

ARABESQUE

RECOVERED FRAGMENTS OF WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN A NOVEL OF
MANNERS

—

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EDITED BY UNA JOC

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ABSTRACT

That painting is understood as being visual cannot really be contested. Even when Duchamp introduced his disavowal of painting and the schema of the chessboard to indicate an anti-retinal strategy, the implication of visual imaginary was still in place. Indeed the link between knowing and seeing is not only at the root of metaphysical (the desire to know is the desire to see —Aristotle) thinking itself, but persists even within the disavowal of it within Late Modernity.

Currently, its presence does still persist and continues to fuel its relevance. This research develops as a speculation on the relation between an ontological understanding of the image and the ornamental. In contrast to the usual understanding of ornament, the ornamental is elaborated as a force and process for the proliferation of forms out of forms. The arabesque is the structuring principle of this research and the figure it presents.

The revelatory force of the arabesque lies not in giving a schema of visual revelation, but it is touching upon a force that transforms and changes, the very 'plasticity' (C. Malabou) inherent in every being and image. Through the recollection of the arabesque, the ornamental is invoked as a principle of drift and thrift in becoming. As a double, paradoxical device the arabesque enables a play between oblique and transparent things, between what can be said or known and what cannot be said, what remains unknown —and whatever lies in between. As a figure of thought, it sets out a play of plastic and graphic imminence. Characteristic for the Islamic culture, the arabesque is more a mode or an idea than a form or pattern, and it was formative for this culture from its very early ways of manifestation. The idea of the arabesque is in and for itself, a 'motor of thought' (C. Malabou).

The tension between representation and presentation, between symbolic, iconographic or legible meaning and a-signifying, pre-linguistic or ornamental meaning is at the heart of understanding the image, which is a mode of being that is encountered in different ways. Through the ornamental as a force of mediation (O. Grabar) this understanding is infiltrated with an ethical dimension.

The route taken is one of conceptual risk, of invention and the fantastic. Method itself is addressed as something to be found —and not as something already given or pre-established.

This research in painting inflects painting from within, from its relation to presence and the image. Caught in this by its inflammatory auto-affection, painting explodes and de-forms, it trans-forms itself — it consciously receives and, simultaneously, gives form. The research itself is manifested as a concatenation of heterogeneous elements that belong to different registers such as written texts, show installation, and different technologies.

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Cojanu, C. (2013) *Catch Sight of My Moving Image*, Ph.D. Statement Show [online documentation].

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PREFACE

By the time I was five years old, I could copy my three years older brother's scripts from his school notebooks, in German and in Romanian. I spent hours and hours daily playing, 'writing', doodling, drawing letters as I tended to believe would do a scribe. My table was an old door attached to two wooden boxes. I sat on a cushion directly on the floor, with the notebooks to my left. I used calligraphic notebooks, blue ink and a Reynolds fountain pen that my father brought us from his working trips. My right fingers got often stained with blue ink. Bored with writing, doodling and being a scribe, I would weave imaginary rugs as a nun in a nunnery.

Later on, in school, I continued to revel in my love for script styles and writing. I invented for each subject a new handwriting and a different character. However, style consistency for each individual subject was important, even if confusing too, for me and for my teachers. I was inspired by the strokes and patterns of other students' handwriting, of my parents or my teachers, and I appropriated the little details that I liked. As my hand writing styles started to develop their own character, quite a few of my teachers would deem my writing indecipherably beautiful, and would even refuse to try to read my 'round drawings' — one of my history teachers, a very big fan of my brother, but less of mine, told me that even three pairs of reading glasses would not be enough to decipher my unreadable arabesques good for hanging on a wall! I had to copy that essay (Fig. 1) three times to pass his class.

If you were in the German School, you had 'to think in German' and one of the ways to teach us this was to ask us to write a journal in German. It took me a while to accept the German language and culture as a constant part in my life, but since I had started to write my first doodling journal, in primary school, I didn't stop writing one until I was sixteen and decided that I wanted to paint. With painting I stopped writing, but maybe painting was always an-other form of writing, as writing is a form of painting now.

