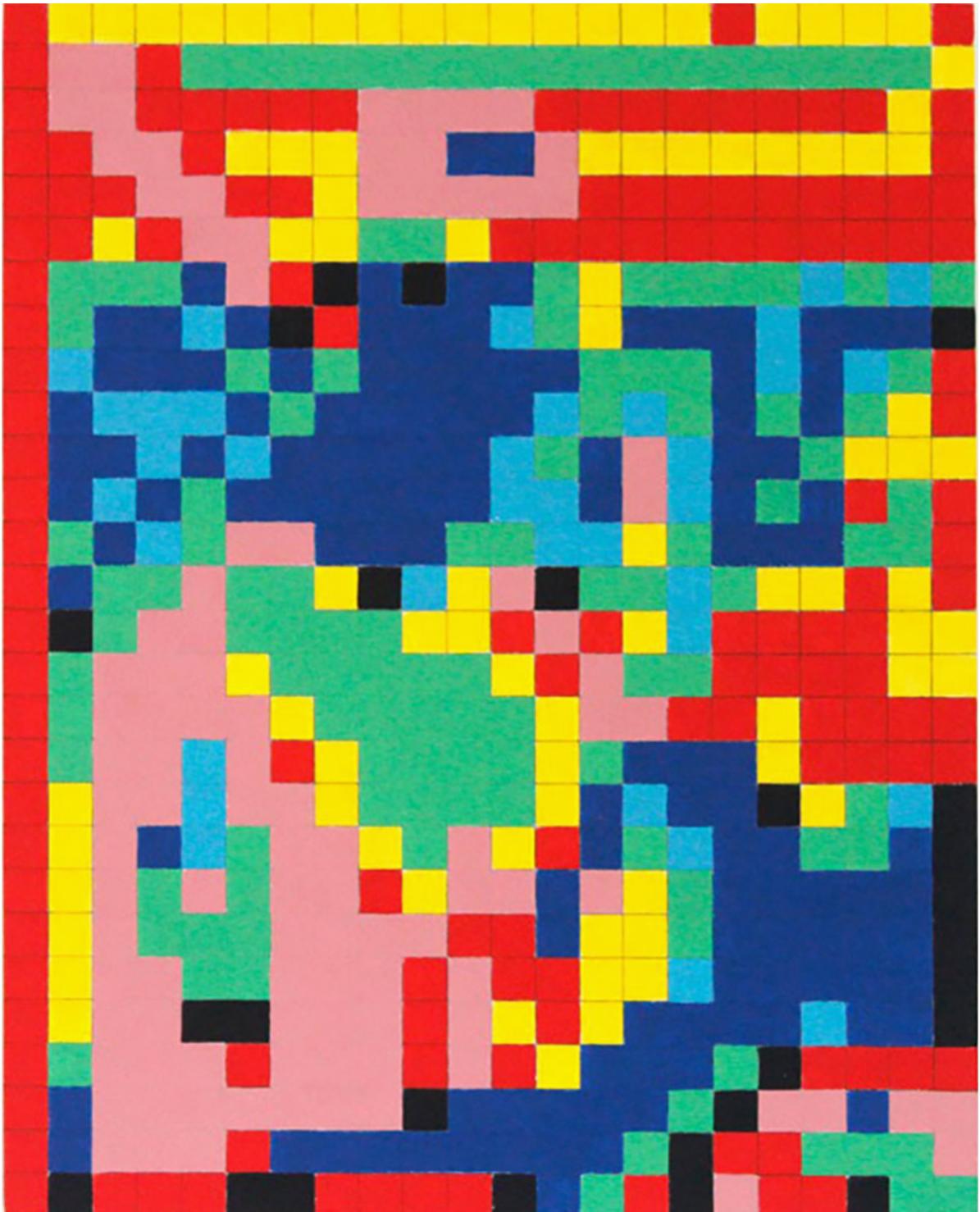


Figure 24: Robert Otto Epstein. **Baseball Card No. 5**. 2014. Acrylic on panel. 35 x 27.9 cm. Collection: Private collection.

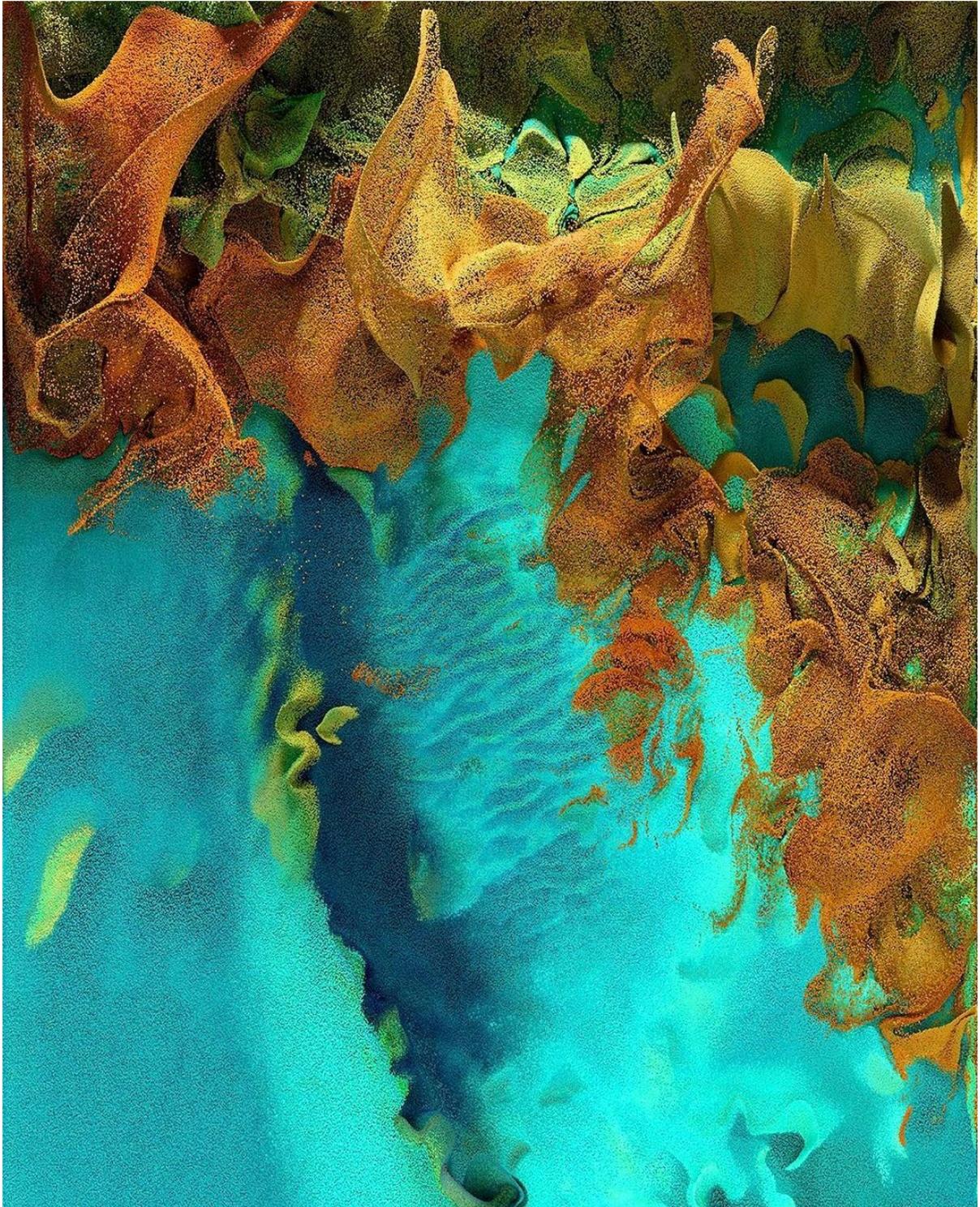


Figure 25: Refik Anadol. *AI Data Painting/A.* (Film Still). (From the 'Machine Hallucinations - Latent Study: Mars' series). 2019. Simulated data painting, dimensions variable. Film length: 2 mins 36 seconds. Collection: Private collection.

is defined. Regarding the gradual automation of painting, she attests: *‘But while painting contains this living labor, it can’t be reduced to it since it withholds labor as well—and this is one of painting’s many advantages.’*<sup>288</sup> She continues: *‘And this is true for conceptual paintings that consist of mechanic, delegated, or nonlabor—their use of “dead labor” will end up being credited to the individual labor of the artist and thereby still allow for vitalist projections of liveliness.’*<sup>289</sup> The premise of “dead labour” as Graw states still allows authenticity and authorship (“liveliness”) to be ascribed to the arbiter of the work based on a latent presence of the artist, despite a negation of touch, via a process of anthropomorphic projection. As such, traditional debates surrounding the idea of authenticity have become redundant in the age of the post-digitally engaged, anthropomorphically projected artist.<sup>290</sup> This idea is evident in the work of artist Wade Guyton [Fig. 26], who has attested to using the language associated with painting in his works and coupling this with machine automation through the use of an inkjet printer, without directly considering himself a painter.<sup>291</sup> Early pioneers of this technologically engaged separation of artist and process include artists Christopher Wool and Laura Owens who have utilised silk screening processes and computer software as a preparatory tool in their painting, as well as artist Albert Oehlen who has created paintings of computer-rendered images [Figs. 27–29]. The artists Avery Singer and Fabian Marcaccio have capitalised on recent technological developments, respectively producing spray-painted works created by autonomous spray-painting machines, and 3D-printed painted gestures that have embraced the latest accessibility of 3D-printing technology [Figs. 30 & 31]. Overall, these artists exemplify radically different ways that embrace the authentic authorship of the artist’s latent presence.

### **[3.5] CONCLUSION**

Based on the research conducted, the Post-digital Painted Gesture defines itself as an amalgamation of formal, theoretical, cultural, and philosophical preconditions, that emerge from an existing analogue painterly language. The PDPG transcribes these analogue preconditions

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<sup>288</sup> Graw, ‘The Value of Liveliness: Painting as an Index of Agency in the New Economy’, p. 82.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>290</sup> Graw asserts her position through an antithesis of Benjamin’s perception of “aura” as fundamental to authorship, and Karl Marx’s labour theory of value (*Arbeitswerttheorie*), wherein value is generated in relation to a material thing if labour is stored in it. Karl Marx, *Das Kapital: Kritik der Politischen Ökonomie*, Vol. I (Berlin: Deitz, 1984), p. 247.

<sup>291</sup> Isabelle Graw and Wade Guyton, ‘Painting Without a Painter: A Conversation with Wade Guyton’, in *The Love of Painting: Genealogy of a Success Medium*, ed., Isabelle Graw, (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2018), (224–239), p. 225.

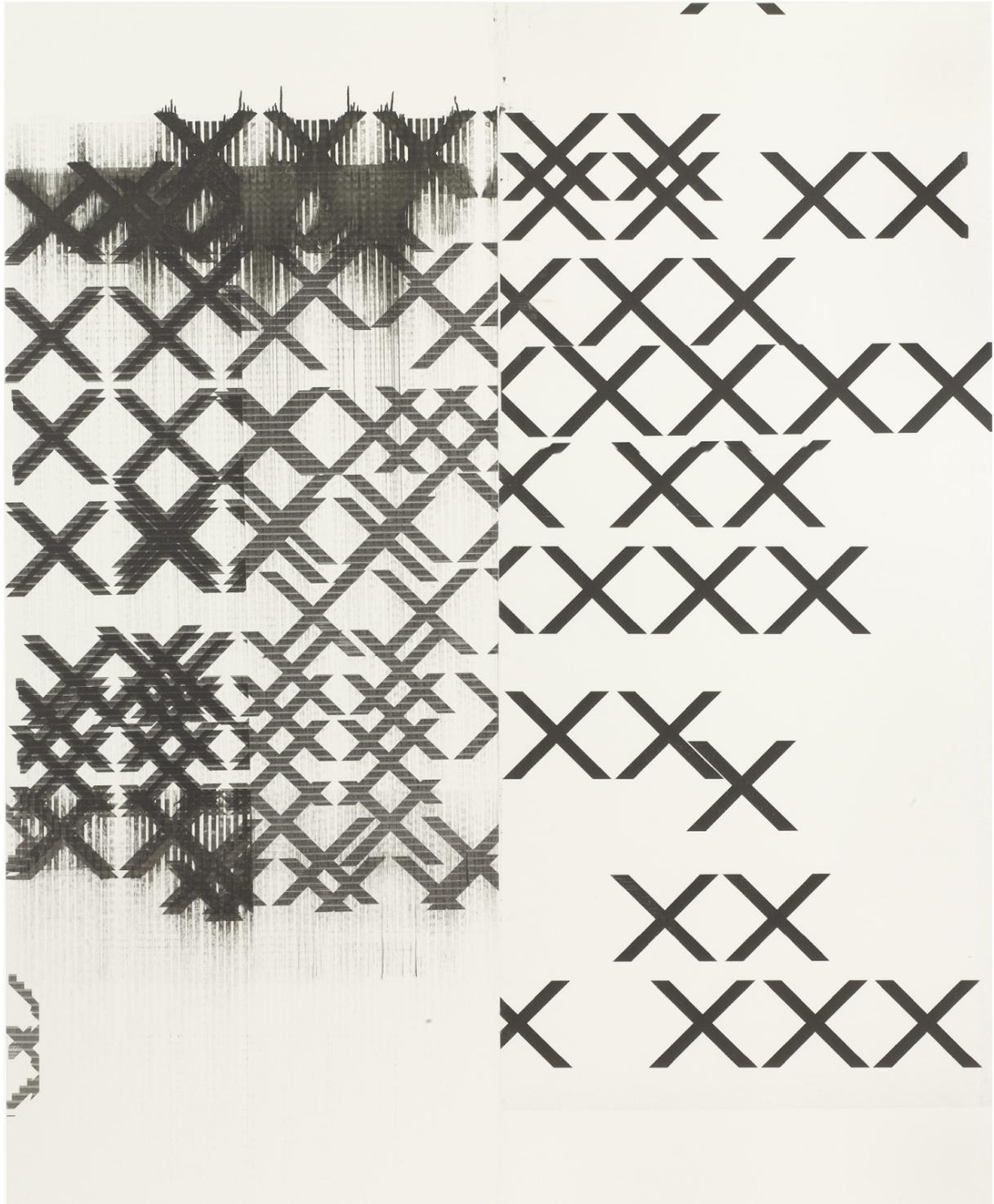


Figure 26: Wade Guyton. *Untitled*. 2006. Epson UltraChrome inkjet on canvas. 216.5 x 175.3 cm. Collection: Museum of Modern Art, New York.

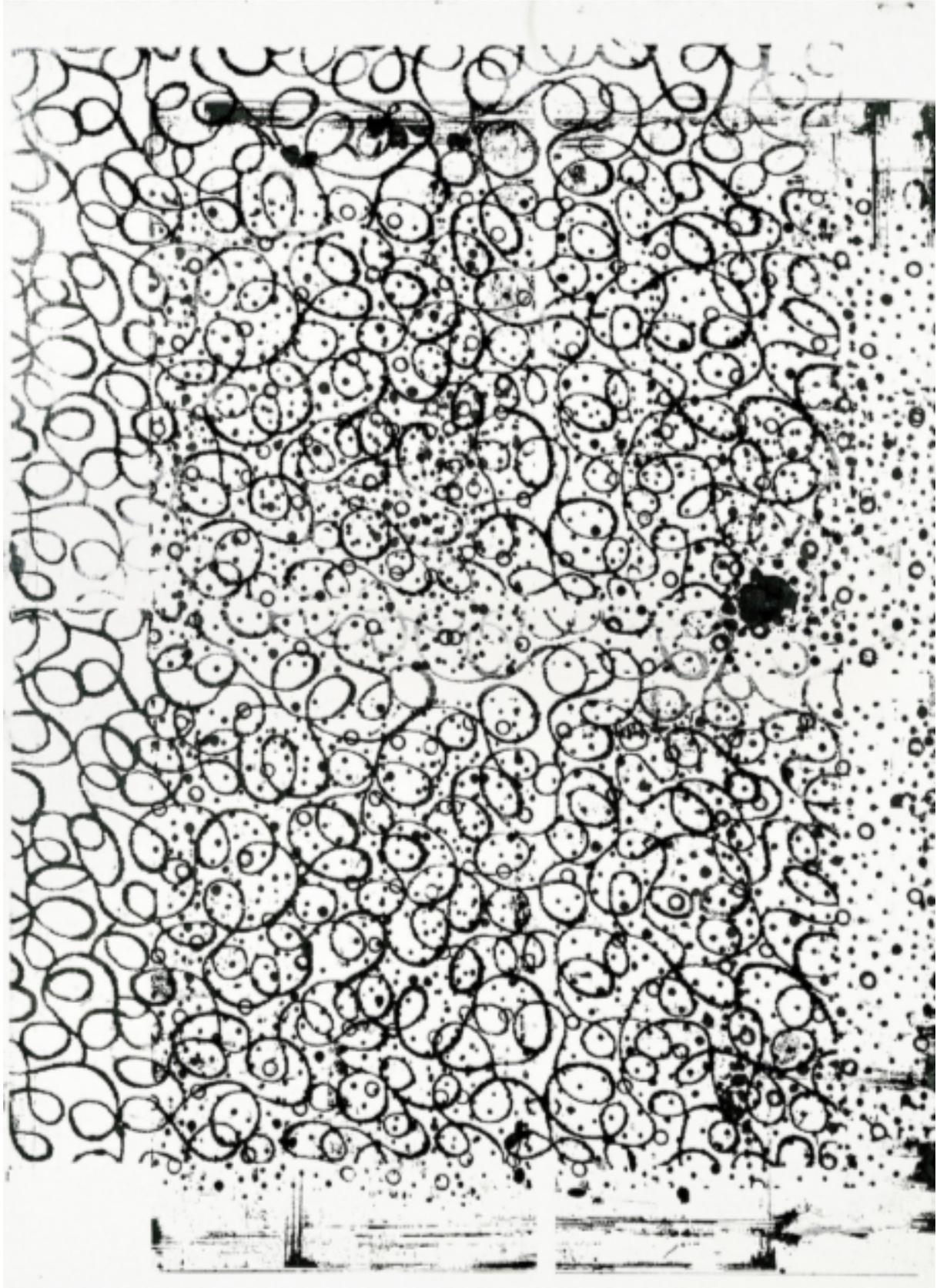


Figure 27: Christopher Wool. **Double Party Booty**. 1999. Silkscreen ink on linen. 274.3 x 182.8 cm.  
Collection: Private collection.



Figure 28: Laura Owens. **Untitled**. 2012. Mixed media on canvas. 274.5 x 213.4 cm. Collection: Tate Modern, London.

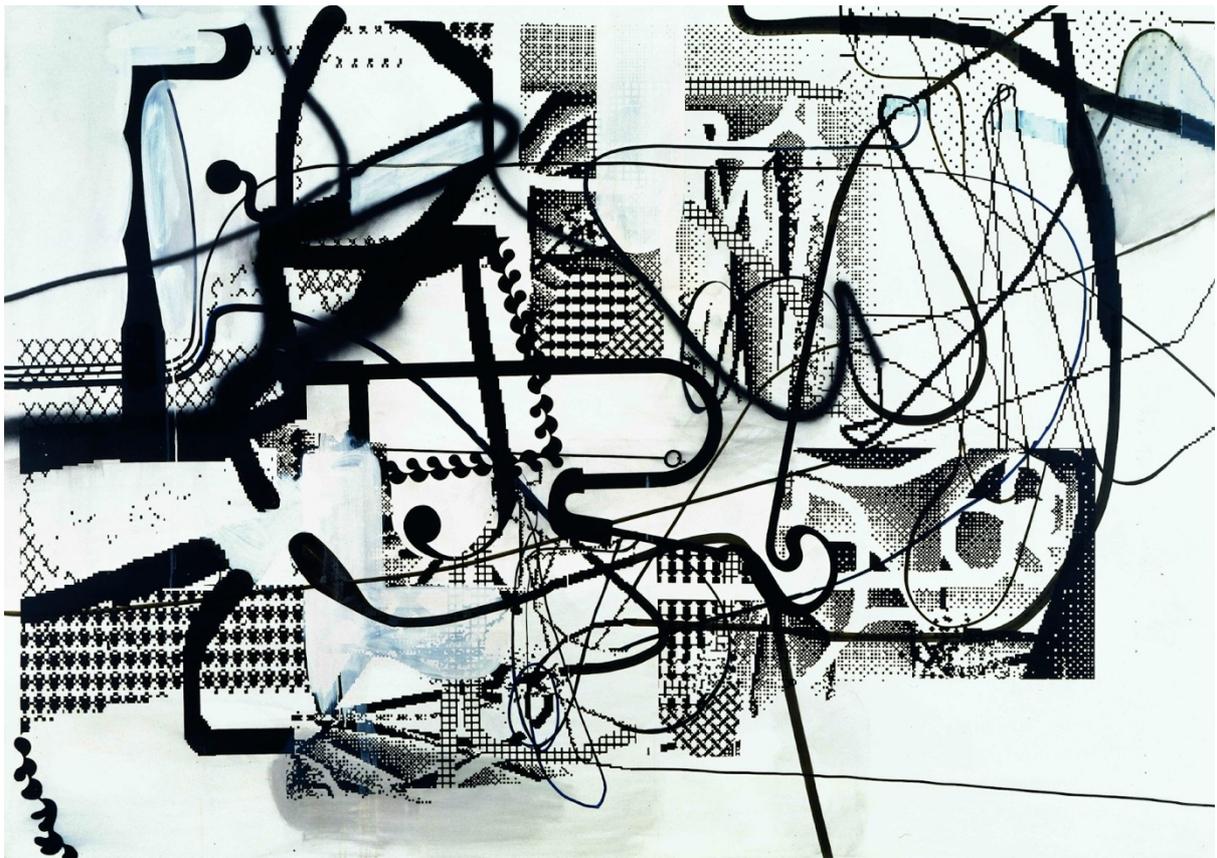


Figure 29: Albert Oehlen. *Easter Nudes*. 1996. Oil on canvas. 191 x 271.1 cm. Collection: Private collection.



Figure 30: Avery Singer. **Untitled**. 2019. Spray paint on canvas. 241.9 x 216.5 x 5.1 cm. Collection: Private collection.

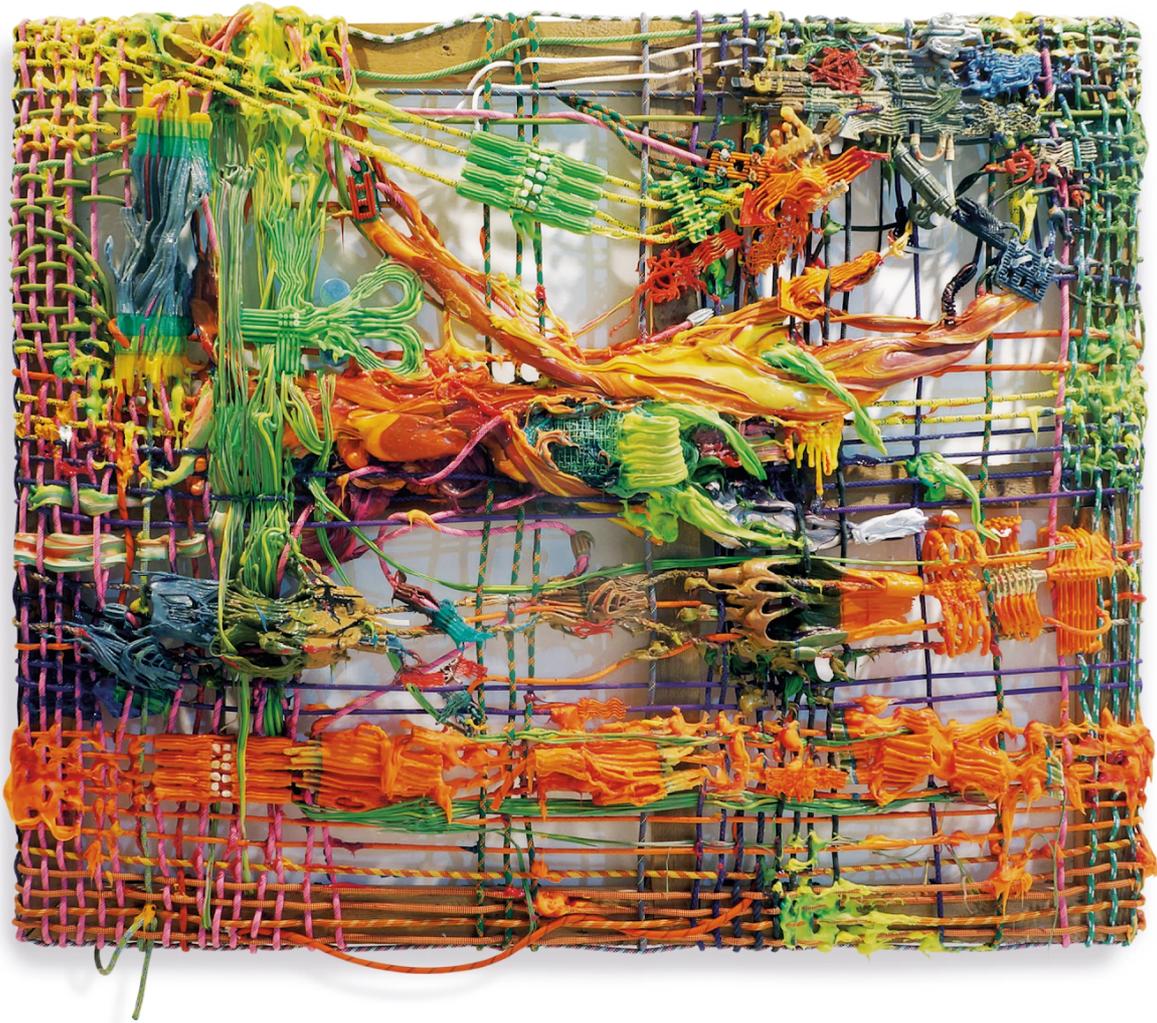


Figure 31: Fabian Marcaccio. **New Techno-Brutalist Plasticity**. 2016. Hand woven manilla rope, climbing rope, alkyd paint, silicone, wood, 3D printed plastic. 160 x 198 x 25.5 cm. Collection: Private collection.

into a technological functionality that reflects the rapidly changing technological landscape surrounding it. This transcription relates to the long history of painting itself and is a consolidation of the analogue beginnings of paint(ing) that emerged as a physical material and a gestural act. The PDPG assumes an expanded painting modality adopted from the postmodernity that precedes it, as a semiotic and linguistic form of information via a process of material and cultural translation (inter-, multi-, and trans-disciplinary). Following this, the PDPG has emerged from the concept of technology itself, following historical technological advancements as an ever-evolving form of new media; consequently, it is multi-technological, wherein it does not restrict itself to a singular formal process. As a result, the PDPG flows through an altermodern, and subsequently new media art discourse, as globalised, indexical, transitive, re-mediatised, and networked. Formally, the PDPG exists in both analogue and digital capacities, transcribing traditional painting strategies into digital processes through hybridising traditional and non-traditional materials; consequently, becoming a form of painting that could not have existed before digital technology. Moreover, the PDPG has become a new form of appropriation, that recycles information and formal languages, operating as a unit of cultural transmission. The PDPG blends medium and Media, acting as both a tool and an artefact, becoming a transmittable and deconstructable unit of information. As such, it is polymorphic, sometimes defying its molecular composition. Consequently, the PDPG is tactile, intangible, and sometimes a combination of both, and can simultaneously exist in multiple states, lending its authorship to the anthropomorphic projection of the artist(s) employed in its creation.

To define the painted gesture within a post-digital painting discourse, this chapter has charted the formal, cultural, and philosophical aspects of painting's development from an insular modernist ideal, through to its redefined status as an expanded, materially malleable form of expression. Accordingly, this investigation has charted painting's evolution from an insular practice into an expanded state, as well as the characteristics of its development, by considering the broadening of painterly definition, focusing on the shift from essence to unspecificity witnessed in late modernist painting practices. Consequently, the painted gesture as a conceptual proposition emerged by considering painting as a semiotic and linguistic entity. Ultimately, the development of paint(ing) itself has been investigated by looking at the cultural capacity it has served, as well as the specific painterly languages and material designations that have characterised painting's emancipation from material occupation. As a result, these

explorations outlined the function of the painted gesture as a form of information that flows from a digital discourse.

Following these investigations into expanded painting, an enquiry into contextualising the historical use of technology in relation to painting and how technology itself is defined when applied to painting practice became manifest. This investigation assessed the philosophical underpinnings of what technology itself is, supported by specific artist case studies and examples that exemplified the interrelationship of painting and technology. Furthermore, the wider cultural and social narratives associated with the PDPG unfolded, detailing the movements and cultural hegemonies responsible for the development of post-digital painting. By piecing together inconsistent formal, social, cultural, and philosophical theories, a new formal pretext with which to analyse the PDPG emerged; specifically, how the post-digital occurs from altermodern and new media art umbrella terminologies.

This chapter has also defined the post-digital condition and how it relates to the painted gesture, through highlighting the following key formal and cultural strands: *New Aesthetic*, *Post-analogue*, and *Post-digital Appropriation*. Furthermore, this chapter has demonstrated the specific painterly mechanics inherent to post-digital engagement, investigating the recent resurgence of appropriation tactics formerly employed by Pop artists, yet within an updated digital setting. Specifically, this research has considered how post-digital painting inherently defines itself as a form of translation; as transmittable and morphological data; as maintaining a transient relationship between the analogue and the digital; and finally, as retaining authenticity and authorship via anthropomorphic projection. Overall, a working definition of the PDPG has been established based on the summation of enquiries within this chapter. As a result, this definition is a vital contextual anchor, setting the foundation for a theoretical framework that this research will use to answer the overall thesis enquiry. Specifically, the question, what is the position of expanded painting practices and processes within a perpetually shifting new media art discourse and how has this affected the translation of the painted gesture?

# **CHAPTER 4**

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### **[4.1] INTRODUCTION**

Following the contextual research carried out in Chapters 2 and 3, this chapter will aim to posit a new research model which unifies and expands upon existing formal and theoretical positions. Alongside this, current vernacular used to describe post-new media painting shall be analysed to create a new epistemological paradigm for the continued investigation into the digital and technological conflation of contemporary painting. It shall do this by considering expanded material designations of paint(ing), but also by narrowing down specific theoretical strands investigated previously. This new research model will unify inconsistent post-digital painting terminology and establish a theoretical framework with which to analyse the positions and definitions of expanded painting practices and processes associated with the PDPG.

### **[4.2] TOWARDS A NEW MATERIALITY**

To address the position of expanded painting practices and processes within a perpetually shifting new media art discourse, and its impact on the translative nature of the painted gesture, it is important to situate a taxonomic structure which has moved beyond a predisposition with material. In our current perception of expanded media, the painted gesture extends beyond the medium of paint, no longer tethered to the confines of tactility or medium specificity. Instead, painting proliferates as a hybridised form of multimedia.

Consequently, it is difficult to ascribe a concrete definition to it, meaning that categorisation of the painted gesture and its broader translative qualities is in a constant state of flux. This elicits philosophical debates relating to the nature of material itself. The art theorist Petra Lange-Berndt describes materiality accordingly:

- Material generally denotes substances that will be further processed, it points to the forces of production at the time. From a critical perspective, the term 'material' describes not the prime matter but substances that are always subject to change, be it through handling, interaction with their surroundings, or the dynamic of their chemical reactions.<sup>292</sup>

This analysis of material differs from traditional advocacies of paint acting as a primal form of pure matter, espoused by art theorists such as James Elkins, in particular his proposition of a *materia prima*,<sup>293</sup> whereby there is a distinction between the material and its function. Lange-Berndt goes on to deconstruct this distinction by stating the formalism of material is a manifold entity, widening the term into: '*matter, material, materiality, Stoff, substance and medium*.'<sup>294</sup> As such, this extends the complexity of categorising painting's material properties. She continues: '[...] *materials are neither objects nor things*.'<sup>295</sup> This concept is supported by art theorist Monika Wagner when she states material and matter are problematic constructs to separate.<sup>296</sup> Following these assertions, the material world is susceptible to change and as such is unreliable.<sup>297</sup> This condition, according to Lange-Berndt, became apparent at the beginning of the twentieth century when the physical world lost its certainty, as scientific enquiry opened the world to the atom, quantum mechanics, and the theory of relativity, which all situate matter as energy.<sup>298</sup> As a result, materiality has become one of the most contested facets of contemporary art,<sup>299</sup> where there has been debate around the concept of materials as vessels for meaning.<sup>300</sup> Current debates surrounding materiality and its position within artistic practice derive from Jean-François Lyotard's 1985 Paris exhibition *Les Immatériaux* at the Centre Georges Pompidou. From this arose questions of how technology and information systems

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<sup>292</sup> Petra Lange-Berndt, 'How to Be Complicit with Materials', in *Materiality*, ed., Petra Lange-Berndt, (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2015), (12–23), p. 12.

<sup>293</sup> On a material level, this is the absolute fundamental morphological composition of paint in its analogue capacity. James Elkins, *What Painting Is*, (Routledge: New York: London, 2000), pp. 70 - 71.

<sup>294</sup> Lange-Berndt, p. 14.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>296</sup> Monika Wagner, 'Material', in *Materiality*, ed., Petra Lange-Berndt, (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2015), (26–29), p. 26

<sup>297</sup> David Macintosh, 'Plato: A Theory of Forms', in *Philosophy Now Online*, (Philosophy Now Online, 2012), in URL: <https://bit.ly/2mHi7xM>, accessed 03/09/19.

<sup>298</sup> Lange-Berndt, p. 18.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid, p. 12.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid, p. 15.

altered the state of how materiality applies to objects. Anticipating the rise of globalisation, Les Immatériaux intersected philosophical questions with aesthetics, recasting Kantian concepts in-line with a postmodern moment.<sup>301</sup> The ideas explored in this exhibition are expanded upon by Lange-Berndt, when she states: ‘Materiality points to the whirling complexity and entanglement of diverse factors in the digital age, in which ‘material’, which like sound or language can now also be something that is not physical.’<sup>302</sup> As a result of advancements in media, the world has surrendered its material differences, including the traditional associations and perceptions of tactility that have followed them. Matter is no longer a definite entity, both physically and conceptually. Following this idea, the philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari propose an overturning of *being* as a result of matter and form, instead positing an expanded relationship to matter which is distinguished by variation,<sup>303</sup> specifically as a ‘matter-flow’<sup>304</sup> that ‘can only be followed.’<sup>305</sup> This diversification of media has contributed to why the painted gesture, especially within a post-digital setting, has been so difficult to define, as historically, material acts as an anchor with which to categorise a formalism. This, coupled with the fact that in our current studies of material culture, the focus on materials themselves is relatively rare.<sup>306</sup>

Arguably, medium is a secondary term when assessing the position of post-new media painting. As such, the production of images is a more accurate summary of what contemporary, post-medium painting practice encapsulates. Rancière states:

- I would like to pose the following question: are we in fact referring to a simple, univocal reality? Does not the term ‘image’ contain several functions whose problematic alignment precisely constitutes the labour of art? On this basis it will perhaps be possible to reflect on what artistic images are, and contemporary changes in their status, more soundly.<sup>307</sup>

As such, a medium acts as a vehicle with which to transmit images:<sup>308</sup> as outlined previously, images belong to networks, and in expanded painting, these networks frequently coalesce.

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<sup>301</sup> John Rajchman, ‘Les Immatériaux or How to Construct the History of Exhibitions’, in *Tate Papers*, No.12, Autumn 2009, (Tate Online, 2009), in URL: <https://bit.ly/2lv2wTm>, accessed 03/09/19.

<sup>302</sup> Lange-Berndt, p. 18.

<sup>303</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, ‘A Thousand Plateaux’, in *Materiality*, ed., Petra Lange-Berndt, (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2015), (38–41), p. 40.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid*, p. 38.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid*, p. 40.

<sup>306</sup> Tim Ingold, ‘Making Culture and Weaving the World’, in *Matter, Materiality and Modern Culture*, ed., Paul Graves Brown, (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), (50–71), p. 53.

<sup>307</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, (London: Verso, 2003), p.1.

<sup>308</sup> This aligns with Berger’s statement: ‘the meaning of paintings is no longer attached to them.’ Berger, p. 24.

Formally, images are readable as three-dimensional, two-dimensional (relatively), or even as digital; “image”, in this context, is merely a term for the transmission of visual information from an object to the viewer. Consequently, this extends the discussion of painting’s *objecthood*<sup>309</sup> and material into a post-medium context. Wagner supports this assertion when she states: ‘*material is understood as an information carrier.*’<sup>310</sup> This way of thinking about material allows a new form of categorisation for the painted gesture to emerge: paint(ing) as a carrier of information. Consequently, an object which transmits information acts as a form of painted gesture, in certain circumstances. However, this poses problems when positioned with McLuhan’s espousal of Media itself being the message. As such, it is necessary to consider the possibility that information (meaning) reads as a sequence of signs, these being: medium *and* Media. Messages are deconstructable into both medium (*Morphology/Process*), and Media (*Content/Interaction*). Resultantly, an overall interpretation applies to the reading of post-digital painting that accounts for the entire work of art, and not just its constituent factors (medium and Media). As such, medium and Media unify to act as a more comprehensive post-digital painting index. Accordingly, this position builds on Bridle’s New Aesthetic, whereby human life increasingly integrates with the digital. By blending the concept of medium (the means of construction) and Media (the means of transmission) the following formulas emerge with which to classify the ontological capacity of the PDPG, establishing the beginnings of a language that describes the liminality of paint(ing) between analogue and digital capacities:

**1. Medium** = object / material / discrete

**2. Media** = image / information / networked

**3. Medium + Media** = PDPG

Fundamentally, the issue of material embodiment arises from a historical fixation with the essence of material. The presence of this within painting can be traced to Greenberg’s position on material purity, despite its inherent flaws, but also, more fundamentally, as far as Plato and Aristotle’s notion of matter and *Essence*.<sup>311</sup> From this, the nature of the object becomes an ontological, phenomenological, and even existential question. Whereas Plato posits a

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<sup>309</sup> I borrow this term from Michael Fried to denote the morphological occupation of an artwork. Michael Fried, ‘Art and Objecthood’, in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews*, (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press 1998), (148–172), p. 151.

<sup>310</sup> Wagner, p. 27.

<sup>311</sup> Specifically, is an object defined by *what it does* or *what it is*?

metaphysical attribution to the essence of a thing, Greenberg attests to a material pre-designation, defining a disciplines' materiality by its autonomy and essentialism, with distinct properties.<sup>312</sup> To explore this material ontology in greater detail, Heidegger provides a philosophical framework with which to unpack the perception of objects. Specifically, his enquiry into what makes an object 'thingly.'<sup>313</sup> He states an object can be defined by what it is, as well as what it is not<sup>314</sup>—this paradox applies to expanded media. Building on this idea, he concludes that the object (which, by definition, is extendable to painterly ambition) occupies "thingness" and as such can be interpreted in three ways: as objects with characteristic properties (form),<sup>315</sup> as substances formed of matter (matter),<sup>316</sup> and as a manifold sense of perceptions.<sup>317</sup> These first two definitions mostly inhabit a material occupation, limited to tactility, specifically the 'matter-form'<sup>318</sup> dichotomy that Heidegger establishes. However, of most interest is his third proposal that a thing operates as a "manifold sense of perceptions." This idea can be extrapolated further when he states:

- However, the thingly character of the thing does not consist in its being a represented object, nor can it be defined in any way in terms of the objectness, the over-againstness, of the object.<sup>319</sup>

As such, an object, or thing, is not defined merely by its objecthood, but rather the multitude of functions, ideas, and possibilities associated with the conception of the object. In this sense, Heidegger comes close to considering the material in relation to an expanded network. From this concept, it is reasonable to ascribe a malleable criterion to formal definition, dispelling the metaphysical, Platonic Ideal of a "true" media, devoid of material limitation. Consequently, Heidegger's notion of "thingness" is useful when framing the expanded morphological propositions of post-new media painting as a thing, and as such the instance of paint(ing), as not a singular material or morphological pre-designation. Rather, paint(ing) under these terms operates as a diverse sequence of interpretations that frees it from the constrictive material

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<sup>312</sup> Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, p. 5.

<sup>313</sup> Martin Heidegger, 'The Thing', in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), (163–184), p. 165.

<sup>314</sup> Using the analogy of a jug, he states that its form is shaped not by its material, but by the void it surrounds—effectively, its antithesis, or nothingness. Heidegger. *Ibid*, p. 167.

<sup>315</sup> Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', in *Martin Heidegger: Off the Beaten Track*, eds., Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes, (Cambridge University Press: 2002), (1–56), p. 5.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid*, p. 5.

<sup>317</sup> Heidegger, 'The Thing', p. 165.

<sup>318</sup> Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art', p. 9.

<sup>319</sup> Heidegger, 'The Thing', p. 165.

parameters historically ascribed to define it. Krauss summarises this approach to medium, through an awareness of cultural hegemony:

- ... it is obvious that the logic of the space of postmodernist practice is no longer organized around the definition of a given medium on the grounds of material, or, for that matter, the perception of material. It is organized instead through the universe of terms that are felt to be in opposition within a cultural situation.<sup>320</sup>

Resultantly, objecthood can holistically be built to form a wider whole, or deconstructed to indicate the constituent, ontological matter of the “thing”, therefore, radically expanding the material and morphological parameters that can be ascribed to the PDPG via the cultural demands of its time. Consequently, this format of thinking extends painting to encapsulate painterly adjacent definitions with which to build an expanded formal synonymity through a linguistic emancipation of matter and form.

#### **[4.3] A NEW TAXONOMY**

By combining the above analysis of material with a unification and expansion of the theoretical positions established in Chapters 2 and 3 a formal framework can be established. This framework allows for a holistic analysis of translative post-new media painting, through an assessment of discipline, the artist and medium, formal hybridity, and cultural systems. By unifying these approaches (which independently lack paradigmatic cohesion) a working taxonomy with which to structure an investigation into digitally engaged expanded painting emerges. The formal models associated with what I term as Translation distil from specific terminologies currently used to describe post-new media painting. These constituent terminologies are useful in providing an overview of how, as a digitally and technologically embedded form, painting has developed. Of note, the art historian Craig Staff considers a twofold approach to this: practitioners who either ‘*image*’<sup>321</sup> or ‘*imagine*’<sup>322</sup> painting within a broader field of contemporary art practice. He says of “image”:

- [...] there would appear to be at least two possible means by which painting has attempted to open itself up to and dialectically engage with the current proliferation of digitally based technologies. Firstly, there are those painters who use digital technology as an instrument by which imagery can be generated.<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> Krauss, ‘Sculpture in the Expanded Field’, p. 42.

<sup>321</sup> Craig Staff, *After Modernist Painting: The History of a Contemporary Practice*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), p. 146.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid, p. 146.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid, p. 149.

Considering the task of “imagining”, Staff continues:

- This would be seen in contrast to the second impulse notable within recent painting wherein *ideas* of the digital and a related set of thematics this heralds (which may or may not encompass the artist working directly with digital technology) are bound up in the works meaning.<sup>324</sup>

Fundamentally, Staff proposes a distinction between the *process* (“image”) and the *surface content* (“imagining”) of digitally engaged painting. Moreover, Staff’s formal classification is comparable to that of both Grayson and Bacon, specifically when Grayson states: ‘*the more interesting shift in painting has nothing to do with media used but instead the forms, composition and content in painting.*’<sup>325</sup> Grayson’s claim that media has “nothing to do” with painting’s development is contestable. However, her precise phraseology of “content” elicits a direct comparison to Bacon, who posits a tripartite approach when interpreting digitally expanded painting. Specifically, the formal tenets of ‘*surface*’<sup>326</sup> (the material and spatial construct of the painting), ‘*image*’<sup>327</sup> (imagery that embodies the optical occupation of the painting) and ‘*reception*’<sup>328</sup> (the critical and social relevance of the painting and how it is received). In effect, Grayson and Bacon’s propositions directly follow Staff, emphasising the concept of *surface content* (“content” and “image”), as well as the specific *morphology* (“surface”) post-new media painting comprises. Finally, Bacon attests to how these works are contextually received, and how this extends to encapsulate the *interaction* (“reception”) experienced with an artwork. Aligning with the problematics of inconsistent formal languages inherent to a post-new media formal structure, these commentators refer to similar valid concepts, albeit with different terminologies. Moreover, these terms extend the theoretical languages explored in Chapter 2<sup>329</sup> into a workable classification structure [see Table 3], manifest as the following four taxonomical axioms, that I classify as “Digital Factures”:

- **Process**—An expansion of Staff’s “image.” This refers to the way a painting is produced to make it adopt a post-digital identity, for example, the use of mechanised or digital means.

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<sup>324</sup> Ibid, p. 149.

<sup>325</sup> Grayson, p. 1.

<sup>326</sup> Bacon.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

<sup>329</sup> Specifically, IMTD, indexicality, re-mediatisation/transitivity, and network.

- **Content**—An amalgamation of Staff’s “imagining”, Grayson’s “content”, and Bacon’s “image.” This refers to how the compositional content of the painting refers to the digital, for example, the depiction of digitally engaged pop culture iconography.
- **Morphology**—An expansion of Bacon’s “surface.” This refers to how the physical properties of the painting reflect a digital imperative, for example, pixelation, unnaturally saturated colours, or the use of distinct image filters.
- **Interaction**—An expansion of Bacon’s “reception.” This refers to the way a painting is appropriated, disseminated, assimilated, and interacted with within a wider digital and technological network.

#### **[4.4] CONCLUSION**

This chapter has posited a new taxonomy with which to classify post-new media painting. By building on debates of expanded materiality and combining these with formal, theoretical, and philosophical positions established earlier in this thesis, a taxonomy for the PDPG manifests. This taxonomy allows for a more rigorous analysis of the position of cross-disciplinary expanded painting practices and processes within a perpetually shifting new media art discourse, and how this affects the translation of the painted gesture. Specifically, this taxonomy establishes the Digital Façade axioms of Processes, Content, Morphology, and Interaction as the means of the PDPG’s translation. Acting as an epistemological anchor, this new framework will facilitate a deeper analysis of how post-digital painting operates, guiding the practice-based material research to follow.

# CHAPTER 5

## POST-DIGITAL PAINTING PHENOMENA

### **[5.1] INTRODUCTION**

“Chiaroscuro”, “pentimento”, “sfumato”, “facture”, “scumbling”, “impasto”, “grattage”, “wash”, “glaze”, “stippling”, “grisaille”, “sgraffito”, “alla prima”—these are but a few of the many terms attributed to specific painting processes or qualities. In the same way “traditional” painting can be categorised by its unique characteristics, so too can post-digital painted gestures. By expanding on the initial Digital Facture axioms positioned previously, this chapter will investigate my proposal of Digital Factures as an ever-expanding post-digital modality. It shall do this by exploring the formal trends of practitioners engaged within the post-digital field, both through analysing original artist survey responses gathered, and through the visual analysis of a broader range of post-digital painters. Furthermore, I will support these artist investigations by analysing my own practice-based, prototypical visualisations of these perceived Digital Factures. As such, this chapter will address components of the following questions that emerge from the main research question: *What surface morphologies, interactions, processes, and surface content has emerged from a post-digital painting discourse? And What is the position of expanded painting within new media art?*

This chapter is the synthesis of artist survey data collected between July 2019 and March 2020. I gathered primary source data using this method to study the artistic practices of emerging and established artists who work with, or in relation to, digital and technological processes.

By contacting respondents via email and requesting them to complete a questionnaire I was able to ask specific questions related to the processes used in the production of their painting practices. In total, over 160 practitioners were contacted, with approximately 17% of those approached providing data. This dataset acts as the primary source in the further extension and contextual support of the initial Digital Facture taxonomy structure established in Chapter 4 [see Table 3].<sup>330</sup> I designed the survey in an open-ended question format to generate a dynamic and authentic dataset that exemplifies key trends apparent within the work of post-digital practitioners. Ultimately, I have translated these qualitative responses into quantitative data to quantifiably ground the research by demonstrating the existence of trends as well as discovering the frequency of their employment within contemporary painting; as such, this data is emergent in nature.

## **[5.2] ARTIST SURVEY DATA**

Key trends extrapolated from coding survey responses are divided into four concepts that emerged from the data.<sup>331</sup> The first of these is *Culture*, which is defined as wider cultural trends that post-digital painting is situated within, or references. Secondly, *Discourse*, which is an acknowledgement of historical and contemporary issues and structures, that range from the history of painting to the authenticity of the art object. Thirdly, *Media*, which encapsulates modes of image reception and dissemination, as well as information transmission and linguistic assimilation of data. Finally, *Medium*, which is the formal preconditions of post-digital painting. In the proceeding tables [Tables 6 & 7] I arrange trends identified within the survey into constituent axiomatic branches, delineating the frequency of their employment, in alignment with the taxonomic structure visualised in Table 3, that defines a formal construct for the PDPG. The survey identified twenty-two overarching trends associated with post-digital painting: in the proceeding pages I give precise definitions to each of these.

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<sup>330</sup> Before conducting this research, ethical approval and guidance was sought, in-line with Glasgow School of Art's *Research Ethics Code of Practice*. Furthermore, compliance with Glasgow School of Art's *Research Data Management Policies* and *General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)* were adhered to.

<sup>331</sup> Data coding was done manually (as opposed to using data analysis software) to understand the context of the survey responses more comprehensively. Furthermore, later cross-referencing of artist images to extrapolate trend data could only be done manually. This mode of data extrapolation followed my emergent research methodology, as trends and Digital Factures "emerged" from the datasets collected.



Table 6: Survey Data—Trend Classifications.

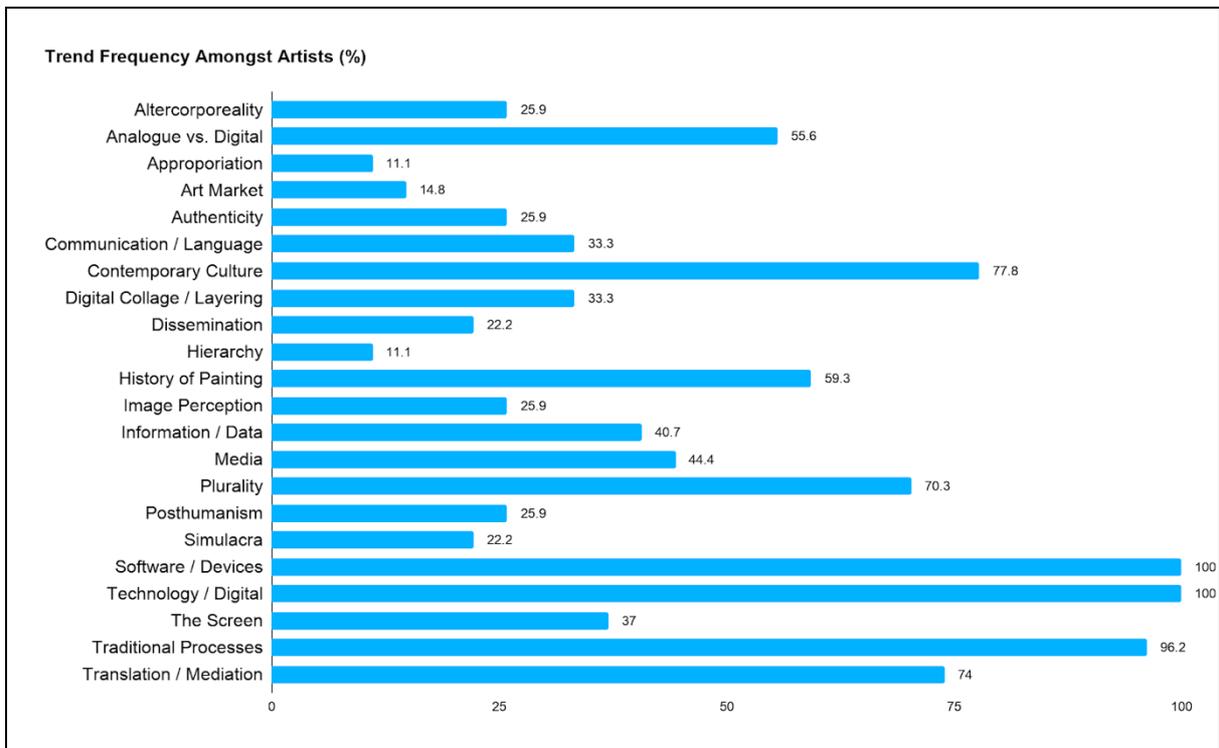


Table 7: Survey Data—Trend Frequency Amongst Artists (%)

<b>Altercorporeality</b>	A mode of polymorphic painting used to transmit morphological meaning, that gives the virtual a materiality. Similar to, yet distinct from the trend <i>Translation/Mediation</i> .
<b>Analogue vs. Digital</b>	The tension between analogue and digital modes of making amongst practitioners engaged within digital painting practices.
<b>Appropriation</b>	The post-digital appropriation of images and culture within painting.
<b>Art Market</b>	The wider art market and its position within contemporary painting.
<b>Authenticity</b>	How authenticity, “aura”, agency, ownership, and originality apply to painting in a post-digital discourse.
<b>Communication/ Language</b>	The transmission of symbols, language, data, and media.
<b>Contemporary Culture</b>	Broader cultural trends that post-digital painting is situated within, or references.
<b>Digital Collage/Layering</b>	A process where the construction of a painting emulates a layered and collaged style, usually through using software as a preparatory sketching tool. The use of software in this process is typically evident in the final painting.
<b>Dissemination</b>	How painting/images are disseminated and assimilated via technological and digital means.
<b>Hierarchy</b>	The dissolution of hierarchy between images and discourses in a pluralised, post-digital discourse.
<b>History of Painting</b>	An acknowledgement of the historical conventions of painting.
<b>Image Perception</b>	The way images are perceived contingent upon the cultural pretext in which they become situated.
<b>Information/Data</b>	The consideration of paint(ing) as a quantifiable unit of information/data.
<b>Media</b>	The modes of image reception and dissemination, as well as information transmission and linguistic assimilation of data.
<b>Plurality</b>	An engagement with expanded, hybridised forms of painting: this is inter-, multi-, trans-discipline in nature.

<b>Posthumanism</b>	An acknowledgement of posthuman tendencies within contemporary painting practice and society.
<b>Simulacra</b>	The emulation of one medium/painterly process with another.
<b>Software/Devices</b>	The use of specific software or devices in the construction process of painting.
<b>The Screen</b>	The use of screens in their various manifestations as a delivery method for painterly/image information.
<b>Technology/Digital</b>	The importance/acknowledgement of a technological and digital presence within contemporary painting discourse, encapsulating the ubiquity of new media.
<b>Traditional Processes</b>	The preservation and continued use of traditional painting strategies.
<b>Translation/Mediation</b>	The translation of digital data via painterly process.

### **[5.3] DIGITAL FACTURES**

In this section, I analyse the distinct formal conventions emerging from the trends identified from the practitioners surveyed. Moreover, a broader range of painting examples from digital artisans not included in my survey are considered to provide a more comprehensive analysis. To turn these trends into usable data, I have taken my initial Taxonomy of Digital Factures structure established in Chapter 4 and expanded upon it. This taxonomy also evolves from phenomena I have observed in my studio practice, exemplified in my prototypical digital mock-up *Image Analysis Prototypes* (2020) [Figs. 32–36]. I have deconstructed this painting Prototype into the taxonomic branches presented in Table 3 to visually exemplify the Digital Facture concept. By aligning this studio investigation with the artist survey data yielded, I have observed that within each of the four Digital Facture axioms, the emergence of distinct *Digital Factures* [Table 8]. These Factures are formal motifs present within post-digital painting that weave between analogue and digital capacities. In the following pages I position comprehensive definitions of each. My cross-examination of these Factures, evident in the work of post-digital artisans are presented [Figs. 37–66] to visually exemplify the Digital Factures employed.



Figure 32: **Image Analysis Prototype 1: Computer Mock-up.** Photoshopped version of painting Prototype used for the construction of a physical image. See [PF. 19] for the physical development of this image.



Figure 33: **Image Analysis Prototype 2: Content.** This relates to how the actual content of the work suggests a digitally/technologically engaged imperative. In this instance, Imma: a CGI model.