Writing a thesis in philosophy while having a daily studio practice confronted me again with the beginning and end of painting and writing, and I embarked on this project with this question, where does painting begin and where does the writing begin, pushing against my interest in the image and the ornamental. The final decision did involve also some practical reasons, but in the end, everything remained grounded in this instinctive, private and anecdotal desire, in this adolescent tumult.

The project goes also back to a series of paintings and the medium specific problems they brought about: shallowness of space, figure-ground relation, decorative mark-making and an ornamentalization of the female body, to a text on Matisse, and to my thesis in philosophy. But, from another perspective, I believe that there had been for a long time an obvious though latent welcoming disposition awaiting me to settle on the idea of the arabesque and the ornamental.

The idea of the arabesque became the structuring principle of the project. My writing became a sort of 'arabesque writing' (in the tradition of Barthes or Schlegel), and research itself an arabesque game. The desire to fictionalize, to paint, to write, to play led me to try and resist any scientific methodology and to be aware of how compulsory conventions can be. What I intuited as a child and played out in school, that we have always various doubles and that a fixed identity is a fantasy, I staged here through the figure of the split author and as a game.

What was this game? A simple and trivial invention played by any child. Through imagining a basic fictional structure and by doubling itself, a child invents a (multiple persons) game that allows her to play by herself and with herself. A game, whose rules are made along the way and not fixed, but changed whenever necessary. To deal with the paradoxes of this research project, to paint and write and research, I had to imagine such a fictional structure for myself.

Firstly, there could be no linear, traditional thesis in my research, because in painting there is no final meaning, and I saw it as an imperative of writing not to fix meaning, not to allow it to be definitive and essential. At the same time, there had to be meaning, as a constant emergence of meaning, a plasticity of meaning at once differential and collective, plural, ornamental. Which is what I discovered to be possible through the idea of the arabesque. The arabesque was my grid around which I could permutated my research. Collective yet individual, finite yet infinite, absolute yet subjective. And the arabesque was simultaneously also the figure of the project itself.

The project had to be fragmentary and incomplete, like an arabesque. So I imagined (in order to smuggle myself through as many compulsions as possible) somebody, who was writing a novel of manners and who had lost the already written fragments. Una Joc, another fictive voice, an editor, found these fragments (or some of them), of what could have been a novel of manners and decided to use them. Like a child, I could now play a game by myself with myself as other. And, even better, I could re-write along the way the game whenever necessary. A different handwriting and a different 'I' for each subject, one for painting and one for writing, without the clarity given by a clear cut split or a readerly story. Painting and writing bleed into each other, intermingle, but remain distinct. Cristina Cojanu and Una Joc bleed also into each other and into the world. The world bleeds into them. Through them others are speaking. Some different voices are announced by obeying quotation conventions, but the clarity offered by knowing how to read such a text offers only a short relief. The reader is confronted with more and more round drawings, more curls and fringes, of thoughts and images circling around themselves extending with your help into an infinite rapport. Sometimes, as a reader, I get lost myself in the text, as one does in every child's game that defies logic from the start. Other times, I am overwhelmed by the blackmail of theory. As a reader, I too had to find my way through this arabesque and ended up each time with a new trail, which sustained my interest without losing my pleasure for new beginnings.

... a gura mea ...
a pehent conștientă
ie copil era pasionat
instruire, după cum
este. Eu re-am văd
ie. Săltă cururi care
sunt".
- Învățământul este
cu oportunitățile sale
apla care depinde de
Registru sau de vizita

FIGURE 1: DETAIL OF MY OWN HANDWRITING.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Over the past few years — they were four in total, but sometimes they felt like ten and others as two — many people have helped and sustained my endeavour in ways great and small, all of whom I owe a debt of gratitude. 'Hold in there!' they whispered in my ears in moments of doubt, re-assuring me and cheering me up along the way.

This project would have never happened without the financial, intellectual and emotional support and patience of my whole family. To my parents, parents in law and to my husband a big thank you! Now, we can start to enjoy family visits without having to think about transporting any (flammable) painting materials or heavy piles of books. And, after 16 years of institutional student-existence, "die ewige Studentin" (the eternal student) that I became, does promise you, that she will finally start being (also) something else.

I would particularly like to mention and thank all my supervisors, Jonathan Miles, Margarita Gluzberg and Ian Kiaer for their guiding support and influence, for their critical eye, encouragement and generous teaching during this time. I would like to thank Elisabeth Price for her advice in the very early stages of this project.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

During the period of this study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification.

The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Cristina Cojanu and Una Joc

October 2013

CLARIFICATION¹

The pages which follow may be understood as a lay model of the type of seeking which is pursued on the basis of a previous finding; a finding of traces, as unforgettable as intangible, that maybe never existed — finding, almost inventing. However, for such a seeking and finding to be able to take place, there must be a system of waiting — waiting without abidance, waiting determined by nothing. Waiting as a simple intentional attitude, made up of wonder and a confused desire, is in fact the first form of finding.

An attitude of waiting could be the hypostasis of the adolescent in the face of the world. Adolescence, while not itself a fulfilment, is nevertheless the affective prelude to any future fulfilment. It is the age when the undifferentiated rumour of desires and aspirations pushes towards the peace of a form, towards a positive plasticity of life, towards that alone which can, when it takes shape at a later stage, bring that degree of stability which is the starting point for speaking of a law of one's own, and so of a personality and a destiny, a character, an individuality, an idea, a work, an image, a world.

Una Joc: 'But, is this how WE wait? Are we, now, not waiting without time, without meaning, purpose, without dwelling? Our attitude of waiting is of exterior relations and scattered. Without sense, this waiting has no origin or arrival. Waiting determined by nothing is the emergence of meaning, day after day, on the verge of its emergence, with no future fulfilment. Emerging from being-WITH in the world on a daily basis, in a cohabitation that this world is. An attitude of waiting in excess of any referential ideality and dualistic structure.'²

Obliged to sense and impossible to (un)decide it, re-posed into my mind, this waiting takes the form of cultural romanticism.³ Cultural romanticism is the pubescent expression of the mind itself in crisis; the crisis of the mind settled on an intelligent thought like the stucco decoration on the wall of a colonnade.⁴ The awakening of the mind takes place in the ornamental, plastic and not historical space of culture; however, if it is projected onto a certain turbulence of the soul and perceived through the medium of violent and contradictory motions, in which one's

¹ This chapter is appropriated from (Liiceanu 2000: 3).

² For the concept of 'sense' in Nancy's thinking see: (James 2006: 91-97).

³ Athenaeum Fragment 55: "Romanticism is one of those classifications that are bad enough as classifications, but that have nonetheless dominated entire nations and epochs." Its meaning in the passage above is not less equivocal. It is not used as an aesthetic category that evokes "a flowing sentimentality or foggy nostalgia for the past," but it may refer to a historical category in opposition to classicism, as much as it could be a "theoretical romanticism" that points at the inaugural moment of a theoretical project and speculative thinking, also known as Early Jena Romanticism, at the end of the 18th century. "Romantic — especially in its English provenance is the landscape before one feels the sentiment of nature, or the epic grandeur of the past, or a mixture of both: ruins in wilderness. But romantic, as well, is the sensibility capable of responding to this spectacle, and of imagining, or better, recreating — *phantasieren* — what it evokes (Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe 1988:1)."

⁴ Medieval Jewish saying from the book of Ben Sirach (Grabar 1992: 25).

predestination is sometimes felt as glory and sometimes as failure, it cannot fail to take a romantic form — endangered to exhaust itself in the inability to grasp its own essence. This form, in which thoughts cannot yet break away from passions, so as to remain empowered and not blocked by them, is especially fertile and dangerous.

It may appear that it is part of the miracle of adolescence that it holds encoded in its waitings, and so in its findings too, the future presence of a being who has, in turn, the capacity inscribed in its destiny to respond to this confused calling, and to liberate its own measure. It is in this way that she, at a later date — and quite by chance — could be found long before an encounter with her took place. When it did take place it seemed to be a simple recognition, and had that natural quality which a long and careful period of preparation and waiting gives a meeting.