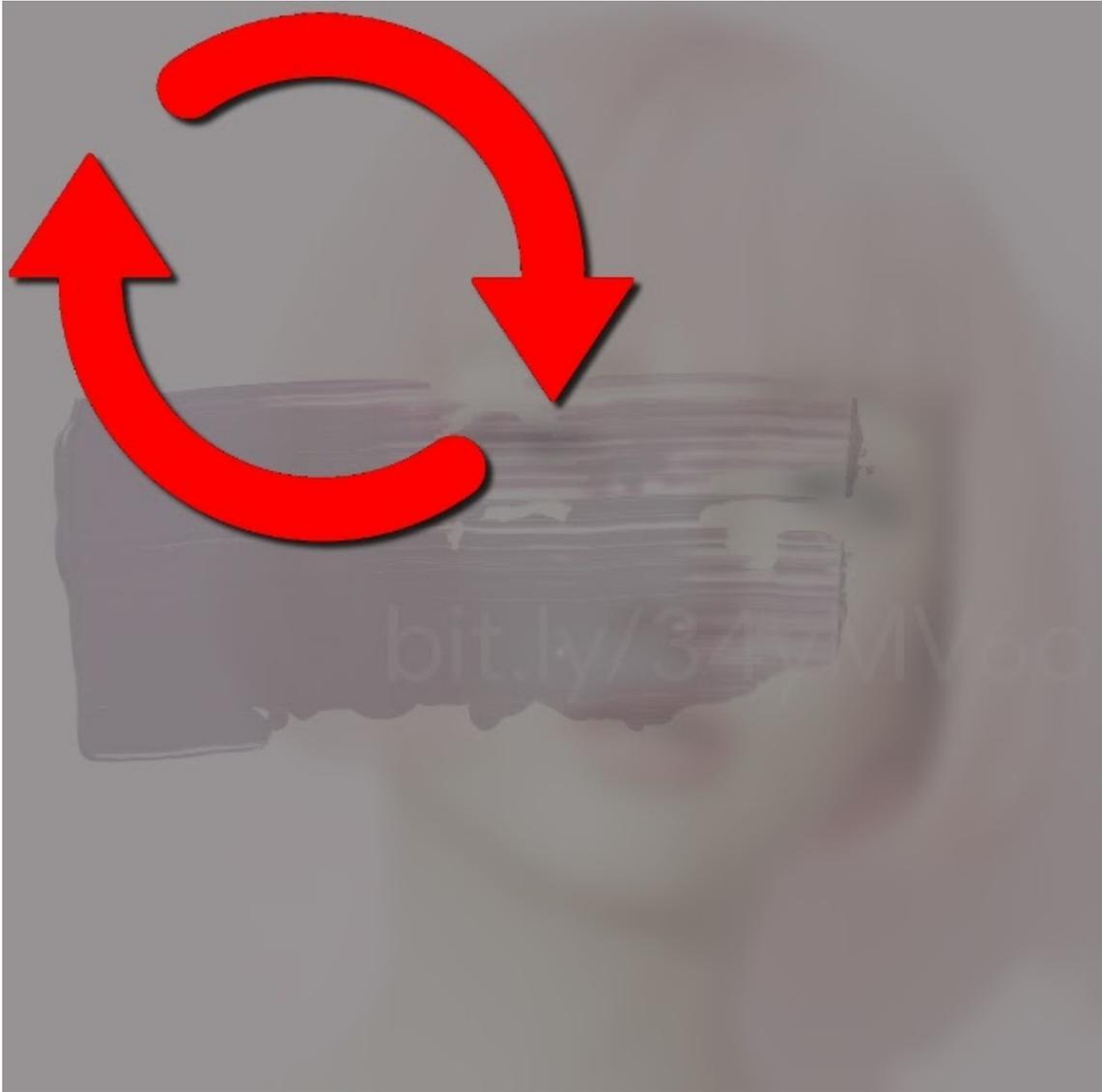


Figure 34: **Image Analysis Prototype 3: Process.** This relates to the technological processes involved in the production of the final work. Exemplified here by a red “refresh” symbol that was manufactured via a laser cutting process in the physical outcome of this work.



Figure 35: **Image Analysis Prototype 4: Morphology.** This relates to the specific surface topography of the work. Pictured here is a paint gesture that was physically manifest as a digital print in the physical outcome of this work.



Figure 36: **Image Analysis Prototype 5: Interaction.** This relates to how the work is interacted with, either physically or digitally. Pictured here is a URL that can be interacted with online as a digital counterpart to the physical encounter with the work.

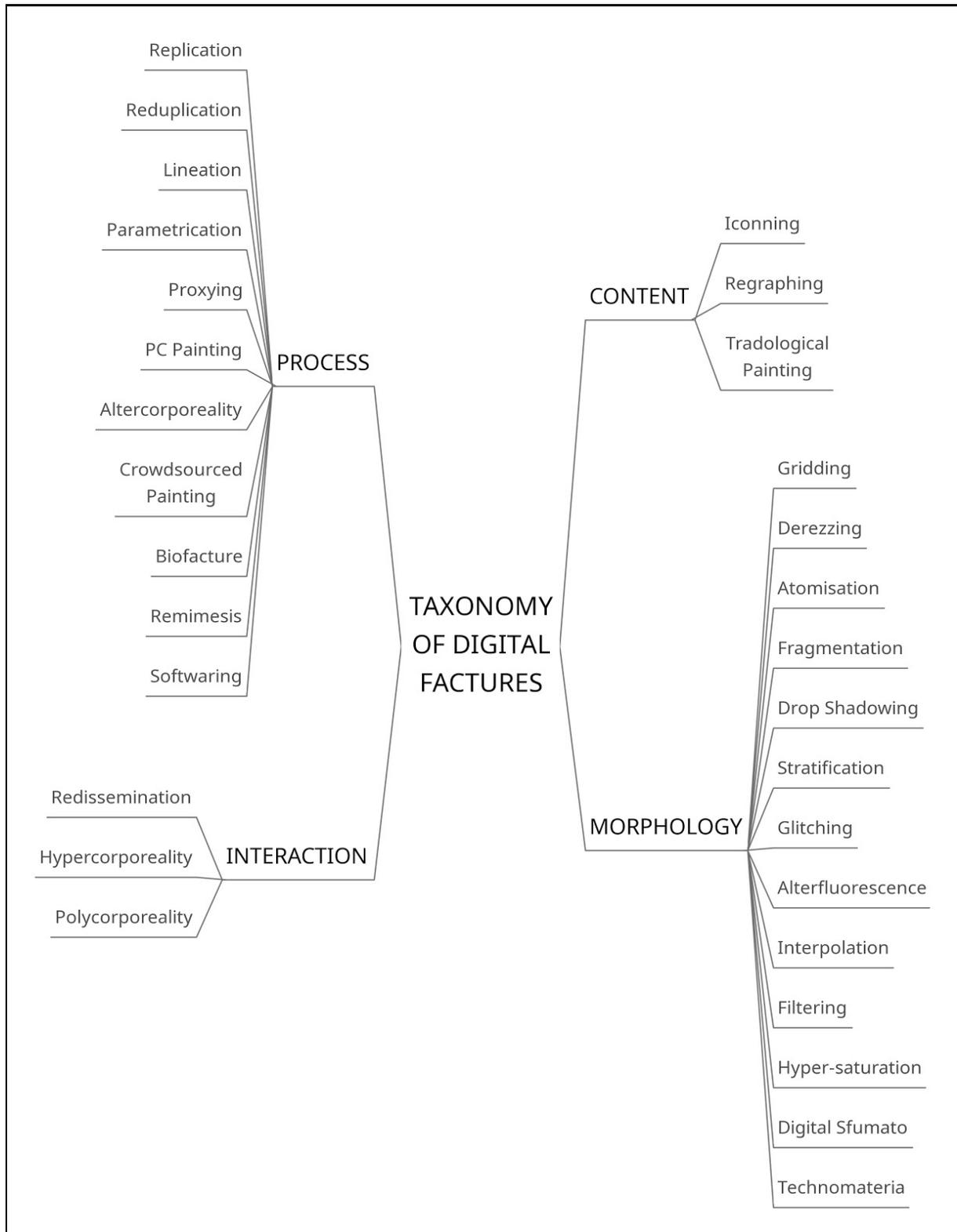


Table 8: *Taxonomy of Digital Factures.*

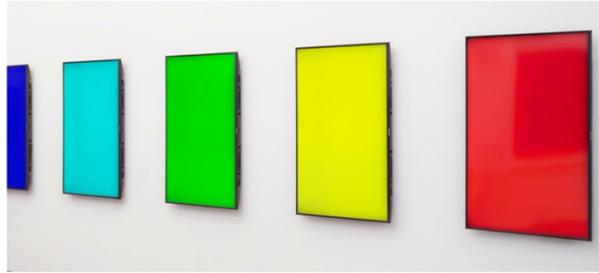
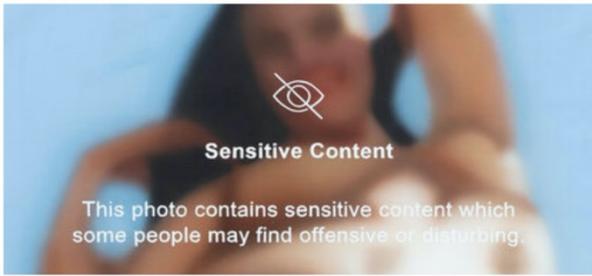


Figure 37: *Altercorporeality.*

Figure 38: *Alterfluorescence.*

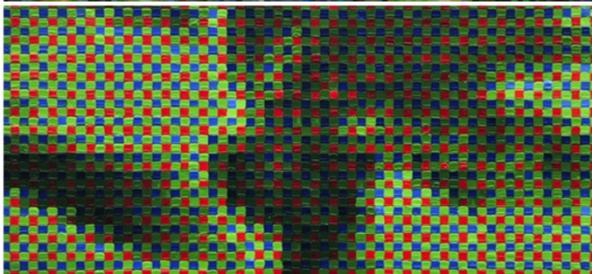
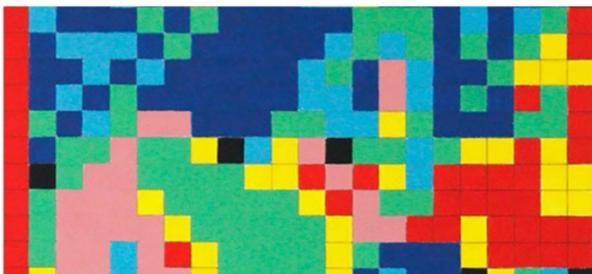


Figure 39: *Atomisation.*

Figure 40: *Biofacture.*



Figure 41: **Crowdsourced Painting.**



Figure 42: **Derezzing.**



Figure 43: **Digital Sfumato.**



Figure 44: **Drop Shadowing.**

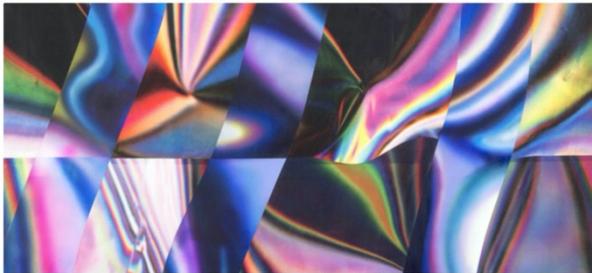
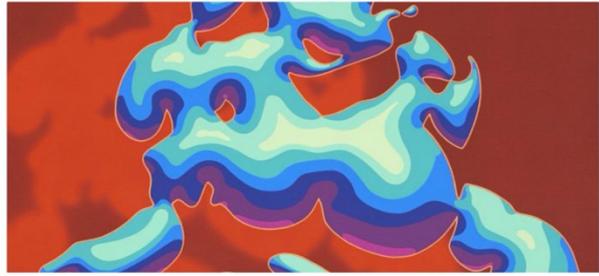


Figure 45: **Filtering.**

Figure 46: **Fragmentation.**



Figure 47: **Glitching.**

Figure 48: **Gridding.**

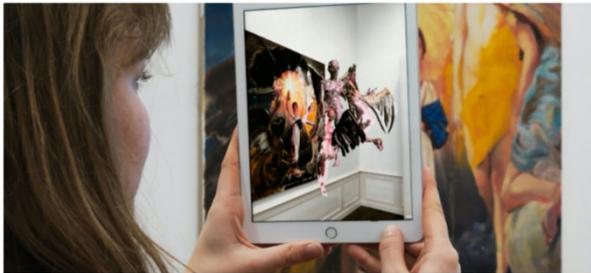
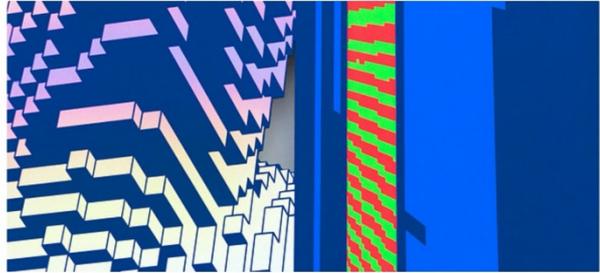
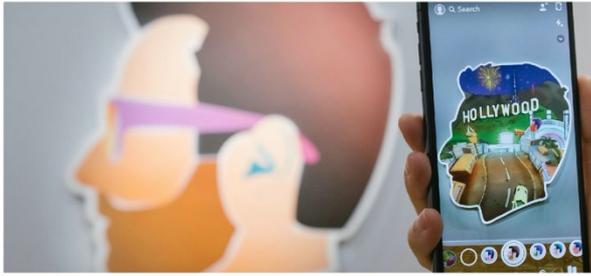


Figure 49: *Hypercorporeality.*

Figure 50: *Hypersaturation.*



Figure 51: *Iconning.*

Figure 52: *Interpolation.*



Figure 53: **Lineation.**



Figure 54: **Parametrication.**



Figure 55: **PC Painting.**



Figure 56: **Polycorporeality.**



When you see a friend in public



Expectation Vs Reality:

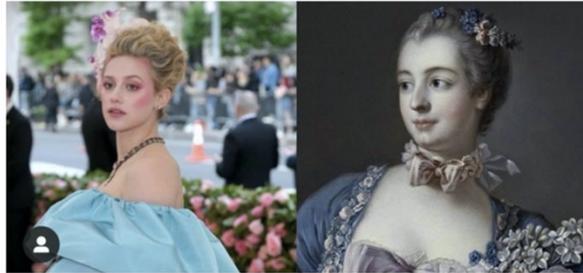
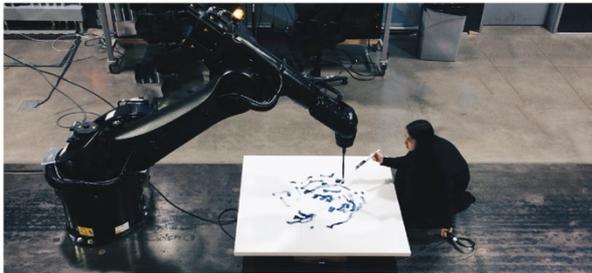


Figure 57: **Proxying.**

Figure 58: **Redissemination.**

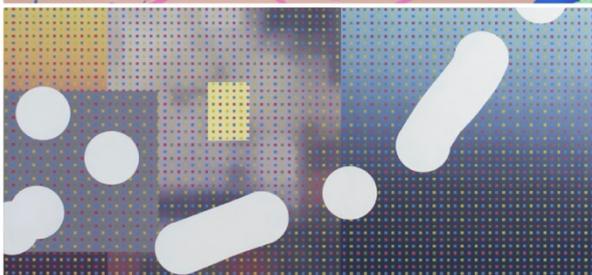


Figure 59: **Reduplication.**

Figure 60: **Regraphing.**

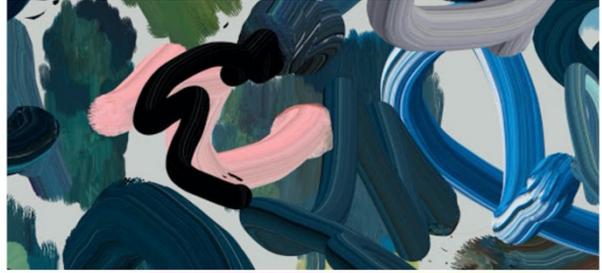


Figure 61: *Remimesis.*

Figure 62: *Replication.*



Figure 63: *Softwaring.*

Figure 64: *Stratification.*



Figure 65: *Technomateria.*

Figure 66: *Tradological Painting.*

<b>Altercorporeality</b>	Characterised by making the digital image analogue, as a direct transposition of visual data from one format to another. For example, overtly painting (or “altering”) the contents of a computer screen onto a physically painted surface. Common to this practice is the use of computer programmes to create (either through chance or in a controlled manner) compositions, as well as directly referencing widely circulated pre-existing images. A common phenomenon of this Facture is the meta-referential nature it has in relation to the translated visual data it describes. As a result, this Facture updates the concept of <i>Meta-painting</i> (itself a historical painting convention), to describe self-aware modes of painting within the post-digital. This Facture shares its name with the aforementioned trend <i>Altercorporeality</i> , from which it takes its meaning.
<b>Alterfluorescence</b>	An emphasis on how a painting is lit, that derives from the technology of the screen. This can be broken down into two modes: a painting being lit artificially (such as a backlit screen) or naturally front-lit (such as a spotlight), acknowledging the nature of artificial and natural light in painting.
<b>Atomisation</b>	Characterised by breaking down an image into equal, irreducible units of information. These units can take on any morphological property, so long as they are all equal in size and capacity for distribution upon a surface.
<b>Biofacture</b>	Emerging from the term “biohacking” and the Cyborg Art movement but extending specifically to painting. Characterised by the artificial implantation of technology within the artist themselves as a necessary part of the production of the artwork—a form of painterly transhumanism.
<b>Crowdsourced Painting</b>	Painting that operates in a survey-like format via social media or through digital network engagement, relying on crowd participation in the work’s formal or conceptual fabrication. Authorship of the work can, therefore, be extended to a wider network of participants.
<b>Derezzing</b>	An emulation of computer pixels. This term is a portmanteau of “deconstruction” and “resolution.”
<b>Digital Sfumato</b>	An emulation of the soft, airbrushed effect of computer simulations in paint, through using airbrushes, spray paint, or highly blended paint strokes.
<b>Drop Shadowing</b>	Commonly adopting a “squiggly” line or spray-painted effect, but also extending to brushwork: lines and objects appear to float from the surface of the painting, giving an illusion of depth. Characterised as an analogue emulation of computer gestures, and influenced by the Abstract Illusionism movement, whereby abstract forms adopt a sense of depth akin to <i>trompe l’oeil</i> painting, as a projection of illusionistic space. Similar to, but distinct from the Facture <i>Reduplication</i> .
<b>Filtering</b>	The overt use of software and image filters to produce a painting or a work that adopts the aesthetic of artificially filtered images.

<b>Fragmentation</b>	Visual information broken down into larger, broader units of data, or used as uneven clusters to build a wider whole, unlike the uniform, evenly (dis)assembled visual information characterised by the <i>Facture Atomisation</i> .
<b>Glitching</b>	Painting that exemplifies a computer glitch aesthetic. It is related to, yet distinct from, the Glitch Art movement.
<b>Gridding</b>	Once a signifier of the modernist utopian vision, now rearticulated to act as an analogue of computer screen resolution: a reference to computer syntactics and matrices. Morphologically, this is a structuring of information into a grid format. Similar to, but distinct from the <i>Factures Derezzing</i> and <i>Atomisation</i> .
<b>Hypercorporeality</b>	Paintings that are interacted with using a digital device or application, such as <i>Snapchat</i> , QR code, or a URL link. Related to, but distinct from the <i>Factures Redissemination</i> , <i>Polycorporeality</i> , and <i>Altercorporeality</i> .
<b>Hypersaturation</b>	The deliberate use of unnatural and highly saturated colours that emulate screen content and highly edited images.
<b>Iconning</b>	The implementation of digital pop culture imagery, fonts, and symbols, such as emojis, memes, icons, and social media tropes/trends.
<b>Interpolation</b>	Referring to the language of collage that is emulated via painting. Aesthetically characterised through the effect of multiple images or elements copy-and-pasted together in a software programme, such as Photoshop.
<b>Lineation</b>	A method of painting that emulates digital drawing aesthetics, specifically computer-drawn lines (see also: <i>Drop Shadowing</i> and <i>Reduplication</i> <i>Factures</i> ). The “squiggly line” is a common theme amongst post-digital painters and in this manifestation appears flat (as opposed to “floating” above the surface of the painting, as exemplified in the <i>Facture Drop Shadowing</i> ). The history of this <i>Facture</i> traces back to mechanical plotters and early graphics tablets. Similar to, yet distinct from the <i>Factures Reduplication</i> and <i>Drop Shadowing</i> .
<b>Parametrication</b>	The moving painted gesture. Characterised by an acknowledgement of the gestural capabilities of paint (be this digital or analogue) yet is either animated or interacts with an animated element of a work’s composition.
<b>PC Painting</b>	Digitally painted images created via software packages such as Microsoft Paint, often referencing the conventions of analogue painting practices. The outcomes appear to have a cartoon-like or heavily stylised graphic quality.
<b>Polycorporeality</b>	An expansion of the terms “re-mediatisation” and “transitivity,” this is the translation of one form of corporeal information (an image, for example) into another (like text). It is a painting that can exist in multiple formats simultaneously, be these photographic, painted, analogue, or digital. These

	works can assume a digital location, and as such are interacted with on multiple platforms. Related to, yet distinct from <i>Altercorporeality</i> and <i>Hypercorporeality</i> .
<b>Proxying</b>	A mechanically (re)produced form of gesture involving machine automation as a “proxy” for the human hand, implementing technologies such as 3D-printing and robotics, amongst many others.
<b>Redissemination</b>	Recontextualised, digitally modified images that reference pre-existing paintings or artworks, disseminated on social network platforms; a <i>Facture</i> that capitalises on the networked status of painting.
<b>Reduplication</b>	Analogue painted gestures that emulate the effects of computer-drawn marks, (that often reference, or go beyond the common morphological theme of “squiggly lines”). Related to, yet distinct from the <i>Factures</i> <i>Derezzing</i> , <i>Lineation</i> , and <i>Drop Shadowing</i> .
<b>Regraphing</b>	The reproduction of distinct computer imagery, graphics, or icons in analogue paint. Digital avatars, loading screens, polygonal models, computer game characters, or wireframe models are common subject matter.
<b>Remimesis</b>	The painted gesture recreated and displayed purely digitally, experienced in X-Reality. Sometimes this <i>Facture</i> is employed to augment or interact with physical artefacts. Processes include software usage, such as <i>Google Tilt Brush</i> .
<b>Replication</b>	The digital reproduction of a painted gesture that then becomes realised in an analogue capacity (such as printing). This involves processing or emulating a painterly gesture via software before the work becomes physically manifest in a secondary (analogue) morphological form, such as being printed onto an analogue substrate like canvas or paper.
<b>Softwaring</b>	The specific use of software to arrive at, and possibly disseminate, a painterly outcome, devoid of analogue pigment. Processes include the use of GANs and artificial intelligence.
<b>Stratification</b>	Gestural information stacked and layered, often depicting abstracted visual data. Similar to, but distinct from the <i>Facture</i> <i>Interpolation</i> .
<b>Technomateria</b>	A form of assemblage in which the painted surface incorporates elements of readymade, assembled, or found objects that relate to digital technologies.
<b>Tradological Painting</b>	Traditional forms of painting, both in terms of surface content and processes employed (this <i>Facture</i> is unique as it straddles both <i>Content</i> and <i>Process</i> Digital <i>Facture</i> branches) that depict (usually in a representative fashion) themes of technology or digital languages. A particular emphasis on the European tradition of painting is a notable feature of this <i>Facture</i> .

It is important to acknowledge that the preceding presentation of Digital Facture figures share a visual similarity to a series of works called *Interpolations* (investigated in Chapter 7) created as part of this thesis. However, there is a clear distinction between both outputs. The Digital Factures visualised here are a documentation of gestural trends, as opposed to the *Interpolations* works, which are practical research outputs.

#### **[5.4] DISCUSSION**

***Interpretations***—The key finding of the artist survey is the visual and contextual demonstration of the existence and emergence of my Digital Factures proposal; as such, its implementation as a research method has been vital. Throughout the data, numerous correlations have arisen between Factures; these exist as the recurring processes, surface content, morphologies, and interactions present in the work of survey respondents and the visual data considered. These Factures are repeating phenomena, confirming the assertions made by commentators such as Grayson that this type of painting delineates a cultural genre.<sup>332</sup> As such, the proposition of Digital Factures provides a classification structure for the PDPG. In alignment with my primary research question, a distinct feature of Digital Factures is that of gestural translation, that positions painting as a translative entity. The data shows the PDPG exists in continual relocation, which is networked, re-mediatised, indexical, and IMTD in its gestural manifestations. Upon closer inspection, it is arguable that the painting paradigms I analysed emerge initially from a Westernised perception of painting practice, however, these develop to show a global language of painting that is not tethered to a specific region or demographic.

***Implications***—My Taxonomy of Digital Factures establishes the specific and manifold emergence of post-digital painted gestures. As such, this taxonomy presents an architecture as to the formal nature of expanded post-digital painting practices and processes within a perpetually shifting new media art discourse. In particular, the position of what surface morphologies, interactions, processes, and surface content have emerged from post-digital painting. Whilst this taxonomy corroborates, unifies, and validates the positions of commentators who have aimed to position constituent formal attributes of post-digital

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<sup>332</sup> Specifically, “Post-analogue” painting. Grayson, p. 1.

painting (analysed in Chapters 2–4),<sup>333</sup> my insights have expanded previously positioned theories. Specifically, my taxonomy extends and clarifies the formal vocabulary partially established by commentators, detailing the precise positions and wide-ranging entities manifest within the PDPG concept.

**Limitations**—A potential limitation to my taxonomy emerges, as Paul states: *‘Definitions and categories can be dangerous in setting up predefined limits for approaching and understanding an art form, particularly when it is still constantly evolving, as is the case with digital art.’*<sup>334</sup> Following this claim, ostensibly, the notion of a taxonomy narrows a formal structure. By no means does my taxonomy comprehensively map a post-digital painting discourse. However, through a process of unifying constituent formal and philosophical languages, my taxonomy provides a more cohesive way to analyse the position of post-digital painting. Instead of constricting, my taxonomy acts as a general paradigm that is expandable, and which accurately frames contemporary painting trends amidst an inconsistent and often contested discourse. A secondary limitation occurs in the size of the dataset received from my artist survey: a more extensive sample size of respondent feedback would have yielded more specific percentages of trend data. As such, this survey has generated only general trend data for the popularity of Digital Factures. A final limitation to this research was the financial and logistical limitations of curating an exhibition that exemplifies the Digital Factures I identified, and the many practitioners involved in their implementation; the optimal output for such a mode of research would be to stage a physical show.

## **[5.5] CONCLUSION**

This chapter has expanded upon my initial taxonomic structure of Digital Factures and PDPG data generated in Chapters 3 and 4. As such, I have investigated my proposal of Digital Factures as an ever-expanding post-digital modality. I carried this out by analysing the formal trends of painters engaged within the post-digital field, through both an original artist survey, and the visual analysis of a broader range of post-digital painters. As a result, this chapter has addressed components of the following questions that emerge from the main research question: *What surface morphologies, interactions, processes, and surface content has emerged from*

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<sup>333</sup> See Grayson, p.1, Staff, pp. 146 - 149, Smythe, and Bacon.

<sup>334</sup> Paul, p.8.

*a post-digital painting discourse? And What is the position of expanded painting within new media art?* I have answered these questions from my employment of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. From this approach, I have delineated a vast range of as-of-yet uncharted post-digital painterly strategies, as well as the key trends that are present in the work of contemporary digital artisans' painting practices. This data evolved into a fully formed taxonomy that has broken down Digital Factures into the precise surface morphologies, interactions, processes, and surface content that I have observed as post-digital painting phenomena. From these, a wide range of Digital Factures that map the situation of the PDPG positions itself. Moreover, through my survey responses and wider artist research, I have been able to identify the key digital artisans operating within the field of post-digital painting.

Specifically, translation as a key trend emerged, that attests to the translative position of expanded painting practices and processes within a perpetually shifting new media art discourse, as contextually hypothesised in Chapters 2 and 3. This concept is inherent to the notion of re-mediatised and translated practices witnessed within the formal attributes of post-digital painting, exemplified in its prominence amongst several Digital Factures. This observation aligns with my proposal of Translation as a formal terminology in Chapter 4. However, as discovered, Translation is tied to the concept of data transfer. Therefore, to quantify the PDPG as a translative entity, I must first situate it as a form of data that is empirically testable. As explored in the proceeding chapter, the idea of the painted gesture as a unit of data emerges as no new phenomenon; painting's exposure to digital technologies has only heightened this quality. Accordingly, through the production of original painterly artefacts, I will be able to observe, via a materially focused format, the specific modes of translative gesture that derive from my Taxonomy of Digital Factures.

# CHAPTER 6

## THE PAINTED GESTURE AS A FORM OF TRANSLATABLE DATA

### **[6.1] INTRODUCTION**

Information, much like culture, is fleeting, manifest as a continual stream of cultural data sets that rapidly expand the discourse of post-digital painting. Obrist says of this condition: ‘... today [we] have more information than ever before but that does not necessarily mean that we have more memory.’<sup>335</sup> This global oversaturation of knowledge without meaningful context contributes to the confusion of formalist discourses, but also sets the stage for painting to operate fluidly as a form of information. In the age of ephemeral, hyper produced “Instagrammable” art, this information requires a translative medium to travel through, but how is this means of translation identified?