TO THE READER

This was, whatever this arabesque writing is, at some point, ABOUT a confluence between art and ornament, and ABOUT producing a relation. In this realm, of the ABOUT, we got distracted by disjunctive paradoxical places, parergonic relations to experience, marginal rapports to figure out. This joint between art and ornamentation was more about unity (which implies partition) than about unicity. And form is distinctive, but distinction is distinction plus its excess, that from which it is distinct. Not remaining in systematic structures, but living their rapport in their concreteness, was our intention. And the production of one stitch became the view of a lump, and the lump spread out quickly proliferating in high speed. How could it ever be effective in the here and now, this energetic force of the ornamental, we started to ask ourselves, if it only made us wander around in circles, further and further? Our play-off was an endless game of doubling, of kaleidoscopic shadows, shaking with disquieting fertile uncertainties —but how and for how long could we sustain this volume, this capacity? Were we the observers who had forgotten themselves, immersed in this fantastic game?

This, what you read now, in our common yet unknown presence, is not ABOUT something in the past nor ABOUT something that is to come in the future. This, whatever this is for us, for you, today, tomorrow, or the day before, this is not a recollection, nor anticipation. This is an ornamental production, a present practice, its expressions, its faces, and our experience of them. And if a present is not being opened, then there is no working-out, no work, no image, only failure —the image of failure disguised as other.

The ornamental, here in this project, is “the becoming essential of accident” and, at once, at the same time and in the same time, the “becoming accidental of essence” (Malabou 2005: XII). The ornamental does not realise itself as ornament here, even though it is also a form of manifested (planar) surface-embellishment, a tensely contracted figure-ground collapse. The ornamental is here the activity of form itself that indicates the plasticity of body (mass). The “becoming essential of accident” and, at the same time, “the becoming accidental of essence” as the capacity to receive and to produce form. Meaning as a constant emergence of meaning, infinitely deferring from ‘taking’.

‘So, what is ornamental space, ornamental temporality? Is it space that accommodates within itself non-space, blank or gap, and non-time, cessation? The fiction of what is not; the ‘what is not’ that is real? The ornamental is here the imaginary production without a referent, a pure ontological creation, “the foreigner on the inside, the whole of the metabolic force that sleeps without sleeping in what is, the very face of being that concepts cannot say without losing face (Malabou 2011: 12).

Plasticity implies change, difference (which is identified often culturally as pejorative form). But the ornamental, as an intermediary, as a form of mediation, is a mode of the 'as-well-as' and not an 'either/or' mode. It leads always to something other than itself and its mediation starts from the *other* and not from the norm. The ornamental seems to be less a fantasy about the capacity of individuals to make and re-make themselves (that leads to a crisis of arbitrariness), and more about being something (without identity and essence) in the in-between, in the *Spiel-raum*, between entities.

The idea of the arabesque is an avoidance of immediate and quick interpretation, of immediate and collective apperception of interpretable phenomena. Of what goes without saying, of the self-evident, the obviousness. Visual perception is intensified by the excessive sensuousness of the interiorization of aesthetic experience. Complex and rich interlacings protect the mysteries and intimacies of thoughts and images. The fascination with the subtleties of detail, the elaboration of endless details are best explored and experienced in private. Confronted with arabesques, one has the feeling as though the creative impulse has been driven by a desire to compel the viewer or reader to withdraw within her/himself, to meditate on her/his own, to discover meaning for her/himself and for her/his own life. To allow oneself to get immersed in the myriad of details, to wander deep within intricate detours of visual entanglement, to wonder and wander with disbelief; to forget oneself in this SATURATED state; to lose sight of the horizon, of the I and of intuition.

The arabesque is not a schema of a visual revelation, but the perceptive, as-well-as intermediary of donation and reception of form in re-presentation, that is in reality, in *Wahrscheinlichkeit* (a particularity of Islamic thought)— an invention on its flight home. The arabesque is here “[...] jene durch die Dichtungskraft hervorgebrachte Form, in der sich die unendliche Fülle ahnungsweise manifestiert (Pollheim 1966: 56 in Kirves 2012: 23)” — the arabesque is that form that is brought forward, and exposed through *Dichtung*⁵, which is neither only fiction, nor only poetry. In this form the infinite plenitude of the one manifests itself suggestively (directly, not symbolically). The arabesque confronts sight with a kaleidoscopic challenge that no longer allows it to linger on details or individual forms, nor to be able to take in the whole image at once. It keeps any final meaning from ‘taking’ (Barthes 2010:x).