My Taxonomy of Digital Factures has established the fundamental components of how the PDPG exists as a formal entity. However, it does not delineate the specific translative capacity of post-digital painting that I aim to define, nor does it describe how the painted gesture has the potential to act as an enhanced unit of information arising from digital and technological intervention. By expanding specific Digital Facture phenomena, I will answer the following

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<sup>335</sup> Hans Ulrich Obrist, Russell Tovey & Robert Diament, in *Talk Art Podcast: Hans Ulrich Obrist*, 6th Sept 2019, (1hr, 4mins, 37secs), accessed 18/02/20.

question within this chapter: *What are the manifestations of paint(ing) as a form of deconstructable and translatable data?* I explore this question by working through a series of materially driven Prototypes I have termed my *Simulacra* series (2018–2019) [PF. 1–15].

The development of this series emerges from a continuation of an intense period of pre-doctoral study that focused on a series of painting strategies I employed from September 2016 to January 2017. My *Simulacra* works use this initial data gathered as a starting point. This background work, which I referred to as my *Permutations* [Figs. 67 & 68] aimed to engage with a vast multitude of media, both objectively and subjectively, to investigate the disconnect between method, material, morphology, and visual data. Via simulating materials, I also aimed to address the concerns of one medium by ascribing its features to another, to reconfigure painting on a material level, as a form of transcribable visual information.

At first glance my assertion that painterly facture can be consolidated into mere data may appear reductionist and schematic, akin to the theories of philosophers Max Bense and Abraham A. Moles' "Information Aesthetics." During the 1960s, Bense and Moles proposed the use of statistical and mathematical information to objectively situate aesthetic theory that was based on theories of information, semiotics, and communication.<sup>336</sup> This rigid form of pure objective analysis, however, ventured aggressively into total aesthetic objectivity<sup>337</sup> that could not adequately comprehend the expressive complexity of the fine arts. Specifically, Information Aesthetics was unable to grasp *what* it should measure against and *why* it should measure at all.<sup>338</sup> Taking strong heed of this criticism, I propose a clear objective as to the measure of the PDPG: I define this as a form of *data* instead of an aesthetic equation. Mitigating the problems encountered by Information Aesthetics, which sought to reduce art to an (unanswerable) equation, I propose data, by its very nature is free flowing and potentially limitless. Whilst an equation is potentially uncompromising through unattainable order and structure when applied to a fine art setting, I avoid the reductive strategies of Bense and Moles by accepting the unquantifiable nature of *expression*. I do this by highlighting that the material/morphological construction and translatable quality of paint(ing) *can* be measured

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<sup>336</sup> Frieder Nake, 'Information Aesthetics: A Heroic Experiment', in *Journal of Mathematics and the Arts*, Volume 6, Issue 2-3 (2012), (Bremen: Taylor & Francis Group, 2012), (65–75), p. 65.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid*, p. 65.

<sup>338</sup> CompArt Database, 'Information Aesthetics', in *CompArt: Database of Digital Art*, (CompArt Online, 2010), in URL: <https://bit.ly/3nIVdm8>, accessed 21/12/20.



Figure 67: James Frew. *Imitations*. (From the 'Permutations' series). 2016. Silicone mould. 35 x 32 cm.



Figure 68: James Frew. *Imitations*. (From the 'Permutations' series). 2016. Plaster cast. 33 x 30 cm.

as forms of data. Contrary to Information Aesthetics, my proposition of the painted gesture as a unit of data is not devoid of subjective articulation. Instead, I attest that within a post-digital, technological capacity, the painted gesture can be *quantified as a material construct* or as a *transmittable form of translatable information*, rather than being a purely objective entity. In opposition to Bense and Moles, I propose that *expression* itself cannot be quantified or equated. Moreover, my approach dispenses with the mathematical constriction employed by Bense and Moles, instead favouring information and technology as subjective forms. This enquiry is based on existing aesthetic languages associated with painting (as explored in Chapters 2 and 3), and the semiotic capacity of painting as a sequence of malleable signs, rather than on uncompromising mathematical precision.

For centuries artists have been deconstructing and manipulating painting into manageable units of information to understand the constituent components of its construction [see Fig. 23], frequently employing advances in science and technology in their investigations (such as optics, mathematics, and perspective). These developments are observable in several movements, ranging from the technological and scientific advancements of the Renaissance, the highly saturated, atomised hues witnessed within Pointillism, the enhanced representations of reality found within Cubism, and within modernist abstraction with its focus on materially pure, formalist pursuits. As a result of this image deconstruction, the relationship art has shared with technology has been apparent for centuries. In a continuation of this trend, the dawn of computer technology has allowed image compartmentalisation and manipulation to proliferate in new, and much more calculated ways, both conceptually and formally, ultimately redefining the role of the painted gesture. It is arguable, therefore, that the PDPG serves as a unit of quantifiable information to be manipulated, managed, decoded, and reinterpreted by today's digital artisans. As such, if the painted gesture functions as a form of deconstructable data (as historically exemplified), then I argue that this feature defines its position as a translatable entity. In the same way computer code can be manipulated into manageable units of information, so too can the PDPG, resulting from its direct relationship with technology. Expanding on this idea, the epistemological term Translation I position in Chapter 4 itself proposes a shift from one thing into another: a property shared by information.

Resulting from this technological transmission of facture, within a post-digital setting the function of the painted gesture as a form of data has become more defined, to the extent

where the painted gesture relieves itself of its analogue materiality in its transmission.<sup>339</sup> Therefore, to address what the manifestations of paint(ing) as a form of deconstructable and translatable data are, I argue that Digital Factice phenomena are subdividable into two categories that I refer to as *Quantification* and *Transmission*. Quantification delineates the morphological (de)construction of a painted gesture into units of information. Examples of this phenomenon are present in the Digital Factices *Atomisation*, *Gridding*, and *Fragmentation*, whereby painterly information structures itself as a form of repetitive, fragmented, categorisable, or patterned visual data, that can be quantified by its material embodiment or optical structure. Transmission refers to a form of Digital Factice that can transmit its gestural information into other forms of visual reception, as either a result of technological or digital manipulation, or via a linguistic, semiotic, or conceptual interpretation of digitised forms. Transmission characterises itself through an emancipation of material confinement in its representation of gesture, resulting from the IMTD characteristics of its structure. Examples of this phenomenon are present in the Digital Factices *Hypercorporeality* and *Polycorporeality*.

## **[6.2] DECONSTRUCTING THE IMAGE**

My *Simulacra* series focused on replicating a single image [PF. 1] in varying media. At this stage in my research the subject matter of the image itself was unimportant, acting merely as an initial form. By limiting the subject matter, I intended to establish a formal baseline, to investigate the properties of medium and Media, their interrelationships, and differences, and to assess the potency of factice as data. I deemed that working with a range of source images at this stage had the potential to muddy the data extrapolation process. Initially, I aimed to restrict the size of my image to a pre-set dimension, that was intentionally the approximate size of an iPad/tablet: this was a deliberate visual association. However, after establishing a formal baseline by working *through* and *across* multiple media, I felt comfortable experimenting with scale and composition as my series progressed. Furthermore, through my work, I aimed to investigate how practitioners use traditional materials and processes alongside, or in relation to, digital technologies, by interrogating the role of the analogue and its relationship to the digital. As image manipulation is a notable feature of post-digital painting, it was my primary aim to investigate the different ways I could break an image down into quantifiable

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<sup>339</sup> This follows assertions made by Rottmann, where he states that to maintain its validity, painting has had to dispense with its traditional morphological constraints. Rottmann, p. 11.

information, specifically through a process of categorisation and disruption of visual data. I called this process “filter sketching.” This method was initially manifest by using image filters, through implementing a range of different software packages to achieve a diverse catalogue of deconstructed images. Through this process of deconstruction, I was able to manipulate the visual information in both analogue and digital capacities, reconfiguring the painted gesture into a sequence of instructions and linguistic signifiers. Initial forays into this concept are most present in my work *Facture 2.0* (2019) [PF. 2]. These digital textile prints consisted of computer edited manifestations of paint pigment, overlaid with a heavily filtered source image. With this work I aimed to address the concerns of painting with the medium of print yet retain a traditional painterly language by employing a canvas and stretcher construction.

### **[6.3] QUANTIFICATION: FACTURE AS DATA**

To explore the idea of Quantification as a phenomenon that addresses facture as a form of quantifiable data congruent with the properties of morphology and material, I considered Heidegger’s 1954 essay *The Question Concerning Technology*, wherein he questions the essence of technology and how this influences material occupation. I was interested in his proposition of a fourfold causality in relation to technological and material categorisation/deconstruction:

1. The *causa materialis* [from which something is made]
2. The *causa formalis* [the shape the material enters]
3. The *causa finalis* [the use of the material]
4. The *causa efficiens* [the manufacturer, or means of the material’s manufacture]<sup>340</sup>

I apply Heidegger’s structure to my enquiry by asserting that the mode of production is capable of intrinsically influencing the development (or morphological structure) of the work produced, without conceptually changing the message contained within the materials. Consequently, a translative mode of polymorphic painting means that the essence of facture does not reside in a single aspect of an object’s construction or material, but rather as a holistic embodiment that encapsulates material, morphology, utility, and process, including the signs embedded within a material. Operating under a post-medium contextual anchor point, the primary aim of my *Simulacra* series was to experiment with as wide a variety of processes, materials, and techniques as possible, enabling me to both draw similarities and diffuse the

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<sup>340</sup> Heidegger, ‘The Question Concerning Technology’, p. 6.

boundaries between a wide variety of media. Material, as a form of corporeal data that acted as a vessel for translative gestures set a precursory tenet with which to approach Quantification. Accordingly, my works became heterogeneous, spanning media not traditionally appropriated by painting. Overcoming the morphological characteristics of specific media was of central importance. As such, I incorporated a wide variety of formal and mechanical means to realise my work [PF. 14]. These processes played an integral part in the development of my research, establishing painting as a form of quantifiable, corporeal data.

One of my first Prototypes that explored the notion of facture acting as corporeal/visual data was *Image / 2.jpg/INVENTORY* (2019) [PF. 3]. This is an oil on laser-cut acrylic work that used hex codes to explore the codification of a painting in terms of colour. By breaking down an image in this way, I reduced the painted gesture into pure data that had the potential to later function as a sequence of operations in the construction of an image; I based this on the textual data of the hex codes I extrapolated from my reference image [PF. 4–7]. As such, I found myself *assembling* the painting as opposed to “painting” it: I became a “monteur”, as Roberts states. By pre-painting the acrylic surface with oil paint matched to the hex codes and then laser cutting the surface into atomised square structures for later construction, the act of painting became more of an assembly line, rather than a spontaneous act of expression. These “synthetic brushstrokes” acted as an inventory of construction that had the potential to be applied by either the human hand or a machine, as a unit of manipulatable information. As such, I deconstructed painterly process into a quantifiable, neutral variable that could be replicated and exist as multiple versions. Manovich states of this working process:

- A new media object is not something fixed once and for all, but something, that can exist in different, potentially infinite versions. This is another consequence of the numerical coding of media ... and the modular structure of a media object ... Instead of identical copies [of what Manovich refers to as ‘old media’] a new media object typically gives rise to many different versions.<sup>341</sup>

Continuing Manovich’s idea, medium, therefore, functions merely as a vehicle in which to transmit versions of visual data. This concept aligns with Rancière’s proposal of the image as serving multiple functions.<sup>342</sup> Following these theoretical prompts, my painting operated as a “new media object”, that had the potential to become infinite versions or constructions of itself resulting from its codified nature. In a continuation of this idea, another “version” of the

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<sup>341</sup> Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, (MIT Press, 2001) p.36.

<sup>342</sup> Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, p. 1.

*Image12.jpg/INVENTORY* work became manifest in the piece *HEX/DATA* (2019) [PF. 8]. This Prototype displayed initial source image information as constituent blocks of ordered colour, presented semi-linguistically, arguably functioning as both pigment *and* pixel due to its surface morphology and content. Through the itemisation process of constructing this work, I discovered another way to present hex colour data was through language, by displaying hex codes alphabetically, as a form of information painting [PF. 5–7]. I was able translate these colour codes into any medium I desired. By logging the details of an image as text, I managed to present a set of instructions for its construction. This linguistically rooted processing of surface content became a valid way for me to transmit painterly/image data through any medium or Media I desired.

#### **[6.4] TRANSMISSION: THE URL AS A DYNAMIC SURFACE**

Whilst Quantification delineates the morphological capabilities of gestural data, Transmission describes the ability of paint(ing) to exist polymorphically. Kosuth's work was a pivotal conceptual prompt in my investigation, specifically, his photostat work *Titled Art as Idea as Idea [Painting]* [see Fig. 13]. In the dictionary definition of the word "painting" presented in his work, I found the fifth line of particular interest: "5. delineation that raises a vivid image in the mind; as, word-painting [Obs.]" The notion that words operated as a painting presented an opportunity for me to use language as a proxy for pigment. I explored this possibility through embedding gestural data within URL codes [PF. 11]. The surface corporeality of the URL existed as a gestural analogue interface, that accessed a wider indexical, digital function, with the physical manifestation of the URL operating as a unification of medium and Media. As such, I propose that traditional painting media and new media, through their amalgamation, can operate as extensions of each other, rather than being distinct, separate entities. Following this concept, my mixed media work *Multiples* (2018–2019) [PF. 13] explored both the notion of Quantification *and* Transmission. Influenced by Manovich's claim that the new media object exists in "potentially infinite versions", I experimented with the idea that different surface morphologies can exist as a representation of the same thing, whether analogue or digital. Referring to the work of McLuhan, I posited that the painted image (the "message" in McLuhanian terms) had the potential to act as both medium and Media. I rooted this concept in a semiotic, conceptual mode of working. In this instance, the *signified* (image) remained the same whilst the *signifier* (material) was malleable, susceptible to change, and fallible. Online

manifestations of my analogue works, accessed via URL, acted as an echo chamber whereby gestural information was circulated and in flux, existing in multiple states. Key to the development of this work was an analysis of Kosuth's piece *One and Three Chairs* (1965) [Fig. 69]. The semiotically charged narrative of Kosuth's work elicits alternative representations that imply meaning, which are divided into image, object, and language. In *Multiples*, I update Kosuth's idea to reflect the translative capacity of the PDPG, with the notion of language dictating the morphological context of the work. Like Kosuth's piece, *Multiples* exists in many formats and locations based on the conceptual reception of the work, dissolving traditionally linear relationships between artwork and spectator. I developed this idea further in my work *MACRO/DATA* (2019) [PF. 11]. The work of On Kawara was a pivotal influence in this piece, as it shared a deliberate aesthetic similarity to Kawara's *Date Paintings (Today Series)* (1966–2013) [Fig. 70]. *MACRO/DATA* displays the same visual information in several ways. There is the textual element: a URL that links the spectator to an online version of the image [PF. 10], then there is the image, which is a scaled-up brush stroke (taken from my *HEX/DATA* work [PF. 9]). I was interested in how the change of material context affected the image, as well as how I was able to further deconstruct and itemise the gestural data of the original photograph, acting as an unconventional way to “distribute” my work to the spectator. By using an online means to partially represent the work I drew attention to the apparatus of the image's assimilation: a computer screen or mobile phone acted as a window into a ubiquitous, online gallery space, or “interface”, as Openshaw and Bacon attest. An exchange of effort between spectator and object, via the use of a digital device, was necessary to access the totality of the work, implying a technological pretext in the work's reception. This method of accessing a painting contests the strict distinction between medium and Media, as espoused by Paul, and to an extent Quaranta, thereby facilitating a liminality of objects and images, as they recirculate from one medium (and Media) to another, aligning directly with the theoretical structures of IMTD, indexicality, re-mediatisation/transitivity, and network, positioned in Chapter 2. It is by no coincidence that my works reflect a conceptual approach to making, as the idea of new media art (and by extension the post-digital) emerge from conceptualism.<sup>343</sup> Moreover, by appropriating medium and Media in this way I drew parallels between my work and that of the artist Richard Prince, specifically his controversial appropriation of Instagram images [Fig. 71], as well as Guyton's recent printed textile works that reference the screen [Fig. 72].

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<sup>343</sup> Paul, p. 11.



Figure 69: Joseph Kosuth. **One and Three Chairs**. 1965. Mixed media. Dimensions variable. Collection: Museum of Modern Art, New York City.



Figure 70: On Kawara. **Date Paintings (Today Series)**. 1966–2013. Oil on canvas, dimensions variable according to series. Collection: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York City.

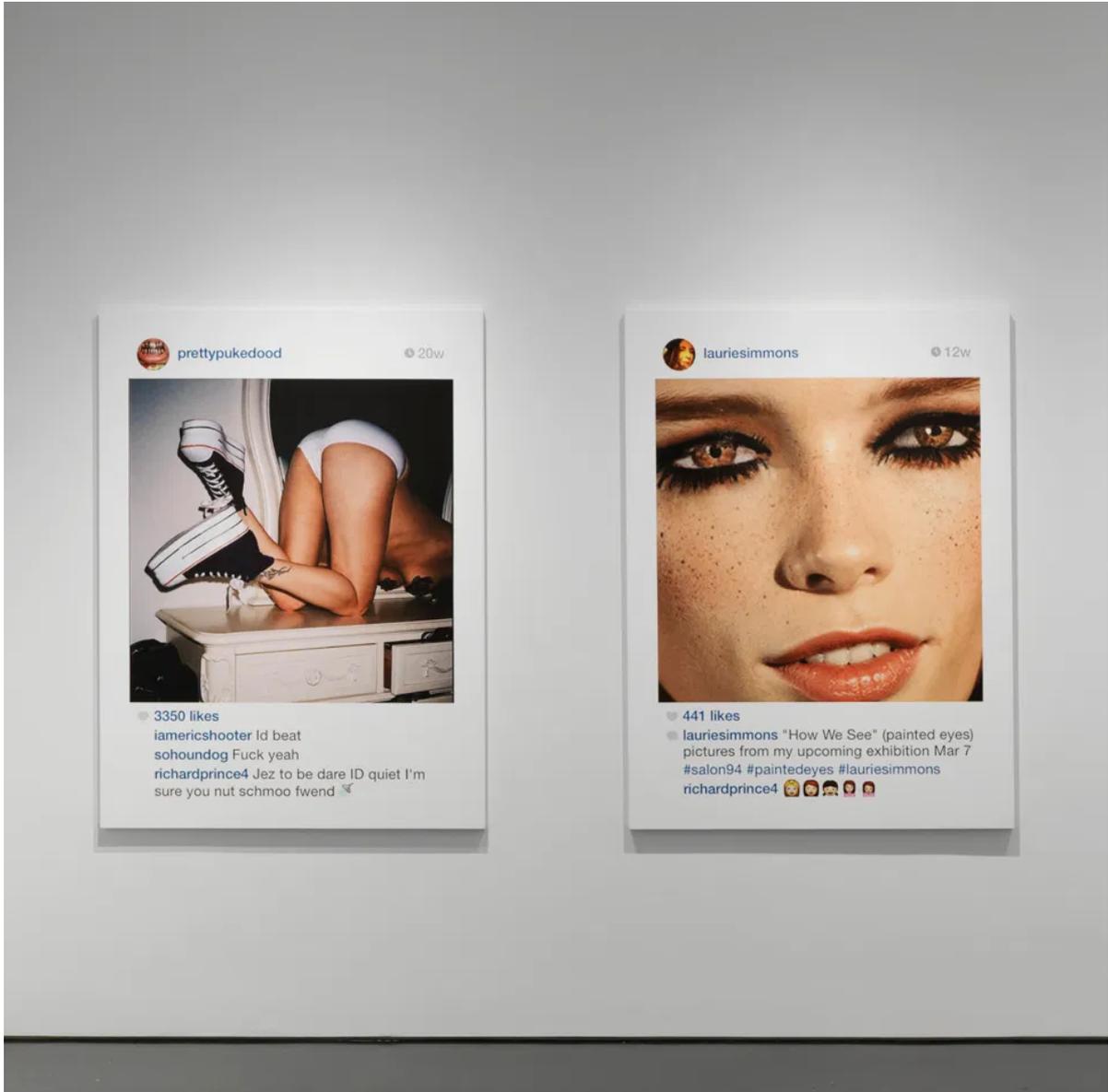


Figure 71: Richard Prince. **New Portraits**. 2014. Inkjet on canvas. Each panel 167 x 123.8 cm. Collection: Gagosian Gallery, New York.



Figure 72: Wade Guyton. **Untitled**. 2017. Epson UltraChrome PRO inkjet on linen. 325 x 275 cm. Collection: Giò Marconi Gallery.

Building on the polymorphic themes that began to emerge in my work, I developed an interest in the multiplicity of image. A painting, when viewed on the Internet, shares the same visual hierarchy of a digital photograph inasmuch as they are both composed of pixels and viewed through a screen. The content of the image itself is irrelevant: Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* now shares the same platform as any random number of Facebook photographs when viewed online; no image superior to the other. The Internet imposes a levelling effect in which all formal hierarchies disappear. Formal aspects such as scale and medium no longer apply, diminished by new media's translative capacity. This polymorphic reception of painting traces back to Berger, when he states: '*A large part of seeing depends on habit and convention.*'<sup>344</sup> The convention of the static, linear image, unique to its immediate environment or original context, has long been considered archaic. As such, the singularity of the image has dissipated through the means of reproduction. In the case of the digital artisan, this is manifest in the digital copy, but also the waves of simulated analogue image production inherent to the PDPG. By synthesising both Quantification and Transmission, I propose a digitally engaged evolution of the painted image's "habit and convention", that I have termed (as a Digital Facture) *Polycorporeality*.<sup>345</sup> As such, painting is no longer a fixed object. Berger, echoing the assertions of McHugh and Manovich, comments on the translative qualities of painting decades before the dawn of the Internet: '*The meaning of a painting no longer resides in its unique painted surface... Its meaning, or a large part of it has become transmittable... it has become an information of a sort.*'<sup>346</sup> This observation aptly applies to the reception of the PDPG, albeit updated within the discourse of a digital economy. From this emerges a non-haptic materiality in the way painting is constructed and received in a post-digital setting. This concept arises from the liminality between analogue and digital spaces, referring to the engagement of the artist in the production of an artefact, or the physical/digital nature of a work. The role of *Polycorporeality* is a semiotic one, emerging from the original *Sign* models developed by Peirce, and the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure.<sup>347</sup> Based on Saussure and Peirce's work, I have developed a

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<sup>344</sup> John Berger, *Ways of Seeing: Episode 1*, dir. by John Berger, (British Broadcasting Corporation, 1972).

<sup>345</sup> I give a comprehensive definition of this term in Chapter 5 in relation to the Taxonomy of Digital factures.

<sup>346</sup> Berger, *Ways of Seeing: Episode 1*.

<sup>347</sup> It should be noted that Saussure denoted the signifier as a 'sound-image', whereby the signifier acts as an expressive form rather than as a substance, in a *dyadic* semiotic model. However, following the work of the linguist Louis Hjelmslev, the signifier has since been considered a material form. This notion of material form, that aligns with a signified concept, is how I have interpreted the idea of the Sign in my own work, updated to fit a Peircean *triadic* semiotic model. In Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, Trans. Wade Baskin, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966), p. 11, and Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics: the Basics*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), p. 14.

*Polycorporeal Sign model* [Table 9] that articulates the semiotic capacity of the PDPG as a form of quantifiable or translatable data.

## **[6.5] DISCUSSION**

**Interpretations**—Based on the material data generated I was able to demonstrate that paint(ing) functions as a form of deconstructable and translatable data, falling into the respective categories of Quantification and Transmission. The results of my investigations show what I have termed as Polycorporeality is defined by:

- Its morphological construct (i.e., pigment on canvas).
- As units of information (i.e., a deconstructible data set).
- Its context (i.e., any medium that assumes the discourses associated with painting).
- Its process (i.e., a set of actionable parameters that constitute the act of painting).
- Its translative capacity (i.e., an image, form, or concept that is transmittable via more than one mode of analogue and digital reception).

Contextually, this definition of polycorporeal painting arises by using Heidegger's concept of material causalities. Specifically, I unify this idea with McLuhan's perception of transmittable media that changes the scale, pace, and pattern of human perception.<sup>348</sup> Crucially, the conceptual strategies employed by Kosuth and Kawara framed the polymorphic capacity of the works I produced, conceptually updated to fit the PDPG. Key to this investigation was the use of the URL. Within the material data generated, the URL demonstrated that the physical surface topography of the painting functioned as a form of interface. As a result, the morphological structure of a painting is only a part, or conduit, for a wider translative capacity of the painted gesture. As such, the surface of a painting is divisible into both quantifiable and transmittable data. This concept aligns with Openshaw's assertion that to access a networked digital experience an interface is required,<sup>349</sup> albeit transcribed to fit a painterly discourse. Fundamentally, information needs a medium to travel through to be properly disseminated and assimilated; I demonstrate that paint(ing) flexibly accommodates this phenomenon in both quantifiable and translative capacities.

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<sup>348</sup> McLuhan, p. 7.

<sup>349</sup> Openshaw, p. 6.

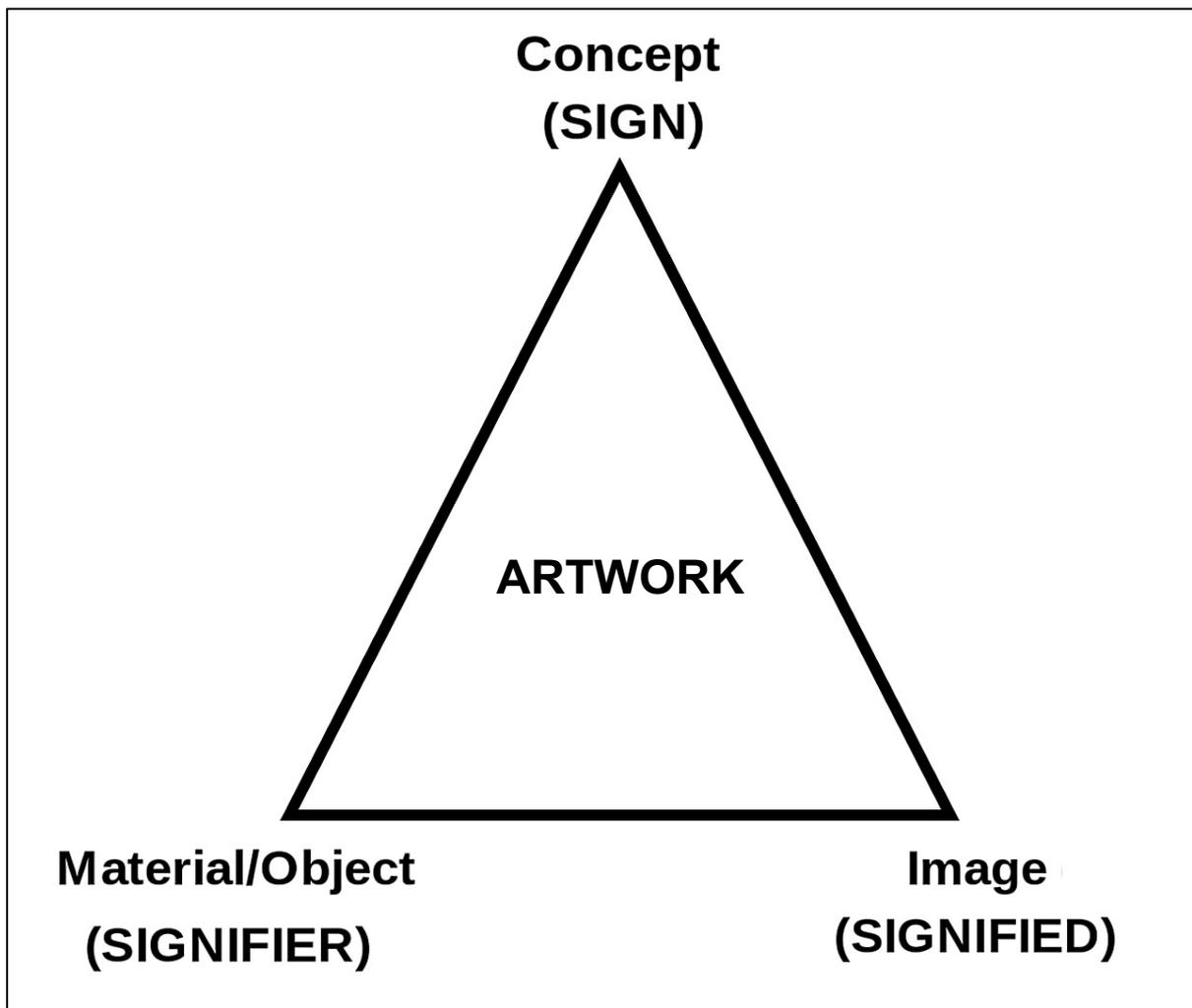


Table 9: *Polycorporeal Sign Model.*

**Implications**—Through establishing Polycorporeality, I have challenged the traditionally static binary definitions of medium and Media. By bridging the corporeality of the artefact with the networked, transmittable capacity inherent to new media art, I have demonstrated the boundaries between image and object are blurring, as such, challenging the notion that medium and Media act as distinct entities, as espoused by commentators such as Paul and Quaranta. It is important to note, however, I do not claim that medium and Media are not, at times, distinct, as has been historically prominent. However, with the rise of post-digital fabrication methods of painting, these entities are becoming increasingly indivisible. To univocally suggest their separation, as commentators such as Paul have, is an incorrect assertion. As Bridle rightfully attests, we currently do not have a language to describe the gradual amalgamation of analogue and digital.<sup>350</sup> Substantiated by his proposition of a New Aesthetic, Bridle’s observations, coupled with my proposal of Polycorporeality, position the emergence of a visual language that fuses the analogue and digital capacities of medium and Media. Specifically, situating paint(ing) as a mode of communication in a digital environment, and the capacity of Media to shape and frame the discourses of its time;<sup>351</sup> therefore, my findings corroborate and expand upon my contextual analysis of Lilleker and McLuhan.

**Limitations**—Ostensibly, my assertion that paint(ing) can be reduced to data may be confused with Bense and Moles’ reductive Information Aesthetics schema. However, in opposition to their claims I propose painting functions as a form of quantifiable and transmittable data, as opposed to an unanswerable aesthetic equation based on arbitrary mathematical intervention that does not account for the subjectivity of expression. Therefore, painting operating as *quantifiable data* instead of an *equation* is an important distinction. A further potential limitation occurs via the use of the URL itself. The use of URLs and compressed hyperlinks are indispensable tenets that support my research. However, notional critique arises in relation to the proposed transparency of such surface content. The engagement of a URL demands the accessibility of online space, that cannot be accessed without the technical means to do so. Moreover, such an opaque means of mediated gestural presentation has the potential to direct the viewer to a body of information, or artwork, they may not necessarily want to access or engage with. Moreover, the implied invitation to

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<sup>350</sup> Bridle, ‘A New Aesthetic for the Digital Age.’

<sup>351</sup> Lilleker, p. 117.

interact may go unnoticed, or the required exchange of effort between spectator and artwork may prove too trivial, as a result diminishing the conceptual purpose of the URL.

## **[6.6] CONCLUSION**

Using my Taxonomy of Digital Factures as a basis, this chapter has delineated the specific translative capacity of the PDPG, describing how it has the potential to act as an enhanced unit of information resulting from digital and technological intervention. Consequently, I have addressed the following thesis sub-question within this chapter: *What are the manifestations of paint(ing) as a form of deconstructable and translatable data?* As a resolution to this question, the URL became a pivotal way to bridge the gap between archaic distinctions of medium and Media. By working through a materially driven, practice-based approach to research, I empirically investigated the properties of medium and Media, their interrelationships, and differences, to assess the potency of facture as data. By historically situating the painted gesture as a form of deconstructable data, and its heightened status of such via exposure to digital technologies, I have argued that this positions the PDPG as a translatable entity. Dispelling any potential conflation my proposal may share with the reductionist, schematic approach of the short-lived Information Aesthetics movement, I was able to deconstruct my findings into two categories: Quantification and Transmission. These terms have situated the PDPG as a quantifiable unit of morphological data, and as a polymorphic structure capable of exploiting the capacity of new media with which to widen its potential for reception. These findings ultimately led to the synthesis of the term Polycorporeality that proposes a semiotic, translative capacity of the PDPG. However, this concept can be explored further still due to the simulated morphologies I encountered during my material explorations. Resulting from the coalescence of medium and Media in my *Simulacra* series Prototypes, a form of haptic dissonance emerged between the materials and processes used in my work's construction. As such, an uncanny quality became manifest within the works I produced. These simulated, skeuomorphic corporealities arise as mediated forms of PDPG, that can shed further light on the role of medium and Media's amalgamation. Accordingly, this has the potential to consolidate the translative capacity of post-digital painting, and as such demand's further clarification.

# CHAPTER 7

## TRANSLATIVE ENTITIES

### [7.1] INTRODUCTION

Extending the findings of Chapters 5 and 6, the following investigation analyses the translative phenomena apparent within the material data generated as part of my studio research. This research emerges from the convergence of three studio projects: *Imma Gram* (2019–2021) [PF. 16–26], *Developments* (2019–2021) [PF. 27–52] and *Interpolations* (2020–2021) [PF. 53–74]. This data is analysed in relation to wider critical positions to contextualise my findings. Specifically, I explore the following sub-question within this chapter: *How is Translation defined and manifest in relation to post-digital painting?* To answer this, I have structured my investigation into four distinct research strands:

***Simulacrum as Mediation***—This investigation explores the concept of simulacra as a mode of translation within post-digital painting, through an investigation into computer-generated human avatars as a subject matter for my painterly Prototypes. Specifically, I consider a digital fashion model and social media influencer known as *Imma*. From this, I investigate postmodern themes of simulation, hyperreality, appropriation, and elements of posthumanism in relation to contemporary painting, by practically exploring in greater depth qualitative artist trend data generated in Chapter 5. I exemplify the function of these trends as core formal dynamics of the PDPG, resonating with my contextual findings of Post-digital Appropriation postulated in Chapter 3. I also consider the latent presence of the artist by employing to a greater degree

the use of mechanised means in the production of my Prototypes. As such, I explore material and processual translation highlighting an anthropomorphically projected strategy of making.

***Skeuomorphism as a Post-digital Mode***—Within my piece *Multiples*, there was a prominence of what I perceived as skeuomorphic tendencies resulting from translated and mediated paint gestures, present in the manufactured and replicated surfaces I constructed. However, I did not fully explore the idea of material surrogacy as a means of gestural data transfer as part of this work. Within this chapter, I chart the shift from skeuomorphism residing not just within material, but to that of the gesture itself, translated via digital interpretations. As part of this investigation, I create surfaces and factures that adopt non-functional aesthetic features inherent to their original morphology through translating visual data. Moreover, I analyse wider critical positions that situate skeuomorphism as a valid post-digital painting modality.

***Interpolations***—By limiting myself to the use of a computer to create painterly artefacts, I investigate the nature of mass media image dissemination as a valid mode of painting production. Continuing my investigation into the nature of Post-digital Appropriation, and the phenomenon of the image as a dominant digital force in contemporary culture, I create works that relinquish the confines of materiality and tactility, to further destabilise the medium/Media dichotomy I have identified. Specifically, I explore the networked, re-mediated qualities the PDPG can assume, by enhancing my findings of painting as a sign-based construct free from conventional systems of medium attribution.

***The Hyperfacture***—This section studies the Digital Factures *Altercorporeality*, *Polycorporeality*, and *Hypercorporeality*. Key to these Digital Factures is the polymorphic capabilities they have, that broadcasts painterly data from one format into another. As a group of painterly entities, the Hyperfacture consolidates the position of painting's translative status within the post-digital, as the ultimate amalgamation of medium and Media. The Hyperfacture synthesises my accumulated practical research through its pairing with existing theories, most notably the artist's Seth Price, Artie Vierkant, and Oliver Laric's respective concepts of *Dispersion*, *Image Objects*, and *Versions*, as well as the writer and architect Stephen Perrella's *Hypersurface* theory. These ideas are aligned with Bourriaud's usage of the term *Hypertext*, as well as the semiotic nature of the PDPG recognised within the Polycorporeal Sign Model positioned in Chapter 6.

## **[7.2] SIMULACRUM AS MEDIATION**

A strong cultural fascination with the posthuman persists in contemporary society. This has taken root in several forms of media including film, television, computer games, and social media. Inevitably, this mainstream interest has percolated into varying forms of painting practice that explore manifestations of Process, Content, Morphology, and Interaction.<sup>352</sup> Examples of those redefining the human experience in relation to painting and technology include the colour-blind artist and self-proclaimed “cyborg” Neil Harbisson, who has implanted sensors within his brain that allow him to “hear” colour. Another example includes the painter Emma Stern, who concerns her practice with the highly contemporary subject of digital avatars and virtual selves. Playing with the dichotomy of traditional painting strategies and the use of 3D-modelling software to create her compositions, Stern renders hyperreal femme-fatales that are evocative of the posthumanist philosopher Donna Haraway’s concept of the cyborg as a transgressive feminist symbol.<sup>353</sup> Moreover, the multidisciplinary artist Sougwen Chung uses machine automation and artificial intelligence to interrogate the qualities of human and machine-led mark-making [Fig. 73].

Employed by most post-digital painters, the interrogation of cultural entities congruent with postproduction as a formal trend acts as a globalised, digitally engaged continuation of postmodern appropriation tactics. Consequently, the potency of the simulacra remains within a digitally embedded culture. Corresponding with the notion of Post-digital Appropriation posited in Chapter 3, an evolution of appropriation and simulated forms has manifested in the work of the post-digitally engaged artist, becoming a form of painterly translation. Within my research, this phenomenon is prevalent in the use of Imma [PF. 16–18]. I find Imma fascinating as subject matter, as she exists as a mediated computer-generated digital entity (of which there are innumerable online examples of); within the context of my painting practice she is employed as a “digital found image.” For me, Imma as a simulacrum is compounded further via the discourse of painting, as a hybridised quotation of a digital surface. A summation of Imma’s

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<sup>352</sup> Historically within painting posthumanism has emerged, defining itself as an extension of, and ultimately an antithesis to, humanist art practices as present within the Renaissance (for example, early movements to pioneer posthuman aspects included in Futurism). However, for the sake of my enquiry I shall focus on contemporary practitioners who embody post-digital themes.

<sup>353</sup> Specifically, the cyborg as a female ‘lived experience’ that is ‘*oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence.*’ Donna Haraway, ‘A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century’, in *The Cybercultures Reader*, eds. David Bell and Barbara M. Kennedy, (London: Routledge, 2000), (291–324), pp. 291 - 292.

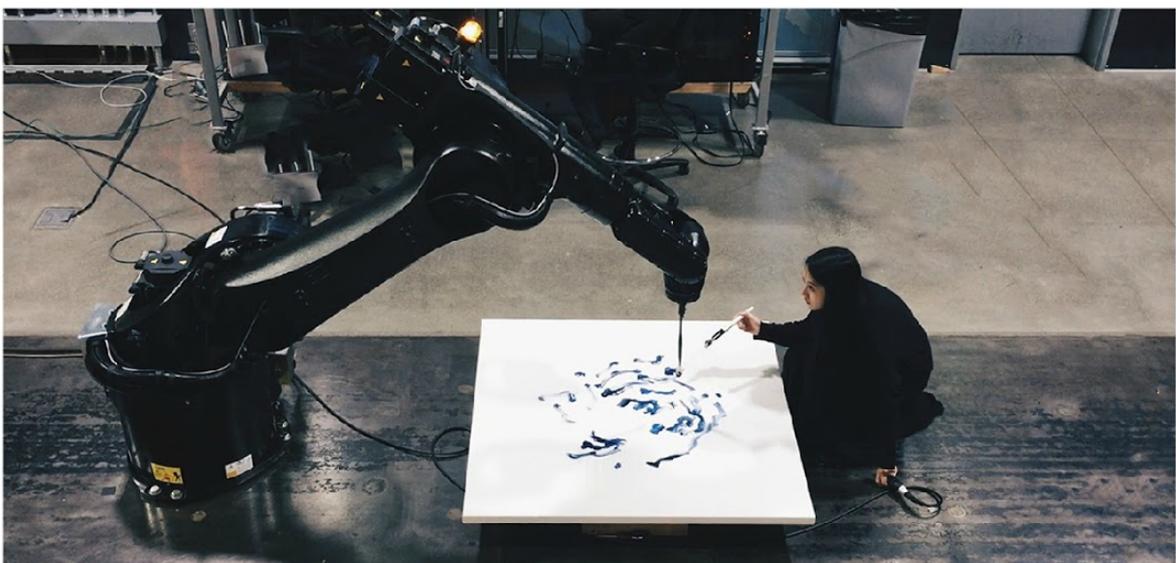


Figure 73: *Posthumanist Practices in Painting.*

translative status is comparable to the philosopher Rosi Braidotti's analysis of the destabilised, late postmodern human:

- ... in the historical era of advanced postmodernity, the very notion of 'the human' is not only destabilized by technologically mediated social relations in a globally connected world, but it is also thrown open to contradictory redefinitions of what exactly counts as human.<sup>354</sup>

Consequently, Imma is a loaded post-photographic image, that exemplifies a hyperreal<sup>355</sup> original copy of humanity. She reflects the saturation of social media's presence within post-digitality, acting as a signifier of the digital image age that rearticulates the formal image tactics of the postmodernity it proceeds. This postmodern mode of image interpretation applies to a culturally saturated altermodern discourse of postproduction, within which Imma exists. Specifically, in a state analogised by Bourriaud as the '*DJ and the programmer*'<sup>356</sup> as a blurred notion of originality and creation in the information age. Accordingly, postproduction, as an entity within an altermodern discourse emerges from a postmodern formal lexicon. Following such modes of hyperreality and appropriation, the writer Beth Coleman defines these exchanges between the virtual and the real as '*X-reality*.'<sup>357</sup> She argues that the avatar's role is to aid in the agency of pervasive, networked media, contextualised by a world that is a diversity of neither virtual nor real, but a networked aggregate of mixed realities.<sup>358</sup> Specifically, she attests: '*I mean not only the animated figures moving across the screen but also the gestalt of images, text and multimedia that make up our identities as networked subjects*.'<sup>359</sup> Artists have taken notice of networked X-reality technologies, emulating the digital sheen of its aesthetic or reflecting upon the themes (specifically the use of avatars) inherent to it. A few notable examples include Stern, Pieter Schoolwerth, Gao Hang, and Rute Merk [Figs. 74–77].

Translating these concepts into my practice, and aware of Graw's proposition of anthropomorphic projection, I have used the image of Imma as a substrate to apply gestural affect. Taking both the subject matter of gesture and Imma out of their respective analogue

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<sup>354</sup> Rosi Braidotti, 'Posthuman, All Too Human: Towards a New Process Ontology', in *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 23 (7–8), (SAGE, London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi, 2006), (197–208), p. 197.

<sup>355</sup> Specifically, the notion of *Simulation* postulated by Baudrillard, wherein hyperreality blurs the distinction between objects and their representations, as a "simulation of something that never really existed." This can alternatively be distinguished as a copy with no original. Baudrillard, p. 1.

<sup>356</sup> Bourriaud, *Postproduction, Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World*, p. 13.

<sup>357</sup> Beth Coleman, *Hello Avatar: Rise of the Networked Generation*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2011), p. 3.

<sup>358</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 3 - 4.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 3 - 4.



Figure 74: Emma Stern. **Gabbi + Susan**. 2020. Oil on canvas. 182.8 x 152.4 cm. Collection: Private collection.



Figure 75: Pieter Schoolwerth. **Shifted Sims #13 (Covid-19 Expansion Pack)**. 2020. Oil, acrylic, and inkjet on canvas. 228.6 x 304.8 cm. Collection: Private collection.



Figure 76: Gao Hang. **Conversation**. 2020. Acrylic on canvas. 101.6 x 76.2 cm. Collection: Private collection.

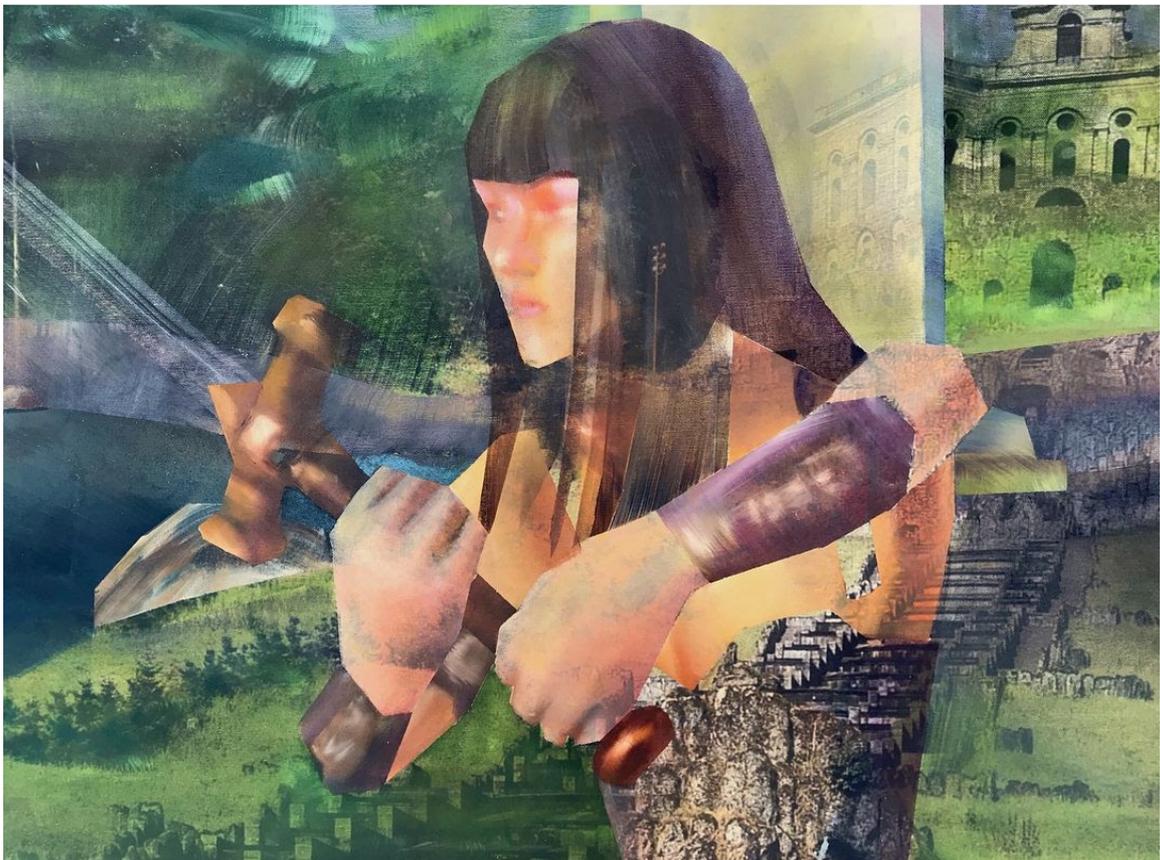


Figure 77: Rute Merk. **Xena & Hercules**. 2018. Oil on inkjet print canvas. 118 x 158 cm. Collection: Private collection.

and digital contexts, I have converged them into mediated, yet tangible post-digital artefacts. My *Imma Gram* works are physical analogues of digital mock-ups, functioning as a series of mixed media painting Prototypes. These investigations reflect screen and post-photographic image culture, as well as post-digitally expanded perceptions of painting, its reception, modes of dissemination, and changing formal structures. Ultimately, I created physical manifestations of the Photoshop work surface I used to edit my images, commonly employing a mechanical means of construction, relying on software due to the myriad forms of manipulation it shares with painting.<sup>360</sup> My altermodern-situated digital collage process indirectly reaffirmed its postmodern predecessor, albeit updated to suit a post-digital narrative.<sup>361</sup> Stemming from this process, the works act as a mode of screen mimesis, to bring an analogue physicality to digital entities, as well as a digital presence of an analogue entity. Accordingly, collage has become a common formal rearticulation within post-digitality.<sup>362</sup> My fascination with this machine-like, digitally manipulated quality of painting, led to my studies of Imma assuming a blurred surface quality, directly inspired by the artist Gerhard Richter's technologically aware "blurred" working process. Specifically, when he states of this visual tactic:

- I blur things to make everything equally important and equally unimportant. I blur things so that they do not look artistic or craftsmanlike but technological, smooth and perfect. I blur things to make all the parts a closer fit. Perhaps I also blur out the excess of unimportant information.<sup>363</sup>

By emulating Richter, I aimed to position a critical distance between material and subject matter, as well as adding a distance between myself and the "brushwork", creating an impersonal levelling effect. Resulting from this digital and mechanically referent collaged process, my work adopted elements of Constructivist forms. Roberts, when writing about Dada and Constructivist practitioners, states: *[they] all saw themselves, essentially, as artistic constructors and fabricators.*<sup>364</sup> My painting strategies update this narrative, following a

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<sup>360</sup> The writer Gina Nicole Giotta attests to this phenomenon accordingly: *'The digital image—by virtue of its relatively fast and easy manipulability—therefore shares more in common with the painterly arts than it does the mechanical arts. That is to say, although it looks like a conventional photograph, the digital image is effectively a postmodern painting, always and already open to revision.'* Gina Nicole Giotta, *Disappeared: Erasure in the Age of Mechanical Writing*, PhD (Doctor of Philosophy) thesis, (University of Iowa, 2011), p. 26.

<sup>361</sup> The sociologist David Lyon has attested that *'Collage becomes the postmodern style.'* David Lyon, *Postmodernity*, (Buckingham, Open University Press, 1994), p. 14.

<sup>362</sup> This is proven in the artist survey research carried out in Chapter 5.

<sup>363</sup> Gerhard Richter, Dietmar Elger & Hans Ulrich Obrist, *Gerhard Richter: Text: Writings, Interviews and Letters 1961-2007*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), p. 33.

<sup>364</sup> Roberts, p. 9.

postmodern, and ultimately altermodern thematic mode of construction.<sup>365</sup> Supporting this idea, the prominent Dada artist Raoul Hausmann attested: *'We call this process photomontage because it embodied our refusal to play the role of artist. We regarded ourselves as engineers, and our work as construction: we assembled [in French: monteur] our work, like a fitter.'*<sup>366</sup> By working in this way, I apply gestural affect by becoming a “monteur” of painting methods, in a way circumventing the traditional “role of [the] artist.” Furthermore, in the same Pop manner as Warhol, by repeating an image, I drew attention to the mechanical fabrication methods utilised. A close comparison can be made between my *Imma Gram* series and Warhol's repetition of forms, such as Marilyn Monroe or Campbell's Soup tins; this mode of working aligns with the concept of Post-digital Appropriation identified in Chapter 3. Accordingly, general observations I have made from the Imma Prototypes include an understanding that my work emerges from Pop and Constructivist positions, rearticulated within a postproduced form of practice, as an engineered mode of gestural application. Consequently, I have concluded that one does not need (to) paint to fabricate a painting. Therefore, a painting emerges from a sequence of prosthetic gestures; prosthesis on these terms operates as any process that enables the artist to apply gestural affect via anthropomorphic projection.

### **[7.3] SKEUOMORPHISM AS A POST-DIGITAL MODE**

By (re)producing painted gestures through technologically engaged processes I noted that post-digital painting is tethered to the gestural aesthetics of the past. This includes readily identifiable painting attributes such as abstraction and representation, as well as a plethora of traditional techniques. However, these historical gestural tendencies are frequently filtered through technological mimesis. I recognised this within my work, in particular the uncanny brushstrokes within my *Imma Gram* studies. This gestural modality applied to a broader formal investigation relating to digitally translated painting: *skeuomorphism*. Defined as a derivative object that retains non-functional ornamental attributes from structures inherent to the original,<sup>367</sup> translation is an intrinsic feature of skeuomorphism. Consequently, it shares a relationship with the simulacrum. I adopted this concept from a conference paper entitled *The*

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<sup>365</sup> Roberts goes on to state of this development within postmodern practice: *'The postgendered monteur was now merely an ensemble of techniques, functions and competences. In the 1980s much critical art and much art theory under the banners of postmodernism and post-structuralism was produced within this framework.'* Roberts, p. 9.

<sup>366</sup> Note within the text: Raoul Hausmann, quoted in Hans Richter, *Dada: Art and Anti-Art*, (Thames and Hudson, London, 1997), p. 118.

<sup>367</sup> George Basalla, *The Evolution of Technology*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988) p. 107.

*Floating Squiggle: Skeuomorphic Space and Post-Internet Painting* (2019) delivered by the artist and academic Emily Sparkes at the *PhotographyDigitalPainting Symposium* in October 2019. Sparkes applies the features of skeuomorphism to a post-digital gestural phenomenon I refer to as “Drop Shadowing” within my Digital Fracture Taxonomy. However, she refers to this as the ‘floating squiggle’<sup>368</sup> due to the squiggled, linear appearance the gesture adopts, that hovers in an illusionary way above the surface of the canvas. As part of her analysis, Sparkes traces the history of this phenomenon from the Abstract Illusionist practices of Michael B. Gallagher and James Havard. Specifically, how the drop shadowed, *trompe l’oeil* effect of their gestural investigations evolved to reflect a digital painting language, sharing a relationship to computer-drawn marks. It was Sparkes’ keen insights into the skeuomorphic nature of this post-digital gestural trend that inspired my fascination with the term. Using Sparkes’ proposition as a basis, I expand on the concept of skeuomorphism to include gestural surface content and morphology that is not exclusive to the “floating squiggle”, but rather skeuomorphism as an intrinsic and translative component of certain aspects of the PDPG.

Relating this to my practical investigations (present within my *Imma Gram* and *Developments* works), I observed that by replicating a brushstroke and displaying this with another copy of the same gesture, I created an impossible form of direct imitation. This process hinted at a technological form of intervention in the construction of the painting that is initially apparent in my piece *Image Feed* (2020) [PF. 20]. The translation process in some cases removed the visual data only slightly from its original context, thus creating a form of gestural dissonance: this is evident to some degree in the 3D-printed brushstrokes I manufactured and applied to my painted surfaces. These simulated works adopted a skeuomorphic premise as the gestures retained non-functional morphological properties of their original, analogue selves, translated via technological intervention. Moreover, I explored the concept of cropping, dissecting, staggering, and fragmenting these 3D-printed paint gestures even further with my quadtych *Glitchy Paint (Fruit Bowl)* (2021) [PF. 50]. This work considered synthetic, optically glitched ideas of the painted gesture resulting from technological intervention (in this case the application of 3D-printed brushstrokes as an analogue for oil paint). Specifically, the uncanny quality of simulated brushwork, that calls into question notions of authenticity and the role of the simulacrum as a signifier of process. These works shared an opticality with Abstract

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<sup>368</sup> Emily Sparkes, ‘The Floating Squiggle: Skeuomorphic Space and Post-Internet Painting’, in *PhotographyDigitalPainting: Expanding Medium Interconnectivity in Contemporary Visual Arts Practice*, ed., Carl Robinson, (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, UK, 2020), (145–166), p. 154.

Expressionist painting, yet defied the formally reductive dogma of such, through the network of processes used in the arrival of the outcome. Overall, my *Developments* series resonated strongly with an observation made by the communication studies professor John Culkin, who, in reference to McLuhan's perception of technology stated: 'We shape our tools, and thereafter our tools shape us.'<sup>369</sup> The new tools (technologies) I used influenced (and were fundamental to) the construction of the *Developments* painting Prototypes. Specifically, in relation to the fabrication of painterly gestures that would not have been possible without the digital and mechanical technologies that created them. Therefore, the inherent structure of tools and their application(s) can influence how we make, ultimately shaping the aesthetic of a final object. Heidegger notes this phenomenon as a 'revealing' / 'bringing-forth'<sup>370</sup> of form through the means of manufacture (the 'causa efficiens')<sup>371</sup> that ultimately 'determines the manner of its [the objects] construction.'<sup>372</sup> Following this idea, the literal mobility of my painted gestures quoted the formal vocabulary of processes such as collage and digital software editing, insofar as these gestures could be placed and replaced according to compositional needs, in a mechanical method of gestural application. Thus, technology becomes a painterly form unto itself, via layers of processual simulacra—in the instance of my *Glitchy Paint* Prototype, a digital photograph of an original brushstroke was used to create a 3D-print that was then moulded and cast in resin, and then spray painted and applied to an analogue substrate. As such, by approaching expanded painting via material and processual simulacra, the work became a signifier for the technology that created it, which is where the critical context (reading) of the object lies; 'the medium is the message,'<sup>373</sup> as McLuhan would attest. Consequently, post-digital painterly skeuomorphism emerges from blurring the distinctions between medium and Media, through the IMTD modes of painting within my practice.<sup>374</sup>

Following these practical investigations, my research into the post-digital painting community has highlighted a tendency for skeuomorphic modalities. Prominent examples of simulated gestural affect are present in the work of artists Zurita, Stone, Ford, and Gerald [see Figs. 2, 5, 6 & 7], to mention but a few. These practitioners take either the analogue or the digital

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<sup>369</sup> Culkin, p. 70.

<sup>370</sup> Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', p. 13.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>373</sup> McLuhan, p. 7.