So we have to unlock difference. Not a difference between two (or more) distinct and completed termini, ideas or concepts, but the infinite game played out by the difference differing itself – the very processual proliferation of the ornamental; the plasticity at the heart of all being and being as nothing more, nor less, than its own changeability (Malabou 2011).

⁵ For *Darstellung* and *Dichtung*: (Nancy 2008: 68-90).

CONFESSION

Painting as Gaze: On The Revelatory Force of the Arabesque was initially a provisional title⁶, a trail marking main points of repose in a way of seeing, some insistent knots of tension and the interstices in-between. A pre-text. What took off to call out a rhythm and pace of pondering on a flight home.

I, for one reason or another, always assumed that a title arrived belatedly, if it would be to emerge out of the work and its process — or, by surprise, unexpectedly, by accident, any time, at any time and from nowhere. And, written down in some notebook and remembered at a later date, it would, when ready to name self-decide its own work. But this title, for which I feel I have to answer, came firstly and it wasn't an accident or a surprise. In fact, I can easily find my way back to how it came about in first place as a trail of white pebbles marking my way home. From then on it restricted my endeavours, while simultaneously impinging me to push them open. Since its arrival, it continued to pull me back and to surprise me with unexpected resonances of its newborn flexibility that gave a measure and pleasure to my wandering.

Painting as Gaze: On The Revelatory Force of the Arabesque was the very FIRST WORK of the project — 'first' because it was the first to arrive in a sequential, both institutional and intrinsic, temporality of the project. And this is not to say, that this is the only temporality of the project; no, the project itself decentres such structures in great force; its beginning is its end and its end is its beginning. Not simply a title, not an origin, but a WORK that condenses in its succinct form (limit) the expansion of the becoming project, while opening it up into its own groundlessness. *Painting as Gaze: On The Revelatory Force of the Arabesque* is a title exceeding its function as title; that IS in excess of itself; a work, which unites while dissimilating itself, that retracts itself within itself by sharing itself out. Not simply a title, but a work, an IMAGE — a fiction, a fable.

Painting as Gaze: On The Revelatory Force of the Arabesque is the IMAGE OF the project: it is that within which WHAT IS and WHAT IS NOT, what becomes the project presents itself. Before I even begun the project, before I KNEW the project — how could I know it before seeing it? — I had a fantasy, an image, a title, private, provisional, not fully apprehended — an imaginary adventure of form and an unknown limit to ascend to. A desire — a motor of thought (Malabou).

The privilege of being the first form of finding is the evasion of the finality of mannered judgements. Being the first determination, before progress, purpose and law kick in (to which any research project is obliged to) means here, that whatever came before the actual obligation (if this is even possible), even though still a manifestation of the project itself, may be able to

⁶ This is the title of the entire project. *Catch Sight of My Moving Image* and *Builted Body Borrowed (by others written, knitted I spoken through me)* are the titles of the works displayed in the statement show; and *Arabesque* is the title of this work.

resist the value system that pre-determines a research project or a “Ph.D. by project”: dimension of production, an effectuation and a realization to value. What I just called “the value system of a research project” is in fact what Nancy calls “the schema of our late thought”: the obligation to sense (Nancy 2008: 125-126).

In the end, the imminent threat to close down its sense, meaning and value upon itself, becomes more and more unavoidable. The title, an intermediary, will retain in its metabolic power a potentiality to thrive on its openings within itself, towards an individuality. The manifestation of the project remains one modality among others, to which the provisional, improvised title was merely an ornament, something that leads to something other than itself. By obligation the project claims to have a certain final meaning, but the title is not exhausted or completed by the way in which the project manifests itself. Neither is the project by its title. And the fact that the project is/becomes what it is, cannot be concealed from the TRUTH of its own anecdotal nature and the artificial structure of its end. That things happened the way they happened, that they manifested the way they did, that they showed themselves the way they did, the meaning of all this, its sense and value, its significance, its “significant contribution to knowledge” lies in the (accidental) EXPERIENCE itself, of relations, of exteriority in a system of exchange; in the relational, plural character of being in our modern world, a “being in the world” that manifests itself also in the relations, affinities and co-appearances, the co-habitations that happened during, and that brought about, the project. These relations make their own sense in and through EXPERIENCE without pinning down a generality of sense to a prior universal origin.

Without a point of orientation for the production of its meaning, sense or value, without effectuation and the completion of value, but within its limit (*peras*) —this is what this Ph.D. by project should be, and it is to this modality that the improvised, provisional title has access.

We could SAY MORE and SAY IT MORE CLEARLY, why the title is a work and why it is an image, but it is with SENSE, that one refrains from this and withholds subjectivity from making itself into its own work, through a will to say, or a will to see, or a will to know everything absolutely. THIS PROJECT IS NOT, WHAT YOU CAN SEE, READ OR EXPERIENCE, NOR IS IT NOT. IT IS EVERYTHING YOU WISH IT TO BE AND EVERYTHING YOU KNOW THAT IT IS. IT IS EVERYTHING THAT IT IS, AND EVERYTHING THAT IT IS NOT.



‘Painting as Gaze’ is a figure of speech, the short form of the translation of “painting as (An)Blick” (Heidgger1991: 90-113)], my actual private working title.⁷ The purposeful use of the

⁷ In the English text, *Bild* is translated with ‘image’ and *Blick* with ‘look’:
Bild kann zunächst heißen: der Anblick eines bestimmten Seienden, sofern es als Vorhandenes offenbar ist. Es bietet den Anblick. In der Ableitung von dieser Bedeutung kann Bild weiterhin heißen: abbildender Anblick eines Vorhandenen (Abbild) bzw. nachbildender Anblick eines erst herzustellenen Seienden.

colon-structure should be syntactical-deductive. But what it presents is a logical, yet paradoxical consequence. First of all, there is maybe nothing that can be revealed; there is also no logical causal revelation. If painting is *read* historically from its traditional Western perspective, than, it can only be in opposition to Eastern painting, to the idea of the arabesque, and, also in the end, to painting itself (in a move from one *perspective* to another). What follows the colon, the further explanation or consequence, “the revelatory force of the arabesque” cannot explain logically or *reveal* “painting as (An)Blick”. “Painting as Gaze”, painting that becomes a look in first place, and simultaneously that looks and knows that it is being looked at, is painting in two ways, in a mode not of *either/or* but in one of *as well as*: that knows, absence in presence, or not-not-presence, and painting that becomes, presence in absence, presence of what withdraws itself. Thus painting is not really ‘painting as gaze’, but painting THROUGH the gaze; and also for itself as it is, *as well as* for the other as it appears. The gaze, the look, the image is always and from ever passively given. Painting is given in reality (*Wahr-scheinlichkeit*). The arabesque is not a schema of a visual revelation, but the perceptive, as-well-as intermediary of donation and reception of form in representation, that is in reality, in *Wahr-schein-lichkeit* (a particularity of Islamic thought)— an invention on its flight home (Mersch 2009).

Sodann kann aber „Bild“ die ganz weite Bedeutung von Anblick überhaupt haben, wobei nicht gesagt wird, ob in diesem Anblick ein Seiendes oder Nicht-seiendes anschaulich wird.

Kant gebraucht nun in der Tat den Ausdruck „Bild“ in den drei Bedeutungen: unmittelbarer Anblick eines Seienden, vorhandener abbildender Anblick eines Seienden und Anblick von etwas überhaupt. [...] — First of all, image can mean: the look of a determinate being to the extent that is manifest as something at hand. It offers the look. As a variation of this meaning, image can also mean: the look which takes a likeness of something at hand (likeness) i.e., a look which is the after-image of something no longer at-hand or a look which is the premonition of a being [yet] to be produced for the first time.

Then, however, ‘image’ can also have the full range of meaning of look in general, in which case whether a being or a non-being will be intuitable in this look is not stated.

Now, in fact, Kant used the expression ‘image’ in all three senses: as immediate look of a being, as the at-hand, likeness-taking look of a being, and as the look or something in general. Moreover, these meanings of the term ‘image’ were not specifically taken up in opposition to each other; indeed, it is even questionable whether the specified meanings and ways of the Being of image [das Bildsein] are sufficient to clarify what Kant discusses under the heading of ‘Schematism’ [...] (Heidegger 1997: 65).