<sup>374</sup> Examples of these skeuomorphic gestures have arisen in my work via the following means: textile printing, 3D-printing, moulding and casting, and laser cutting.

painted gesture and replicate it through its opposite (for example, a digitally created gesture is manifest in analogue paint, such as in the work of Gerald, or, in the case of Stone, an analogue gesture rearticulates to fulfil a digital capacity). Consequently, I noted that the skeuomorphic PDPG exists in two ways: a *simulation of forms* (the simulated representation of a gesture) and a *simulation of materials* (addressing the features of one material with another). This form of mimetic painting follows the legacy of artists engaged with material surrogacy, usually as a means of visual deception or expanded painting application. Notable examples include Jim Cheadle, Allan McCollum, and Piers Secunda [Fig. 78] who have simulated the appearance of painted gestures with another material, or who use paint in ways that mimic other substances. In an expansion of this method, post-digital artisans have taken this meta-awareness of material to a new level. Two exceptional examples include Stone [Fig. 79], who *simulates forms* associated with the painted gesture through digital manipulation and textile printing, and engineer Tim Zaman [Fig. 80], whose work *simulates the material* of paint using 3D-printing.

With the rise of readily accessible technologies such as 3D-printers, commercial printing, textile printing, and laser cutting machines, mimetic gestures and materials appear commonly; these developments in technology, alongside my theoretical investigations of Culkin, McLuhan, and Heidegger, exemplify what I term as *Digital Plasticism*. I define this as the aesthetic embedded in the opticality of a painting that distinctly presents technological and digital fabrication methods utilised in its construction [PF. 40 & 41].<sup>375</sup> By replicating, rescaling, transmediatising, and fragmenting painted gestures using a variety of technologies in my material investigations, I presented an uncanny, surrogate form of gestural translation, creating an optical dissonance that alluded to a mediated form of facture [PF. 21–24, 42, 43, 50 & 51]. Consequently, the original, analogue paint gesture became an initial interface for the potential of painting to occupy a technological network. This term extends to practitioners within the field at large, such as Stone, Marcaccio [see Fig. 31], and Guyton [see Figs. 26 & 72] whose digital and technological painting processes are implicit in the outcome of the works they produce. My preoccupation with technological means led me to approach the painted gesture from a purely digital and image-based perspective: this became manifest in my *Interpolations* series.

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<sup>375</sup> Within these portfolio works I draw specific attention to the digital and technological process (or, *causa efficiens*) within the subsequent analogue object created.

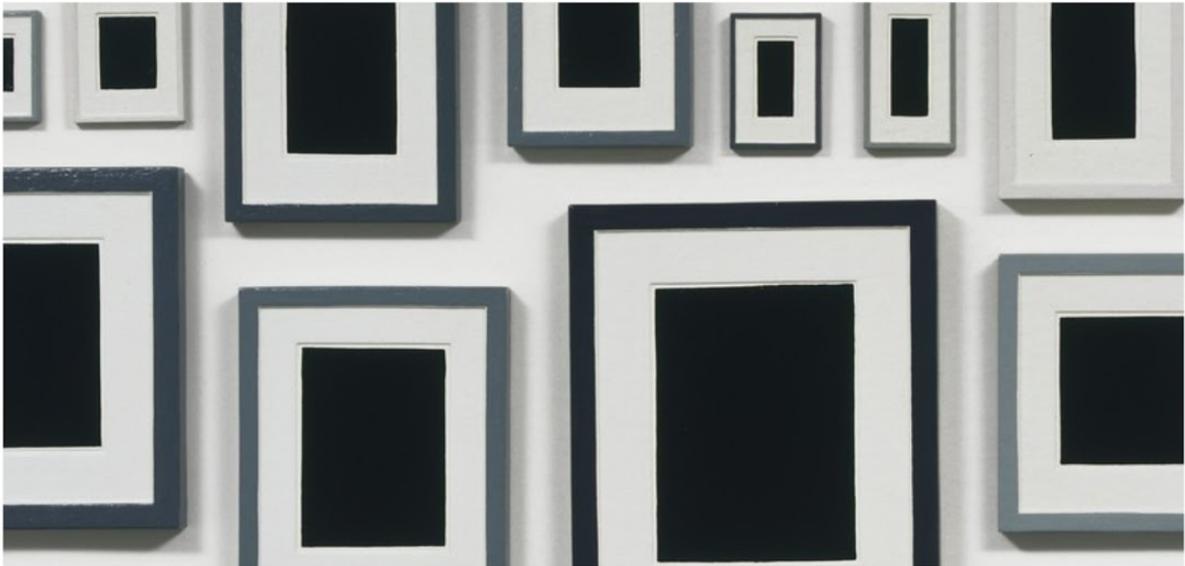


Figure 78: *Material Mimesis in Painting.*



Figure 79: **Example of a Simulation of Forms.** Matthew Stone. **Formality Vortex.** (Detail). 2015. Digital Print and acrylic on linen. 122 x 183 cm. Collection: Private collection.

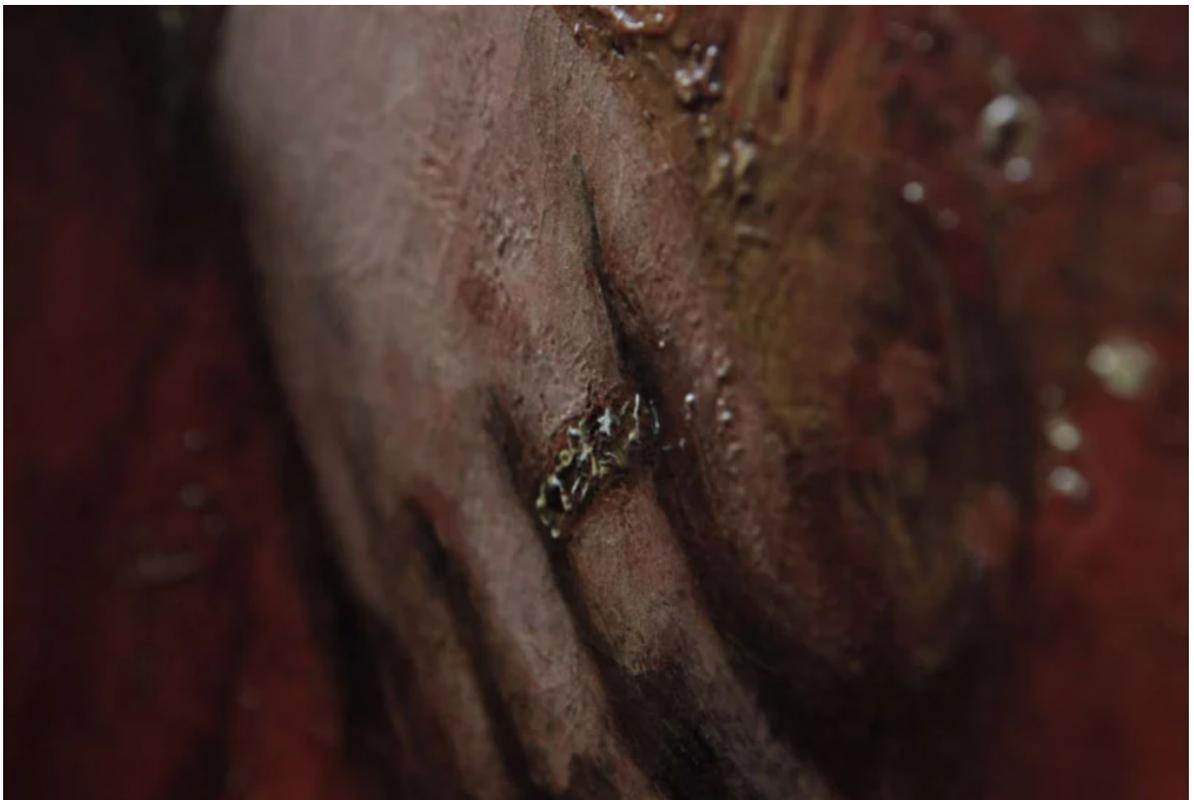


Figure 80: **Example of a Simulation of Materials.** Tim Zaman. **3D-Print Reproduction of Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn's "The Jewish Bride."** (Detail). 2013. 3D-print. 122 x 166 cm. Collection: Private collection.

## **[7.4] INTERPOLATIONS**

The primary concern with my *Interpolations* [PF. 53–74] was how I could dispense with tactility and materiality entirely: something my previous works had not done. Taking my investigations beyond the archaic concerns of pigment, binder, and ground even further, I combined this with the Digital Façade data I had accrued (in this instance the Digital Façade “Interpolation”). I began to focus purely on the signs and symbols related to painting in a digital media context. As such, in opposition to the neutral status I had ascribed to the image in my initial material investigations within my *Simulacra* series, the emphasis of compositional content became important. As I delved further into the nature of post-photographic imagery, my use of the image developed beyond a purely formal, controlled material environment. Instead, my use of aggregated, online imagery, and the randomised, busy compositions of my *Interpolations* works reflected my growing interest in the networked image as a post-digital translative entity. Using software, I employed image editing functions such as overlaying, filtering, cropping, and interpolation as a mode of digital collage that updates postmodern concepts of image appropriation to reflect a post-digital painting discourse; a *cadavre exquis* of disparate imagery. The same fundamental vocabulary of image manipulation used by the Pictures Generation of 1970s America, that included artists such as Cindy Sherman, Richard Prince, Barbara Kruger, and Sherrie Levine, is woven into, and updated, within a post-digital proliferation of painting strategies. Specific formal motifs that are shared include the dissolution between original and copy, appropriation of imagery, and an acute awareness of mass media.<sup>376</sup> This way of working fit the prototypical nature of my previous painting practices, as I was able to quickly arrange, edit, and modify compositions; my *Interpolations* became a way to separate image from object in the construction of my paintings. By using the computer as a tool in the production of these works, I was governed by the conventions of the software I was using. Through implementation of digital technologies as an extension of the painting process, I was still influenced by the protocols of paint(ing), albeit within a different medium. My *Interpolations* series, therefore, addresses the role of the digital image in relation to the PDPG as a form of gestural postproduction. Synonymous with prominent thematic post-digital art trends, the images I have montaged are banal, subversive, humorous, and transgressive. Much like my

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<sup>376</sup> This creative process finds its roots in the work of philosopher Roland Barthes’ 1967 essay *Death of the Author*, whereby a text or image does not emit any singular fixed meaning, but rather is ‘a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture.’ Roland Barthes, ‘The Death of the Author’, in *Image, Music, Text*, (London: Fontana, 1977), (142–149), p. 146.

works *Multiples* and *Image Feed* that were respectively shaped to mirror the dimensions of a touch screen tablet and an Instagram photograph grid, my *Interpolations* were scaled to mimic the dimensions of a mobile phone screen. Again, this functioned as a subtle allusion to a techno-opticality, as well as a mode of easy image viewing access when experienced across varying platforms and devices. Primarily divided into what I call “Threes” and “Fours” (which refers to the triptych and quadtych layout of the panels used in the construction of the compositions), I mirrored the process I used to visually log the Digital Factures I identified in the field of post-digital painting [see Figs. 37–66]. As such, what at first was a mere research strategy for conveying research findings, developed into a form of practice. Following my Theoretical Framework findings in Chapter 4, when constructing my *Interpolations*, I considered the concept of *medium* (how something is made) and *Media* (how something is represented/disseminated) and how these could initially operate as separate entities. I began with the concept of image then worried about the medium and Media through which the image would manifest after the fact; instead, fundamental painting disciplines such as composition took precedence. Consequently, the *Interpolations* reflect the seemingly random, dislocated nature of online information overload associated with screen culture. Moreover, the images I used became an aggregate of found images from the Internet (such as memes), and appropriations of well-known existing artworks, as well as reproductions of my own artwork and previous research. By appropriating images in such a way, a bastardised amalgamation of many visual styles and narratives emerged, ranging from the conventions of European painting to screen grabs of social media comment sections. The resulting compositions are united by a seemingly overwhelming disparity that echoed the continually conflated and often untameable expansion of online image data. Within my research, these images are passive stand-ins that reflect the fast paced, surface level lack of affect (by which I mean the expressive, emotive, or intellectual response from a viewer) within contemporary digital image culture. As such, my levelling of the image experience does not aim to impose a visual hierarchy. Rather, in the same manner as my *Imma Gram* series, it is not what the images objectively *are* in an individual sense, it is about what they subjectively *represent* in a wider cultural context. Consequently, a depiction of a female buttocks shares an equal footing with the cartoon character SpongeBob SquarePants, or a reproduction of a Michelangelo painting [PF. 57]. Furthermore, these works explore in greater detail the phenomenon of Post-digital Appropriation, as a technologically updated redux of postmodern, Pop tropes. Since its Pop inception to today’s image saturated, Internet culture, a mass media, image aware, montaged

trend can be traced throughout painting. Such examples that have shaped the direction of my work include the Pop artists James Rosenquist, Paolozzi, and Hamilton, as well as the Proto-Pop, Neo-Dada efforts of Robert Rauschenberg. Further influential to my work, later employers of these styles include the Neo-expressionist David Salle, and contemporary, post-digital painter Canyon Castator [Fig. 81].

Within my *Interpolations* series I continued to employ my use of the URL as a form of hyperlink that diffuses the analogue and digital experience of the painted gesture. Whilst purely digital, these works had the potential to manifest in any medium or Media I chose due to their image based networked capacity, thus closing the gap between the medium/Media dichotomy I perceived. Ultimately, I disseminated these works via social media sites such as Instagram, with my new painting process embracing the “confines” of a purely digital landscape [PF. 53]. This mode of production exemplified how traditional preconceptions of the analogue and the digital painted image dissolve through their amalgamation. Ironically, by stepping away from all that could be considered painterly, I was able to empirically present a direct fusing of medium and Media as a form of painting. The art critic Leo Steinberg lends surprising context to how my *Interpolations* works achieve painterly validity within a digital environment. In his landmark 1972 essay *Reflections on the State of Criticism*, Steinberg proposes an influential formal expansion of painting:

- The flatbed picture plane makes its symbolic allusion to hard surfaces such as tabletops, studio floors, charts, bulletin boards—any receptor surface on which objects are scattered, on which data is entered, on which information may be received, printed, impressed—whether coherently or in confusion.<sup>377</sup>

Steinberg’s concept of a Flatbed Picture Plane can be updated to fit painting within a digital economy. However, instead of relegating painting to only “hard surfaces” as Steinberg suggests, his specific phraseology of “any receptor surface... on which data is entered, on which information may be received” proves useful for conceptualising painting as a form of data, and as such a potentially digital entity. This thesis has already shown painting, as a form of data, can be defined in two ways: as either (or a combination of) morphological units of information, and as a transmittable source. The latter definition can be extrapolated to align with how Steinberg embodies the picture plane as a receptor for painterly information.

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<sup>377</sup> Leo Steinberg, ‘Reflections on the State of Criticism’, in *Artforum*, (New York: Artforum, March 1972), (37–49), p. 46.



Figure 81: *Examples of Image Montaging in Painting.*

As exemplified, if painting can function as a form of data, then it can manifest itself as a translative, digital entity. Of course, Steinberg applied his analysis to the material designations that occupied fledgling expanded painting practices in the early 1970s. However, by suggesting that surfaces act as receptors for painterly data, the notion of surface can be extended to encapsulate a digital environment. Specifically, the screen experience becomes a new form of picture plane, due to the flat, often square, or rectangular format of images on social media, that act as carriers of pictorial information. Moreover, the ubiquity of light-based, rectangular screens that these images are viewed upon further engenders the role of the screen as one of painterly locus. Dispensing with analogue expanded painting constructs such as verticality, horizontality, three-dimensionality, materiality, and tangibility, Steinberg's concept of a Flatbed Picture Plane is a useful conceptual starting point for how the PDPG is disseminated and assimilated in a digital economy. Specifically, to extend the parameters of the painted gesture to one that can become entirely bereft of materiality, one that occupies a digital, *flat screen picture plane*.

Image (as a mode of information) is the dominant force that occupies this digitised picture plane. Consequently, we now live in a society where people communicate mostly in images, graphics, symbols, and video.<sup>378</sup> As a result, the power of the image as a translative, networked medium cannot be overstated. The image, therefore, is an indispensable part of the post-digital artisan's toolkit, functioning both as a point of reference and as a medium unto itself. A primary example of the extended network to which contemporary, digital images belong is the image sharing platform Instagram. The cultural critic Virginia Heffernan states of this website:

- The value of Instagram does not inhere in the images, pretty or ugly as you may find them. It's in the deliriously complicated and heady circulation of those digital artifacts. The velocity. The trajectory. The way the ceaseless faster-than-light producing and transmitting, liking, tagging, commenting, and regramming can be leveraged for data mining and advertising in sets of encoded digital relations that make derivative securities look simple.<sup>379</sup>

This assertion of image operating as a distributed, networked, and fast-paced entity is corroborated by the media theorist and art critic Boris Groys:

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<sup>378</sup> Virginia Heffernan, *Magic and Loss: The Internet as Art*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016), p. 55.

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid*, p. 56.

- Digital images have, that is, an ability to originate, to multiply, and to distribute themselves through the open fields of contemporary means of communication, such as the Internet or cell-phone networks, immediately and anonymously, without any curatorial control.<sup>380</sup>

Fundamentally, Heffernan and Groys confirm McLuhan's premonitions of the increased scale, pace, and pattern of humanity's perception in relation to the technologies and media it produces, manifest as the digital image. A more astute observation of this phenomenon is the term "circulationism", that is defined by the new media theorist and artist Hito Steyerl as:

- Circulationism is not about the art of making an image, but of postproducing, launching, and accelerating it. It is about the public relations of images across social networks, about advertisement and alienation, and about being as suavely vacuous as possible.<sup>381</sup>

She continues: *'As the web spills over into a different dimension, image production moves way beyond the confines of specialized fields. It becomes mass postproduction in an age of crowd creativity.'*<sup>382</sup>

This radical re-territorialisation of medium and image resulting from the Internet's intervention is precisely what my *Interpolations* series acts as. Specifically, as an aggregate of disparate imagery, focusing on the potential of the image as a dynamic form of painting that circulates, changes function, accelerates, and is postproduced, defying the binary categorisation of either medium or Media. Taking advantage of the Internet as a *'liquid construct'*<sup>383</sup> that is subject to change, rather than making a "new" or "original" image, the focus of the digitised PDPG becomes less about its content and more about its ability to disseminate through the perpetually shifting topography of an online platform. The writer Orsolya Lia Vető addresses this context of post-digital painting within an image saturated culture:

- One of the fundamental motivations behind post-digital painting is the recognition that the materialization of digital visibility presents us with a valuable source pack of new tactics and upgrades the toolkit of the artist. This entanglement of the analogue and the digital sheds light on the delineated conventions of easel painting and the highly controlled visual logic of the digital sphere.<sup>384</sup>

Here, Vető, mirroring the altermodern, postproduced appraisal of contemporary practices situated by Bourriaud, establishes the fundamental relationship between the analogue and

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<sup>380</sup> Boris Groys, *Art Power*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008), p. 83.

<sup>381</sup> Hito Steyerl, 'Too Much World: Is the Internet Dead?' in *E-Flux Online Journal*, Journal No. 49, November 2013, (E-Flux Online, 2013), in URL: <https://bit.ly/3bFljSH>, accessed 12/01/21.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid.

<sup>383</sup> Németh Szilvi, 'Ok Computer. Great Post-internet Art Summary', in *Artmagazin*, (Artmagazin Online, 2015), in URL: <https://bit.ly/2XHK5iN>, accessed 14/01/21.

<sup>384</sup> Orsolya Lia Vető, 'To Adjust the Default Settings: The Common Zone of Painting and Digitally-Influenced Imagery', Trans. Patrick Nicholas Tayler, in *Új Művészet*, (Új Művészet Online, 2020), in URL: <https://bit.ly/3ieFucU>, accessed 14/01/21.

digital image, as well as describing an emancipation from atavistic painting concerns as a prime modality for contemporary painting.<sup>385</sup> As such, a wealth of online imagery and processes is vital for painterly interpretation within a post-digital setting. Therefore, the (successful) post-digital artisan displays an awareness of the vast pace and perception of online imagery as signs and symbols that structure contemporary culture. However, Vetó also attributes a necessity for the “materialization” of digital visibility. Within the context of Vetó’s writing this term delineates an analogue form of painterly reproduction, although it can be argued that “materialization” can exist as a digital entity. Vetó’s assertion raises a key question when positing painting as a purely digital, image-based phenomenon: *is it really painting?*

In response to this question, if I could use a physical representation of a URL as a link to a digital form of facture, could I not, therefore, use a digitally manifest URL to represent a purely digital form of painting? This process of inversion puts emphasis on the concept of the painted gesture as a dynamic form of image-based gestural translation and as a mode of accessible data, rather than a materially or digitally tethered phenomenon. What functional differentiation was there between the mimetic brushstrokes of a Google Tilt Brush painting (that is widely considered a digital extension of analogue painterly means) from the raw imagery I employed? After all, both entities are composed of pixels, are viewed on a screen, are potentially subject to manifold material replication, and follow the same sign systems and procedures as analogue expanded painting.

Taking these concerns into consideration, within the remit of materially fluid expanded painting, my claims to the authenticity of montaged, edited digital images as a form of paint(ing) would seem to stretch even the borders of expanded definitions. Fundamentally, this contestation comes down to the attribution of aura, or a perceived lack thereof when applied to the re-mediatised digital image. Using Benjamin’s proposition of aura as a formal baseline, through simulation and reproduction, critics still contest a loss of aura for the original; this could be considered a nostalgia for the physical object. This criticism is present in the commentary of art historian Joanna Fiduccia, where she claims: *‘The use of scanners, Photoshop, printers, and above all digital files destabilizes the locus of the work by creating an absence at its*

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<sup>385</sup> Specifically, when Bourriaud states: *‘Let’s face it: artists now have access to information, and they all use the same toolbox, from Stockholm to Bangkok.’* In Ryan & Bourriaud.

origin.<sup>386</sup> By stating this, Fiduccia claims the digital manifestation, or inception, of an artwork is not real, rather it becomes real through physical reproduction; as such, aura is present only through analogue manifestation. This claim contradicts my assertion that the authenticity of painting can reside in a digital image state. In stark contrast to Fiduccia, according to Groys, the data that comprises the digital image legitimises its authenticity<sup>387</sup> as opposed to a copy that ostensibly lacks aura. He even goes as far as to state that authenticity is inherent to all digital images: *‘There is no such thing as a copy. In the world of digitalized images, we are dealing only with originals—only with original presentations of the absent, invisible digital original.’*<sup>388</sup> In essence, Groys proposes aura without object, mirroring Baudrillard’s hyperreality concept, specifically, the copy of the absent original. The image, as disseminated through the Internet as a thingless medium, means authenticity is legitimised sans physical embodiment, via digital production. The work of art, instead of being accepted as a sacred, analogue object has now transitioned into malleable, transitive forms of metaphysical aura through what Groy’s defines as *‘material flow’*<sup>389</sup> (this follows a similar proposal to Deleuze and Guattari’s term “matter flow” explored in Chapter 4, albeit in relation to the image-object and not material ontology exclusively). Speaking about this in relation to the digital image, he states:

- The digitalized images do not exist unless we as users give them a certain ‘here and now’. That means that every digital copy has its own ‘here and now’ – an aura of originality – that a mechanical copy does not have.<sup>390</sup>

He goes on: *‘one could even say that every such performance [of visualising digital data] itself becomes an original.’*<sup>391</sup> This form of thinking is best aligned with Graw, where she states that, via anthropomorphic projection, the authentic aura of the artist is manifest through their latent presence during the production process. Therefore, if a networked digital image can retain aura absent of material, so too can the painted gesture when manifest as a digital image, without exhibiting “in real life” tactility. Accordingly, an artwork is capable of existing in multiple authentic versions of itself, in digital, analogue, or digilogue formats, rather than adopting authenticity *vis-a-vis* singular tactility. To bring these ideas back to my practice, the art theorist Mark Titmarsh summarises painting beyond the confines of paint accordingly:

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<sup>386</sup> Joanna Fiduccia, ‘Original Copies: Images in the Zero Dimension’ in *Art on Paper*, May/June 2009, Vol. 13, No. 5, (Chicago, Art in Print Review, 2009), (46–57), p. 49.

<sup>387</sup> Groys, *Art Power*, p. 84.

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>389</sup> Boris Groys, *In the Flow*, (London: Verso, 2016), p. 3.

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

- In the current decade artists enter the professional field of painting where 'not painting' is their starting point and whatever is done from there is determined by relational movements away from painting. However, in such an orbit, to 'not paint' is still centripetally driven by the gravitational centre of painting itself.<sup>392</sup>

This desire to “not paint” to access the relational, networked aspects of painting reifies the re-mediatised nature of paint(ing) itself, as a valid mode of painterly ambition. By creating my *Interpolations* in the way Titmarsh describes, I reiterate Graw’s assertion that painting is perceptible as a system of personalised signs and not necessarily as a medium.<sup>393</sup> Therefore, painting, through its formal emancipation, functions on a system of linguistic equivalence, contingent upon a networked series of re-mediatised, indexical signs inherent to its operation. These signs are not tethered to traditional material preconceptions of medium, allowing painting to function instead as a translative entity. By combining this mode of thought with Groys, Steyerl, and Titmarsh, legitimacy for the function of paint(ing) to operate as a purely digital construct emerges. Therefore, the dispersion of appropriated painterly forms and signs via a system of image networks takes precedence to reinforce the intangible nature of painting, as a formalism that has become bereft of vestigial components such as pigment, binder, and ground.

## **[7.5] THE HYPERFACTURE**

My observations distinctly position the PDPG as a polymorphic entity (by unifying medium and Media), proven through my practical use of the URL, networked imagery, the datacentric nature of facture, and skeuomorphic material translations. However, a critical framework with which to situate these findings is necessary. Within this section I collectively label translative phenomena inherent to the PDPG as the *Hyperfacture*. Summarised briefly, this is the experience of the painted gesture operating on a system of exchange between corporeal occupation(s) and digital manifestation(s), as a set of formal relationships that are not fixed. Building on the networked, immaterial nature of my prior practical investigations, I propose my concept of the Hyperfacture as the synthesis of medium and Media’s unity within a post-digital painting setting. This concept can be contextualised within an altermodern classification, as Bourriaud states: ‘*Altermodern art is thus read as a hypertext; artists translate and transcode*

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<sup>392</sup> Mark Titmarsh, *Expanded Painting: Ontological Aesthetics and the Essence of Colour*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 67.

<sup>393</sup> Graw, ‘The Value of Painting: Notes on Unspecificity, Indexicality and Highly Valuable Quasi Persons’, p. 50.

information from one format to another...<sup>394</sup> This idea finds its roots within the relationship between language, image, and object, as initially confronted by Kosuth's *One and Three Chairs*, and is hinted at further through distinct categories such as "image" and "object" as modes of painting's translative reception.<sup>395</sup> Constituent theories by Price, Vierkant, Laric, and Perrella, are expandable to define the phenomenology of the Hyperfactory. Respectively, they propose the concepts of *Dispersion*, *Image Objects*, *Versions*, and *Hypersurfaces*. Building on these theories, gestural classification defining the lack of fixity inherent to the PDPG is manifest.

Price's series *Dispersion* (2002–Ongoing), operates as a critique of institutionalised systems of dissemination (such as the gallery space and the art market) as well as sites of production and reproduction. Closely aligning with Joselit's network theory, *Dispersion* can be summarised accordingly:

- It [*Dispersion*] argued that distribution, rather than production, was the primary way in which works accrued meaning, and that artists needed to find ways of harnessing the enormous capacity for meaning-making inherent in communications networks.<sup>396</sup>

Arguably a form of Internet era *gesamtkunstwerk*, in a conceptual manner similar to Steyerl's circulationism, key to Price's *Dispersion* series is the release, re-release, and modification of formats and versions, that take the shape of webpages, PDF's, print publications, and sculptural objects [Fig. 82]. Price himself refers to this process as a '*categorically ambiguous art, one in which the synthesis of multiple circuits of reading carries an emancipatory potential.*'<sup>397</sup> From this statement, it is clear Price's iterated objects each inhabit systems of cultural production and distribution, operating as and within networks, with all formats equally afforded the status of art object which share an aesthetic. As such, distribution and circulation rather than production dictate the way works accrue meaning. Expanding on this idea, Price states:

- With more and more media readily available through this unruly archive [the Internet], the task becomes one of packaging, producing, reframing, and distributing; a mode of production analogous not to the creation of material goods, but to the production of social contexts, using existing material.<sup>398</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> Bourriaud, 'Altermodern Manifesto.'

<sup>395</sup> Specifically, Bacon states of this as the '*distinction between the image status and the object status of the work... are simultaneously in existence as objects and also as jpegs circulating through the internet, in ways intentional and otherwise.*' Bacon.

<sup>396</sup> Net Art Anthology, 'Dispersion', in *Net Art Anthology*, (Rhizome Online, 2016), in URL <https://bit.ly/399Vto6>, accessed 6/1/21.

<sup>397</sup> Seth Price, *Dispersion*, (Self-published booklet, 2016. Originally published in 2002), p. 4.

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid*, p. 10.

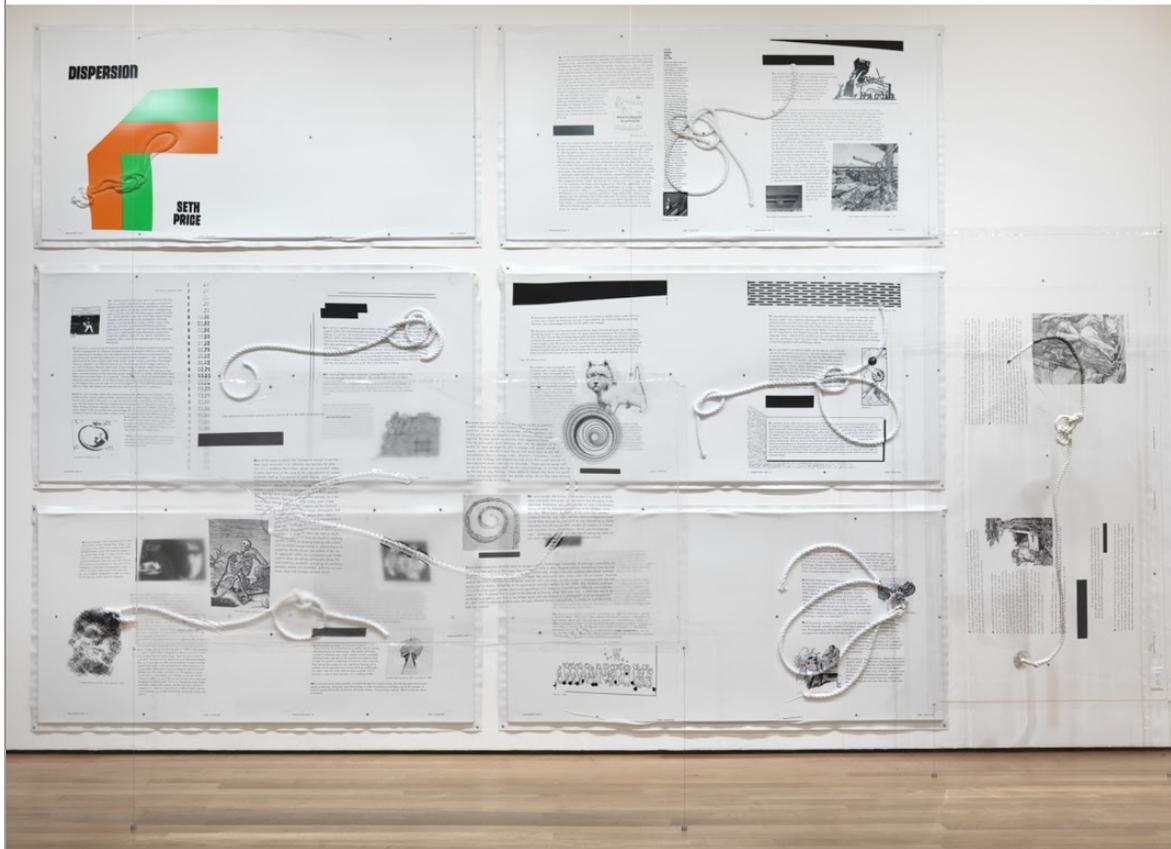
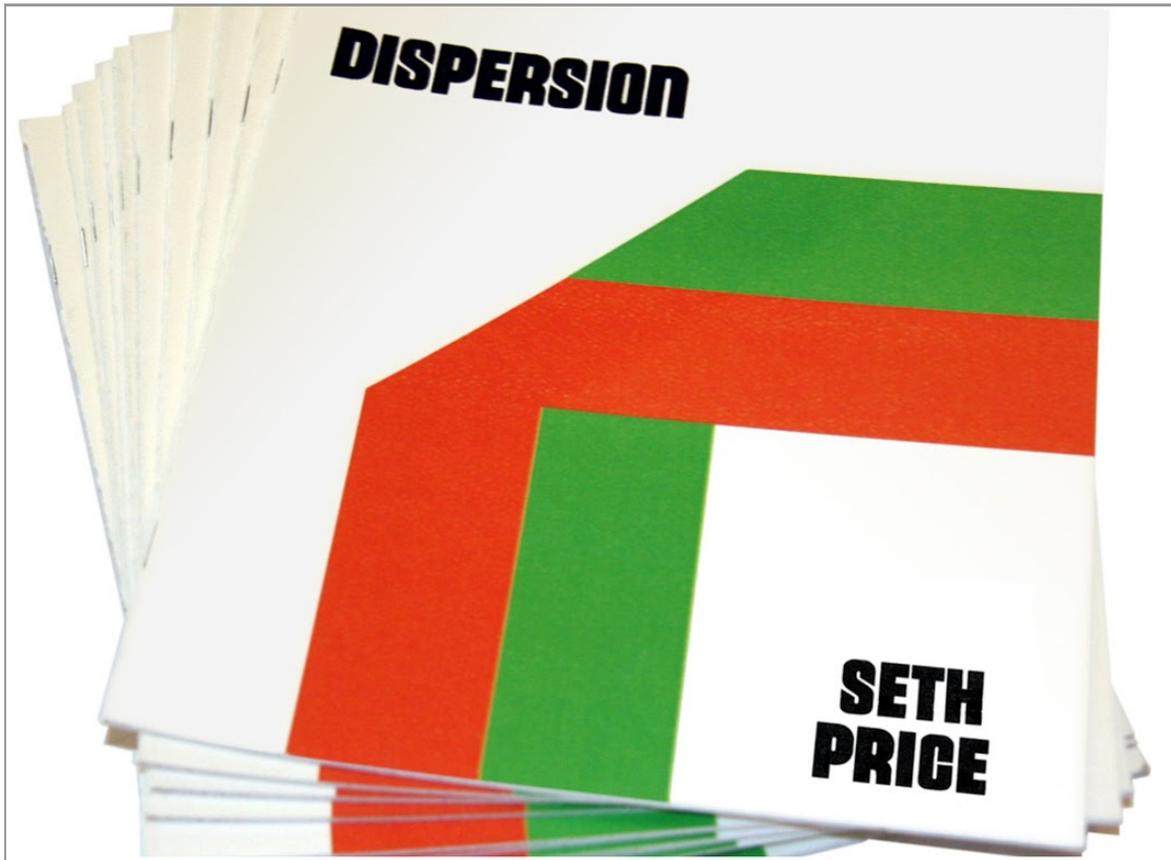


Figure 82: Seth Price's Use of Multiple Modes of Dissemination for 'Dispersion.'

He continues: ‘Production, after all, is the excretory phase in a process of appropriation. It may be that we are standing at the beginning of something.’<sup>399</sup> Within a contemporary context, the concept of Post-digital Appropriation recurs when following this format, adopting a postmodern model of distribution rather than production, or “taking rather than making.” Furthermore, astutely marking the inception of this phenomenon from a Duchampian and ultimately conceptualist position, Price considers modes of reception, such as institutional intervention and mediation, as giving enhanced credence to the art object through reproduction (in words, print, or reproductions)—credibility is thus attained via dispersion. Describing Marcel Duchamp’s *Fountain* (1917) Price notes that it is not the original object that sparked the notoriety of the piece, rather ‘the artwork does not occupy a single position in space and time; rather, it is a palimpsest of gestures, presentations, and positions.’<sup>400</sup> Fundamentally, what Price means is that the multiple versions created of the (now lost) original, as well as the photographic and textual dissemination *Fountain* accrued [Fig. 83], was key to the work’s success. Duchamp’s work, as an anti-art symbol of mass media transcended, through varying modes of media dissemination, the traditional status of the singular art object—this concept of not occupying a “single position in space or time” is a fundamental concept that can be applied to the Hyperfactory. Duchamp, then, is the original instigator of the polymorphic art object. By positioning the concept of dispersion as a post-internet updating of Duchampian and Conceptual formal practices, Price sets a precedent for the artwork to act not as a singular encounter, but as a contextual phenomenon that achieves agency and, indeed enhanced credibility, through dispersion. Specifically, dissemination via cultural and systemic networks of production and reception inherent to the Internet and its capacity for networked material practices. This concept sets the first principle of the Hyperfactory: *Dissemination*, whereby the PDPG is a transmittable entity.

Arguably, Vierkant takes the ideas Price espouses and more readily applies them to traditional conventions of the art object. In his series *Image Objects* (2011–Ongoing) [Fig. 84] Vierkant creates a body of sculptural works that exist between physical objects and online images, as well as uniquely modified digital images and photographs, that all expand the purview of the art object. By working in this way, Vierkant draws attention to the increasingly fluid and mediated status between analogue representation and the online existence of images, taking

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<sup>399</sup> Ibid, p. 14.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid, p. 11.



**THE BLIND MAN**

*The Richard Mutt Case*

*They say any artist paying \$100,000 dollars may exhibit.*

*Mr. Richard Mutt sent in a fountain. Without discussion his article disappeared and never was exhibited.*

*What were the grounds for refusing Mr. Mutt's fountain:—*

1. Some contended it was immoral, vulgar.
2. Others, it was plagiarism, a plain piece of plumbing.

*Now Mr. Mutt's fountain is not immoral, that is absurd, no more than a bath tub is immoral. It is a fixture that you see every day in plumbers' show windows.*

*Whether Mr. Mutt with his own hands made the fountain or not has no importance. He CHOSE it. He took an ordinary article of life, placed it so that its useful significance disappeared under the new title and point of view—created a new thought for that object.*

*As for plumbing, that is absurd. The only works of art America has given are her plumbing and her bridges.*

**“Buddha of the Bathroom”**

*I suppose monkeys hated to lose their thing about our human institution*



Figure 83: Marcel Duchamp's Use of Multiple Modes of Dispersion for 'Fountain.'



Figure 84: Artie Vierkant. **Image Object Sunday 17 June 2012 4:51 pm.** 2012. Mixed media installation. Dimensions variable. Collection: Higher Pictures Generation, New York.

what would historically be a singular material encounter with a sculpture and turning this into a range of unique artforms. This variation of the work between analogue and digital reception influences the reading of Vierkant's objects, as a multiplicitous form of artwork.<sup>401</sup> Vierkant states of this phenomenon:

- First, nothing is in a fixed state: i.e., *everything is anything else*, whether because any object is capable of becoming another type of object or because an object already exists in flux between multiple instantiations.<sup>402</sup>

Vierkant specifically describes this process:

- The strategy employed by myself and others towards this physical relationship has been to create projects which move seamlessly from physical representation to Internet representation, either changing for each context, built with an intention of universality, or created with a deliberate irreverence for either venue of transmission.<sup>403</sup>

Resulting from this fluid form of material occupancy, Vierkant's statement positions a post-internet rejoinder to Krauss' concept of a post-medium condition, and Manovich's post-media aesthetics. Rather than denouncing the specific agency of medium (and by extension materiality) due to its operation within a digital environment (that has historically negated traditional perceptions of medium),<sup>404</sup> resulting from its amalgamation with Media, medium can at once be classed as both discrete and networked, specific and fluid, present and post. By considering the concept of image objects, Vierkant sets a precedent for the artwork to act not as a singular material parameter, but as a one that interacts in series as a sum of its parts. This concept sets the second principle of the Hyperfactory: *Polymorphism*, whereby the PDPG can exist as more than one material structure.

In a similar manner to both Price and Vierkant, Laric perceives a polymorphic phenomenology of the artwork as a multiplicity manifest through iteration. In his 2010 visual essay *Versions* [Fig. 85] Laric contends with the re-appropriation and continual manipulation of imagery. What is most useful about Laric's work in relation to the Hyperfactory structure, is that in a McLuhanian sense his work exists as multiplicity of Media through which he disseminates ideas (embodied

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<sup>401</sup> Net Art Anthology, 'Image Objects', in *Net Art Anthology*, (Rhizome Online, 2016), in URL <https://bit.ly/3akizur>, accessed 16/12/20.

<sup>402</sup> Artie Vierkant, 'The Image Object Post-Internet', in *Jstchillin*, (Jstchillin Online, 2010), in URL: <https://bit.ly/3nEoRjz>, accessed 16/12/20.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid.

<sup>404</sup> Manovich, *Post-media Aesthetics*.



Figure 85: Oliver Laric. **Versions**. 2010. Video still. Dimensions variable. Collection: Private collection.

as video installations, sculptures, PDFs, essays, talks, songs, dance routines, and recipes). These ideas exist at once as a distinct network of versions, that embody an overarching narrative. The constituent components of his work celebrate visual culture as a collective social experience, that fundamentally erodes traditional preconceptions of copy and original, authorship, piracy, and reuse.<sup>405</sup> Following Laric, Perrella, from an architectural position, establishes the concept of the *Hypersurface*, whereby forms structure as ‘*a condition established between a multiplicity of modified asymptotic relations.*’<sup>406</sup> More specifically, the Hypersurface is a way to ‘*describe any set of relationships that behave as systems of exchange*’<sup>407</sup> as a dynamic surface that is subject to change.<sup>408</sup> Accordingly, Laric and Perrella’s concepts set the third and final principle for the Hyperfacture: *Multiplicity*, whereby the PDPG can exist in more than one location or object.<sup>409</sup>

Painting on these grounds has already taken root amidst the mainstream. On March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021, an unprecedented record was set at auction for a digital artwork. The artist known as Beeple (real name Mike Winkelmann) sold his piece *Everydays: The First 5,000 Days* (2021) [Fig. 86] for a staggering \$69.3 million.<sup>410</sup> What demarcates this work, other than its high market value, is the format of its sale. It is the first artwork of its kind, a purely digital file known as a “non-fungible token” (NFT), to be exclusively minted and sold by a major auction house (Christie’s). The transacting of digital, non-physical new media art has existed for decades (with relatively limited success in relation to the sale of physical artworks), however, NFTs are distinct as ‘*provably scarce digital assets representing a range of commodities such as artwork, gaming collectibles, and even real estate – both in the physical and virtual space.*’<sup>411</sup> In effect, NFTs are limited edition digital assets that emerge from cryptocurrency classes such as Bitcoin and Ethereum, with the value of these works attributed to the originality or scarcity of the digital file transacted

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<sup>405</sup> Net Art Anthology, ‘Versions’, in *Net Art Anthology*, (Rhizome Online, 2016), in URL <https://bit.ly/3bCqTpH>, accessed 11/3/21.

<sup>406</sup> Stephen Perrella, ‘Hypersurface Architecture and the Question of Interface’, in *V2\_ Archives Online*, (V2\_ Online, 2020), in URL: <https://bit.ly/2SzcikS>, accessed 4/5/20.

<sup>407</sup> Stephen Perrella, ‘Hypersurface Architecture II’, in *Architectural Design*, Volume 69, Issues 9-12, (John Wiley & Sons, Academy Editions, London, 1999), (41–49), p. 49.

<sup>408</sup> Specifically, when Perrella attests: ‘*A hypersurface is a threshold whereby the density of difference in an interface becomes vital, self-configuring and autopoietic.*’ Perrella, ‘Hypersurface Architecture and the Question of Interface.’

<sup>409</sup> I have determined that the Hyperfacture aligns most strongly with three of the Digital Factures I have positioned: *Altercorporeality*, *Polycorporeality*, and *Hypercorporeality*. Full definitions of these Factures are present within Chapter 5.

<sup>410</sup> Editors of Christie’s, ‘Beeple: A Visionary Digital Artist at the Forefront of NFTs’, in *Christie’s*, (Christie’s Online, 2021), in URL: <https://bit.ly/3tgk6br>, accessed 11/3/21.

<sup>411</sup> Lawrence Wintermeyer, ‘Non-Fungible-Token Market Booms As Big Names Join Crypto’s Newest Craze’, in *Forbes*, (Forbes Online, 2021), in URL: <https://bit.ly/2OqLF2K>, accessed 11/3/21.

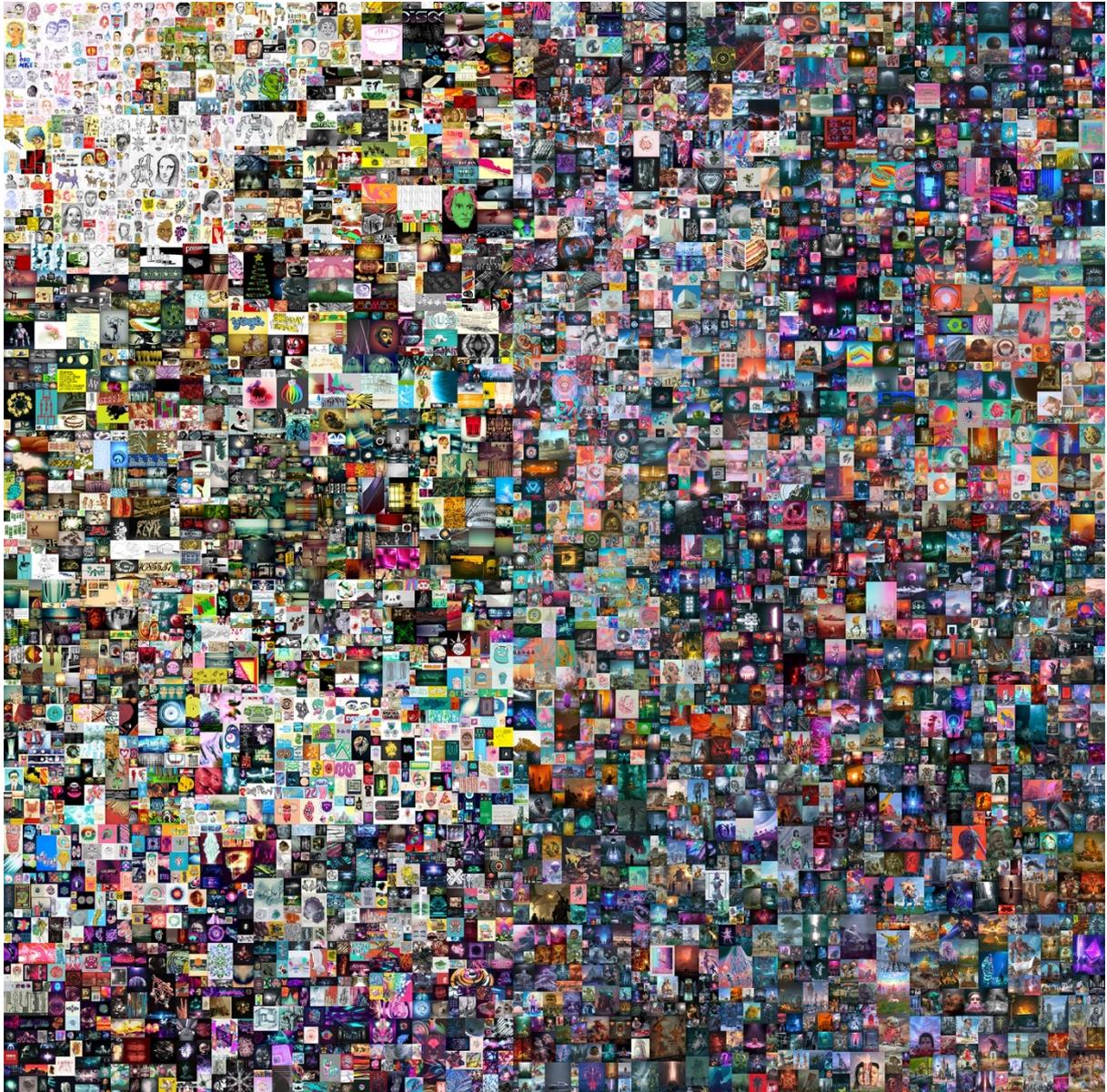


Figure 86: Beeple. *Everydays: The First 5000 Days*. 2021. Non-fungible token (jpg). 21,069 x 21,069 pixels (319,168,313 bytes). Minted on 16 February 2021. Collection: Private collection.

(non-fungibility). Cryptocurrency market aggregators such as Blockchain supply ledgers providing proof of purchase and provenance to regulate authenticity within this fledgling marketplace; usual art market fare, updated to suit a new economy of art dissemination. In what could be called the “NFT boom of 2021”, the mainstream interest generated for NFTs, rippling from the sale of Beeple’s *Everydays* at Christie’s, has undoubtedly redefined the boundaries for how artwork manifests itself as a form of digital product. Consequently, scores of NFT trading platforms have emerged with many artists and collectors attempting to stake their claim in the wake of the recent market frenzy. However, art existing in this translative format is no unique phenomenon. Claims abound of this “trailblazing” approach to making art, with hosts of gallerists, curators, and artists asserting contestable claims of being the first to create, disseminate, and sell artwork in this non-tactile way.<sup>412</sup> Fundamentally, NFTs are polymorphic in their format: this blurring of boundaries between analogue and digital formats has existed for years in art production. Relatively recently, practitioners such as Vierkant, Price, and Laric have shown the capacity for a work to exist in differing formats that traverse IRL and URL domains; the legacy of such art production is tied to a Duchampian and Kosuthian conceptual legacy. The only difference NFT works present is their market value, embedded in recently developed transactional cryptocurrencies; an inevitable result of the art market claiming its own slice of the recent cryptocurrency boom by enabling a way to monetise non-physical objects. Dispensing with market hype, NFT art production has implications when aligned with the Hyperfactory. Crucially, it validates a polymorphic mode of artwork production as a formally and commercially viable alternative to IRL artefact acquisition. The designer Andrés Reisinger makes a valid observation:

- I believe the physical and the digital are merging towards unity... I create to bridge their boundary, in order to reveal the infinite possibilities of the digital... [we are entering a] hybrid era of extended reality, in which art and culture are freed from spatial and temporal constraints, and the rules of experience are rewritten.<sup>413</sup>

This statement is a direct confirmation of polymorphic art production operating at large in a mainstream consumer setting, as an exemplification of conditions prerequisite to the

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<sup>412</sup> Recent shows such as Ry David Bradley and Hanna Hansdotter’s *Once Twice* (2021) staged at The Hole gallery in New York proposes a similar function to Christie’s recent auction. Therein, a physical show is accompanied by a digital showcase that offers the sale of exhibited artworks as NFTs. Moreover, the artist Trevor Jones has been weaving cryptocurrencies into his art production as far back as 2018.

<sup>413</sup> Caroline Goldstein, ‘In the Latest NFT Auction Frenzy, an Artist Just Sold a Collection of Digital Furniture for \$450,000—See Images of the Otherworldly Designs Here’, in *Artnet*, (Artnet Online, 2021), in URL: <https://bit.ly/3cpAcIY>, accessed 11/3/21.

Hyperfacture. Crucially, this digital phenomenology of the object destabilises binary definitions of medium and Media, as an artwork that has the capacity to function as both. Furthermore, this mode of art commodification follows a truly Baudrillardian hyperreal ideology, resulting from the dematerialisation of the physical world into (digital) signs and simulacra whereby, in many instances, the artwork now precedes traditional perceptions of analogue objective essence. Overall, it remains to be seen whether this way of buying and selling art is a speculative market bubble primed to collapse under its own hype, or if it has any sort of consumer longevity. Nonetheless, the emergent market economy that NFTs occupy lends credence to the widespread merging of medium and Media, as well as a wider viability of polymorphic art production and reception.

## **[7.6] DISCUSSION**

***Interpretations***—My interpretation of the data shows that Translation is defined and manifest within post-digital painting in four distinct ways. The first observation noted the resurgence of postmodern formal tropes. Specifically, these include appropriation, simulacra, and hyperreality as key features of the PDPG, delineating an aesthetic that updates Pop Art sensibilities to reflect a digitally and technologically engaged culture. These findings correlated with my artist survey data generated in Chapter 5, as well as my contextual enquiries in Chapter 3. The second observation, arising from the synthetic, replicated processes I used to create my material data, was the PDPG as a skeuomorphic entity, that was manifest as embodying either a simulation of forms or materials (or both). Fundamental to this finding was the identification of a technologically referent aesthetic I referred to as Digital Plasticism. The third observation positions the translative image as a valid mode of paint(ing), as an evolved system of digitally networked signs, whereby the PDPG does not define itself strictly as a medium. Finally, the synthesis of my investigations positions the Hyperfacture as the PDPG's unification of medium and Media, that is distinguished by three principles: Dissemination, Multiplicity, and Polymorphism.

***Implications***—A fundamental implication of this research is an empirical destabilisation of the medium and Media attribution painting endures. This is a direct contest to Paul's distinction between medium and Media formats, Smythe's proposed division between analogue and digital embodiments of painting, and Kelsey and Fiduccia's claims that authenticity resides within

analogue objectivity. In alignment with Graw, Rottmann, and Manovich, I have exemplified painting acts as an enhanced sequence of signs devoid of strict medium classification. This semiotic capacity emerges via circulation and material simulation through enhanced technological development, as a perpetually shifting cycle of metonymic cultural and visual data. As espoused by Bridle, the division between digital and real worlds is eroding. Manifest within painting, this erosion is embodied through medium and Media's conflation. Building on Bridle's work, by establishing the Hyperfature, I position the beginning of a language that describes our relationship to painting and technology and its place within reality, clearly positioning the translative capacity of the PDPG, which has the potential to remediate confused formal terminologies.

**Limitations**—By approaching the construction of painterly Prototypes as a “monteur” I was able to systematically refine the production processes I developed to extrapolate data efficiently. However, by adopting an almost production line-like strategy of artefact creation (caused through an initial over-exploration of mechanical production methods), as well as the repetitive use of Imma as a subject matter, my work became too programmatic. Specifically, certain aspects of my *Developments* series lacked depth and were too synthetic. By negating elements such as chance and expression, these works, at times, appeared “stiff” and predetermined. I resolved these issues with my *Interpolations* works which followed, by allowing a more playful approach to composition and being less programmatic.

It is also important to acknowledge the potential ethical implications of my research. Inherent to the interpretively diverse nature of applying a signifying chain of semiotic enquiry to my practice, the signs and symbols associated with the imagery I used were contingent upon their interpretation, of which a series of divergent readings could be applied. For example, the use of the word “Supremacy” within my compositions [see PF. 57] can be read as a humorously sinister subverting of the ‘Supreme’ fashion logo (which, within my research aligns with the transgressive themes of post-internet art and its manipulation of pop culture signs and symbols), as much as it could also imply a form of hierarchy or dominance, especially when paired with imagery of the female form. Arguably, similar interpretations could be applied to my use of Imma. Specifically, the potential reading that by repetitively depicting a female Japanese virtual model there is an implied exploitation of cultural or gender identities. Accordingly, in a more subjective sense, I realised the potential problematics of using Imma

(and the female form in general) as a subject matter, when viewed through a feminist lens. As a white, Western, heterosexual, male artist, it could be contended that my repetitive employment of Imma reads as a form of exploitative gaze. Whilst I am cognisant of these concerns, I assert that my interest in Imma is not one of exploitation. Conversely, within my research Imma acts as a non-Westernised, globally, and culturally diverse form, that articulates a creolisation of many formal and social languages. For me, it is not what Imma objectively is (an idealised analogue of female beauty manifest as a digital avatar) but what she subjectively *represents* as a posthuman reflection of post-photographic image culture. The repetition of Imma, especially in my piece *Image Feed*, is a post-digital updating of the Pop image tactics employed by Warhol. Specifically, a multiplicity of image numbs its objective affect (to recapitulate, by “affect” I mean the emotional, intellectual, or expressive impression this leaves upon the viewer), instead focusing on the wider, subjective signification residing within the work. Within my *Interpolations* series, I continued my use of Imma as a form, alongside a broader use of imagery that included depictions of the female body. The use of the female form inevitably draws comparison to the inherent male gaze historically present within European painting discourse, or within certain aspects of wider media culture. Specifically, the “nude” as an objectifiable conventionalisation of the female form<sup>414</sup> (as opposed to “nakedness” which is ‘*to be oneself*’<sup>415</sup> free from objectification). Berger positions this power dynamic as ‘*the surveyor and the surveyed*’<sup>416</sup> which is articulated further by the film theorist Laura Mulvey, specifically, as the ‘*male gaze*’<sup>417</sup> whereby there is a power imbalance positioned in favour of the male heterosexual spectator, as the ‘*active/male and passive/female*.’<sup>418</sup> Being cautious of the narrative complexity certain imagery contained, I had a responsibility to ensure my use of the female form (or any form, for that matter) was not exploitative or imposing of a power imbalance, whilst still remaining true to representing the image culture I aimed to reflect. My rationale was to strip these constituent images of any internal meaning attached to them (affect), so that they might be read as an impersonal amalgam that represents contemporary, digital image culture. Through their sheer quantum and disparity, the imagery I used was a wider critique of the medium and Media conventions to which they belonged, rather than constituent hierarchical or subjective autonomies (such as gazing, or body

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<sup>414</sup> Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, p. 53.

<sup>415</sup> *Ibid*, p. 54.

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid*, p. 46.

<sup>417</sup> Laura Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’, in *Screen*, Volume 16, Issue 3, Autumn 1975, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), (6–18), p. 11.

<sup>418</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11.

politics). My intention was to remove any form of affect, to reflect the levelling effect of image circulationism.

## **[7.7] CONCLUSION**

By extending my enquiry into the material data generated in Chapter 6, this chapter has analysed the translative phenomena apparent within my studio practice. By doing this, I have been able to contextualise my practice, and the concept of Translation in relation to wider critical positions. Within the material data generated as part of my studio findings, I have explored the following question within this chapter: *How is Translation defined and manifest in relation to post-digital painting?* To answer this, I divided my investigation into four distinct research findings: Simulacrum as Mediation, Skeuomorphism as a Post-digital Mode, Interpolations, and The Hyperfacture. To answer my question, I met these enquiries with four coalescent studio projects that relied on the increased use of mechanised and digital means in the production of my work.

The first part of my enquiry explored the concept of the simulacrum as an extension of the translative gestural qualities apparent within post-digital painting. From this, I investigated postmodern themes of simulation, hyperreality, and appropriation, and exemplified their function as core formal dynamics of the PDPG. As such, I concluded that translative gestural phenomena find their roots within a postmodern formal vocabulary. By using the CGI model Imma as an image with which to contextualise this enquiry, I explored the concepts of posthumanism and its relationship to hyperreality, simulation, appropriation, and contemporary digital networks. I illustrated how these concepts flow into an altermodern mode of art production, exemplifying digital artisans who employ these themes as a method of post-digital painting. I extended this enquiry by focusing on my fabrication methods, specifically those that referred to Graw's notion of anthropomorphic projection. This process acted as a contextual anchor point for the increasingly mechanised means of production my work adopted, to illustrate the translative capacity of painting through both medium and Media. Moreover, I further investigated the relationships between the analogue and the digital by using digital collage to interpolate analogue surface facture, that responded to digital composition methods. By working in this way, I exemplified painting could become a form of prototyped construction that translates gestural data from one context into another,

transcending traditional preconceptions of medium. I termed this mode of construction Digital Plasticism. Following these findings, I highlighted the skeuomorphic properties of the PDPG, acknowledging this in relation to postmodern and altermodern modes of simulated image production, referencing, alongside my own work, key digital artisans who employ skeuomorphic tendencies in their painting practices. Within my *Interpolations* research, I created works that discarded the confines of materiality and tactility, to further destabilise the medium/Media dichotomy I identified. Specifically, I considered the networked, re-mediatised qualities that the PDPG can assume, by regarding painting as a sign-based construct free from conventional systems of medium attribution. I did this by using Steinberg's Flatbed Picture Plane as a concept that can be extended to encapsulate painting's translative re-territorialisation within an online context. I unified Steinberg with Groy's "material flow" and Steyerl's "circulationism" theories on the nature of digital image circulation, to propose painting as intrinsically image based. Ultimately, I was able to combine these ideas with Graw and Rottmann's semiotic proposition of paint(ing) as one bereft of medium, to defend the authenticity of painting in a purely digital environment. I went on to consolidate my Hyperfactory observations by exemplifying the dynamic quality the painted gesture has adopted amidst a post-digital discourse. I demonstrated this in my work through my continued use of URL links as a dynamic structure for painting to extend its reception through polymorphic means. Further pursuing my earlier investigations of postmodern and altermodern formal languages, the Hyperfactory builds on simulated, appropriated, and hyperreal states to proliferate, ultimately operating on a system of exchange between artwork and spectator, as a semiotic gestural multiplicity. Specifically, I built on the work of Price, Vierkant, Laric, and Perrella, unifying their respective theories of Dispersion, Image Objects, Versions, and Hypersurfaces, to position the painted gesture as a form of information, and an indexical sign that changes based on its context. Embodied by my use of the URL as a signifier of painterly gestural data, this acts as an immediate and ubiquitous mode of a work being both discrete and networked, and as fixed and mobile, that shifts between physical and digital representations as a navigation of networked cultural systems and iterations. From this investigation, I have established three defining principles of the Hyperfactory that included Dissemination, Polymorphism, and Multiplicity. Through engaging with these three principles, the painted gesture defies any preconceived notion of medium or Media, acting as a fluid embodiment of both. Moreover, I have demonstrated how translative art objects and polymorphic modes of art production are flourishing in a mainstream consumer capacity due

to the recent NFT market boom. Overall, I have observed that Translation is defined and manifest in relation to post-digital painting through Digital Factures that dynamically traverse and undermine the morphologically static binary manifestations of analogue and digital topographies present within painting, as a mode of polymorphic image reception.

# CONCLUSION

## RESEARCH SUMMARY

### [a.] INTRODUCTION

This thesis has aimed to assess the painted gesture's translation into a digital discourse, specifically the translative properties of the painted gesture, its formal underpinnings, the overall themes associated with new media art and the post-digital, and the key practitioners and processes emerging from painting's mobilisation within a technologically embedded environment. I have aimed to provide an original definition of the painted gesture in relation to the post-digital, by contextualising it against trending gestures that have emerged within post-digital painting, to address what the position of expanded painting practices and processes within a perpetually shifting new media art discourse are, and how this has affected the translation of the painted gesture. Specifically, my research aimed to assess and provide a valid contribution to this emergent field through a formal analysis of the relationships between pigment and pixel, the analogue and the digital, paint as pure data, the authenticity of the brushstroke, and painting's liminal status amidst analogue and digital modes of production. The impetus for this research has arisen from the often-contested nature of definition and classification within a new media art setting, which extends from a technologically embedded, altermodern social condition. Accordingly, this research has exemplified that a structured taxonomy of new media painting styles is apt to emerge due to limited classification into the manifold surface morphologies that have arisen from painting's translation from a singular analogue entity, into a networked, digital system. Overall, this research has aimed to

remediate, to an extent, the confusion surrounding the classification of the painted gesture's role amidst a conceptually incoherent body of technologically adept critical positions. To address these aims, I set myself the following Primary Research Question:

- *What is the position of expanded painting practices and processes within a perpetually shifting new media art discourse, and how has this affected the translation of the painted gesture?*

I was able to deconstruct this question into the following three categories of Position, Translation, and Gesture. Emerging from these categories, and distilled from the Primary Research Question, the following sub-research questions arose to investigate my research aims more comprehensively:

- *What is the position of expanded painting within new media art?*
- *How is the Post-digital Painted Gesture defined?*
- *How is Translation defined and manifest in relation to post-digital painting?*
- *What are the manifestations of paint(ing) as a form of deconstructable and translatable data?*
- *What surface morphologies, interactions, processes, and surface content has emerged from a post-digital painting discourse?*

To provide a clear answer to these questions, following my contextual and empirical investigations, I shall begin my Conclusion by giving a *Summary of Findings*. Within this section, I consolidate the research findings within both my contextual and empirical chapters, to answer my research questions directly. Following this, I provide a list of *Recommendations*, that detail the future scope of my research and immediate next steps, as well as potential research routes that I could not cover within the remit of this thesis. Moreover, an *Impact* section details what immediate impact my research has made. Finally, I shall precisely detail the *Contributions to Knowledge* this body of research has made.

## **[b.] SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

Following Position, Translation, and Gesture as tenets to effectively summarise my research findings, I shall answer each research sub-question, as encountered chronologically and thematically within each chapter of this thesis, to answer the overall Primary Research

Question. Accordingly, I have responded to my research questions via the following research strands:

**Current Appraisal of the Post-digital**—Within Chapters 2 and 3 the key research questions I explored were: *What is the position of expanded painting within new media art?* and *How is the Post-digital Painted Gesture defined?* Within Chapter 2, I observed that the position of expanded painting within new media art exists in a state of confused and contradicted formal, cultural, and media tendencies. I deduced this was due to continual formal expansion resulting from a saturation of evolving cultural and formal datasets, emerging from new media and post-digital culture. Moreover, I noted there existed no definitive taxonomy describing how the analogue painted gesture's specific morphological properties have formally evolved in relation to a digital, new media art painting discourse, with broader arguments amongst commentators being convoluted and inconsistent. By assessing the formal arguments, terminologies, philosophies, and definitions that have arisen within expanded field painting I observed that the formal language with which to begin to assemble a taxonomy of digitally engaged painting practices already existed, specifically in the following terminologies: inter-, multi-, trans-discipline (IMTD), indexicality, re-mediatisation/transitivity, and network (these terms I later collectively classified as Translation). By analysing the overarching trends, terminologies, and discourses associated with digital art and the technological, I observed that an agreed set of conditions that adequately define new media art (and, new media painting) and its subgenres is a contended subject. I noted that these disputes extended to classifications of medium and Media, the analogue and its relationship to the digital, and how the art object within a post-digital discourse adopts authenticity.

**Definition of the Post-digital Painted Gesture**—Within Chapter 3, I maintained my enquiry into the position of expanded painting within new media art, as well as setting out to remediate the confused status of the PDPG, by synthesising an original definition for it. Narrowing my contextual investigations into painting's expanded classifications, its historical relationship to technology, and the post-digital condition, I observed post-digital painting defines itself accordingly: as a form of translation; as transmittable and morphological data; as maintaining a transient relationship between the analogue and the digital; and, finally, as retaining authenticity and authorship via anthropomorphic projection, resulting from mechanised modes of gestural application. Contextually, I observed that the PDPG emerges

from an altermodern paradigm, yet with reintegrated postmodern trends. Most notably, updated Pop themes of appropriation, as well as retaining the historical features of expanded field painting, conceptualism, and semiotics. I discovered painting has always maintained a relationship with technology, constantly updating with the developments of its time. I highlighted the key strands inherent to post-digital painting include the New Aesthetic, Post-analogue, and Post-digital Appropriation. Overall, I observed the PDPG defines itself as a translative entity that occupies a liminal status between medium and Media.

***Taxonomy of Digital Factures***—After observing that a primary feature of the PDPG was its status as a translative entity, Chapters 4 and 5 explored the following research questions: *How is Translation defined and manifest in relation to post-digital painting? And What surface morphologies, interactions, processes, and surface content has emerged from a post-digital painting discourse?* As well as these questions, I also continued my investigations into the position of painting within new media, albeit on a more formal level. Building on my contextual investigations in Chapters 2 and 3, I defined Translation within my research as the shift in material, morphological, processual, or interactive painterly value from one context into another. By using this concept of Translation as a starting point, I positioned a Theoretical Framework that provided an original epistemological paradigm generated from existing terms, philosophies, and languages surrounding contemporary expanded painting and the technological, built from my contextual investigations. Through contextual investigation and material research, this Theoretical Framework identified four axioms, that function as the key principles of post-digital painting's manifestations, to soundly define its attributes and chart its expansion. The principles identified were Process, Content, Morphology, and Interaction. These principles also exemplify how Translation is defined and manifest in relation to post-digital painting, organising the characteristics of post-digital painting into what I have termed my Taxonomy of Digital Factures. Within each of these categories are sub-definitions (Digital Factures) that more specifically chart the expansion of the painted gesture. By building this taxonomy, I have discovered that there are a plethora of different languages, trends, and interrelationships of digital painting than has been previously documented. Furthermore, it has organised how practitioners are embracing digital and technological means to carry out painting in a post-digital setting. Based on my research of the field, this investigation presents, to date, the most extensive mapping of post-digital painting trends and digital artisans operating within the discourse of contemporary painting. As such, this delineates what surface

morphologies, interactions, processes, and surface content has emerged from a post-digital painting discourse. As a result of artist survey data yielded, I have been able to position a wide range of key digital artisans (both emerging and well established), evidencing both the wider implementation of my proposed Digital Factures and their frequency of use. Within the survey data, I identified the key trends inherent to post-digital painting, that were subdivisible into four branches: Culture, Discourse, Media, and Medium. Consequently, I observed that paint transcends its material constraints due to its translative pursuit of a digital and technological networked status.

***The Painted Gesture as a Form of Data***—Expanding on the contextual findings that the PDPG exists as a translative form of data, I investigated this concept more thoroughly within Chapter 6 through an emphasis on my practice. The key research question I explored was: *What are the manifestations of paint(ing) as a form of deconstructable and translatable data?* By breaking down painterly information into linguistic codes that were semiotically rooted, I discovered that I was able to manipulate gestural information, as a dynamic and networked entity. As such, I argued that painting functioned as a form of data that aids in its translative capacity, to traverse medium and Media. I observed the key manifestations of the PDPG as a form of deconstructable and translatable data in two phenomena that I termed Quantification and Transmission. These terms described the translative material qualities and polymorphic modes of post-digital gestural reception resulting from painting's status as a form of data. From these findings, I was able to propose an original semiotic model that described the concept of the deconstructable and translative painted gesture, that I termed my Polycorporeal Sign Model.

***The Painted Gesture as a Translative Entity***—Building on the material explorations of the gesture as a form of data considered in Chapter 6, as well as artist trend data extrapolated in Chapter 5, I divided my enquiry into four observations that emerged from a combination of material experimentation and an analysis of evolved postmodern cultural trends. I explored in further depth the following research question: *How is Translation defined and manifest in relation to post-digital painting?* I answered this question by considering four research strands. My first observation, which corresponds with the notion of Post-digital Appropriation I proposed in Chapter 3, posited an evolution of postmodern trends, that included appropriation, simulacra, hyperreality, collage, and posthumanism. These acted as forms of

translation within a post-digital painting environment, updated to reflect new media cultural norms. Resulting from these updated trends, I noted the distinction between the analogue and the digital blended due to the PDPG operating between medium and Media. My second observation posits skeuomorphic gestural tendencies as a translative post-digital mode, specifically, as either a simulation of forms or materials (or both). Consequently, I encountered painterly marks that could not be achieved by paint alone: this was a result of Prototype surface morphologies emerging from a mediated form of construction. This phenomenon occurred due to digital and technological intervention in the creation of prosthetic gestures, creating a distinct post-digital aesthetic that I termed Digital Plasticism. My third observation, which took the shape of my *Interpolations* investigations, demonstrated that paint(ing) can escape its historical format of medium within a post-digital context. Specifically, the PDPG can act as a system of signs, as a digital, image-based phenomenon that discards the binary medium/Media attributions of its past, instead blending these aspects to transcend both. Ultimately, this means of producing work positioned paint(ing) as a translative, medium unspecific formalism within a digital capacity. My final observation was manifest within the synthesis of my Hyperfacture concept. Notably, I observed the physical corporeality of a painting acted as an initial interface for the expansion of painterly interaction. Consequently, this functioned as the experience of the painted gesture operating on a system of exchange between corporeal occupation(s) and digital manifestation(s), as a set of formal relationships that are not fixed. As such, I postulated that the Hyperfacture defines itself as paint(ing) that simultaneously occupies more than one medium and mode of dissemination and assimilation. Through unifying and modifying existing constituent theories, I was able to develop three principles that define the Hyperfacture, these were: Dissemination, Multiplicity, and Polymorphism. Overall, I concluded that Translation is defined and manifest in relation to post-digital painting as incorporating evolved postmodern image creation tactics, that exemplified skeuomorphic gestural tendencies, as well as potentially occupying more than one corporeality or location based on digital and technological intervention.

### **[c.] RECOMMENDATIONS**

It has not been within the scope of this research to fully remediate the confused status of the post-digital as a wider cultural entity. Instead, I have sought to contextualise painting more soundly within a post-digital setting, which is an ever-expanding area of research. The remit

of this thesis, however, has dictated a positioning of the translative quality of painting between traditional perceptions of medium and technologically networked new media modalities of production and reception. As such, the translative position between medium and Media is a fertile area of investigation that future research can build upon, going beyond the scope of expanded painting. My research has, to an extent, remediated the confused status of the PDPG by identifying the lack of categorisation between medium and Media (as a key reason for contested formal classifications). However, there is much to be researched within this field in a broader, media studies sense. Accordingly, I believe the Hyperfacture can be used as a foundation to extend research into media theory from a perspective of painting. Moreover, the continued extension of my Taxonomy of Digital Factures is a valid research route. Despite identifying the possible restrictions that a potentially never-ending taxonomy presented, continued analysis of the Digital Facture Taxonomy has the potential to provide further insights on the nature of post-digital painting. Specifically, by researching a larger sample size of artists to yield new insights into potential Digital Factures, but also to discover unforeseen trends.

Mirroring assertions within the Introduction Chapter, post-digital painting's position within a wider art canon has been secured due to large-scale institutional exhibitions and well documented critical positions that recognise the cultural impact of painting and its entanglement with technology. However, it is my recommendation that a comprehensive "IRL" exhibition of post-digital painting is staged, that showcases the specific processes, surface content, morphologies, and interactions it exemplifies, to ensure due diligence is afforded to the formal structures and strategies it embodies. Despite logistical and social challenges, I have nonetheless begun to address this recommendation. Whilst it was financially unfeasible for me to stage an exhibition that included a global array of post-digital painters, or to even organise a substantial show of my own work due to the recent Coronavirus pandemic, as part of my research I mocked up an exhibition as if it were a real event, staged in Glasgow School of Art's Reid Gallery [Figs. 87–90]. Whilst the primary aim of my practical works was as a methodological means of data extrapolation, and not necessarily as art objects intended for exhibition, I nonetheless thought it would be useful to demonstrate how I could share my research in a gallery setting, specifically, how I could disseminate my research artefacts and processes in an accessible way. Accordingly, I had to reconfigure how I was to present my



Figure 87: Reid Gallery Exhibition Visualisation.

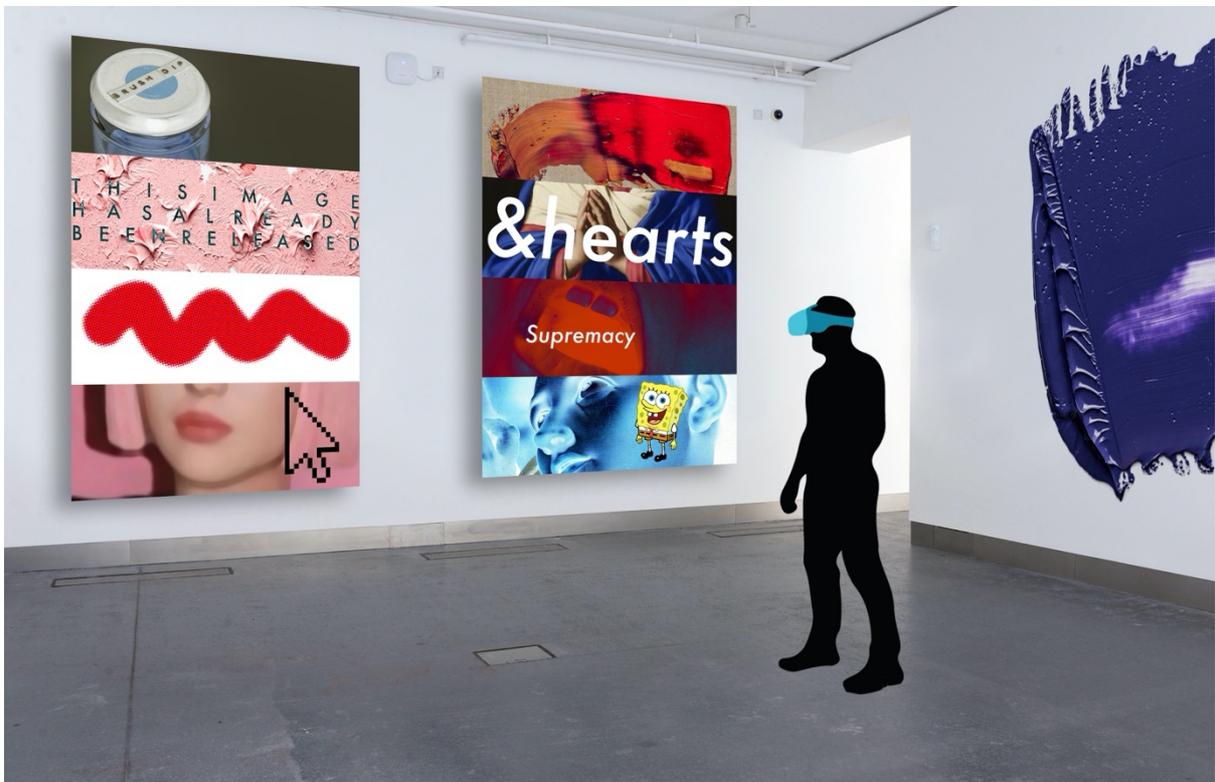


Figure 88: Reid Gallery Exhibition Visualisation.



Figure 89: Reid Gallery Exhibition Visualisation.



Figure 90: Reid Gallery Exhibition Visualisation.

practical research in the wake of Coronavirus restrictions. The featured exhibition visualisations give a sense of what a physical dissemination of practical research could look like. In the images I have included, I have implemented the use of virtual reality as a mode of physically engaging with the works, that are accessed as a digital entity. This new media approach to how my practical findings could be interacted with opens new ways of strategising my research output and my approach to material: the works do not have to be physical objects, and in fact, more strongly support my research ambitions by being intangible, or digital in nature. Postdoctoral, this mode of research dissemination is a route that I would like to explore in further depth.

#### **[d.] IMPACT**

Overall impact that can be attributed to my research is the formal languages I have developed and built upon, that extend the cultural and formal prescriptions that are designated to contemporary painting. My research has been able to define post-digital painting and its diverse manifestations, clarifying and broadening how artists and commentators fundamentally understand paint(ing) more definitively within a contemporary context of post-digital art practices. Moreover, my research begins to formulate a language to describe the increased indivisibility of analogue and digital painting practices. This idea can extend from painting and be applied to wider notions of the analogue and the digital merging, specifically within the field of media study. Finally, my Taxonomy of Digital Factures has emerged as a new research paradigm which, through academic dissemination, can be implemented as a framework that furthers how artists are expanding contemporary painting practices.

#### **[e.] CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE**

The key original contribution of my research is the formation of my Taxonomy of Digital Factures, and subsequent positioning of the Hyperfacture, as epistemological constructs which delineate the amalgamation of medium and Media within post-digital painting; these primary contributions have emerged from the culmination of several original research strands. By aligning practice-based material data with contextual findings, I summarise more precisely my contributions to knowledge accordingly [see also Table 10]. Through mapping the field of contemporary, post-digital painting practices I have provided a current appraisal of the post-

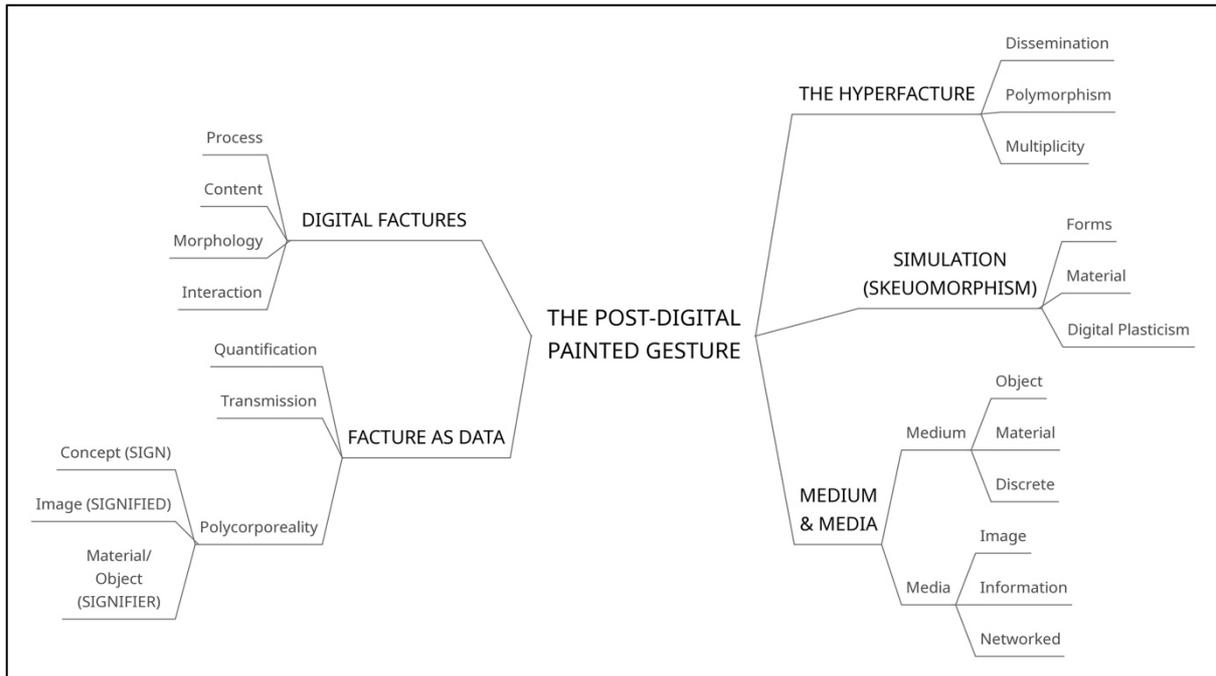


Table 10: *The Post-digital Painted Gesture as a Translative Entity (Research Summary Visualisation)*

digital and identified that painting within a new media setting is in a confused and contended status. This precondition arises from the binary classifications of medium and Media, that has perpetuated an indistinction of what lies between these two entities, and as such wider critical contention. Moreover, I have charted the history of painting’s expanded status and subsequent conflation with the technological and digital, and how this has ultimately fed into current formal, social, and cultural perceptions of post-digital painting. From this enquiry, I have situated the post-digital as an entity that emerges from new media, rather than in opposition to it. From wider considerations of the field at large, I have been to provide a definition of what constitutes as the Post-digital Painted Gesture. Specifically, through the unification of existing formal, philosophical, and cultural languages to define the nature of the PDPG, that subsequently became manifest as my Theoretical Framework. By situating an original epistemological research model on the nature and classification of post-digital painting phenomena, I was able to position the term Translation as the formal basis for the PDPG, and ultimately my proposal of Digital Factures. Based on the research used to establish my Theoretical Framework, I was able to build my Taxonomy of Digital Factures. I did this by identifying the different formal languages (Digital Factures) of post-digital painting; this is the most extensive mapping of this subject in the field to date. As a result of mapping key gestural phenomena, I identified the formal, social, and cultural trends emerging from the PDPG’s use. Moreover, I positioned an original and extensive mapping of emerging and established artists

operating within the field of post-digital painting. From this research, I was able to investigate the PDPG in a more specific way. Initially, through recognising the painted gesture as a form of translatable data, by identifying the phenomena of Quantification and Transmission: these terms emerged as the ways painting acts as a form of *deconstructable* and *translatable* data. Resulting from these terms, I positioned an original sign model that describes the manifestations of the PDPG as a polymorphic and semiotic entity. Building on these investigations, I was able to define in more detail my proposal of the painted gesture as a translative entity. I did this by identifying the reintegration of the postmodern trends of appropriation, simulacra, hyperreality, and posthumanism as formal, contextual, and cultural anchor points within post-digital painting. Formally, I identified skeuomorphism as a translative gestural modality within the PDPG that is manifest as either a simulation of forms, or materials (or both). As a result of these discoveries, I positioned the original concept of Digital Plasticism as a form of mechanically/digitally produced synthetic gesture: a mediated painterly mark that cannot be achieved by the traditional conventions of paint(ing) alone. Moreover, I identified that a purely digital, image-based process for producing painting formally justified the transcendence of paint(ing) from mere tactility, and instead one that functions as a translative system of networked signs that blends (rather than segregates) medium and Media designations. These findings were pivotal for my identification of the Hyperfature, which functions as a language to concisely frame the liminal status of the PDPG, that freely traverses medium and Media, remediating, to an extent, confused formal attributes.

Throughout the course of my research, I have made valid contributions to the field, beyond the remit of this thesis submission. My research dissemination includes publication in a peer reviewed book, which details my findings regarding the PDPG: my essay, titled *Digital Fracture: Painting After New Media Art* was featured in the book *PhotographyDigitalPainting*. Moreover, I presented my research at the *PhotographyDigitalPainting* symposium which this publication was based on. Finally, using my research as a basis, I was commissioned to write an essay for the post-digital painter Juan Zurita. Published via his website, this essay has been translated into several languages and has been disseminated widely online and via physical exhibitions.<sup>419</sup>

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<sup>419</sup> James Frew, *Juan Zurita: Traffic*, (Juan Zurita Benedicto, 2020), in URL: <https://bit.ly/39cwwdid>.

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