The chapters, from which this passage was quoted (page 62-80 in the English text), are important for understanding Nancy’s concept of image, especially the ideas presented in the chapter entitled *Masked Imagination in The Ground of the Image* (Nancy 2005: 80-99).

Because of modern and contemporary resonances of the word ‘look’ with style and fashion, and the history of the ornament debate, and because of a personal acoustic preference I preferred the use of the phrase ‘painting as gaze’ to ‘painting as look’.

PRE-AMBLE/FOR-WORD

Kant defines, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the character as a definite and specific relation between cause and effect: “the law of causality without which it would not be a cause at all.” The law of causality without which it would be no cause at all, its chemical decomposition, its definition (determination) is the presentation of the elements, particles, forces, speeds and slownesses, of the affecting capacities and those for affecting that are in relation to each other and form a complex relational nod, a MODE.

To commit to writing a NOVEL OF MANNERS, to a trivial form, when one has to, is expected, required, when one has obliged oneself and accepted to defend a doctoral thesis, to play this imaginary game, is to have a fantastic orientation towards reason. It is to put together with passionate engagement what I have been trained and asked to keep apart. To commit to LITERATURE is a grand counter-act for which one has to answer —grand because it is *blind*, as I commit to what I don't *know*, in the most literal and metaphorical way; grand, also because it offers very few points to hold on to; it is high risk. Counter-act, because it is a form of working with resistance, and the work of unbearable paradoxes.

To turn to a fantasy, to experience its form, its content, its immersion — to commit to this entirely, is to engage in a form of working beyond failure. Most of all, I commit to fiction or the fantastic, so that I can work beyond (my) failure of sense. I cheat myself way out from certain TRUTHS, with good posture. Fiction, the fantastic or the imaginary are my spotters.

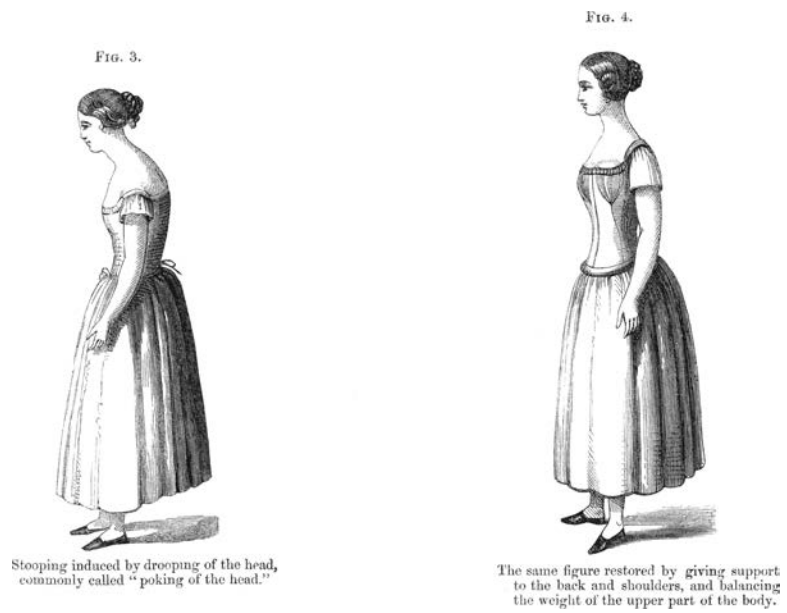


FIGURE 2: CAPLIN, A. R. (1864), *HEALTH AND BEAUTY*, PLATE I 1. AND I 2.

A form of writing beyond failure compels me to adopt my own cheating strategies. To do my forced reps, until I fail, to fail. To work beyond failure is to know that I will fail. This is fiction that has to remain fiction, but that is more real than reality. So that I can get beyond failure, I have to move the weight of sense beyond the sticking point, to fictionalize, to cheat, to move beyond the failure of my self, beyond it, beyond my mind, my body. To exhaust all movement, to re-arrange the harmony between motion and rest, speeds and slowness — of my body that is. This commitment that *com(together)-mitts(to put, send)* to the language of my body is the only meaningful way I know how to move beyond signifying sense. Meaning working beyond its own failure, equivocal as it may be, must be ready to accept a spotter that secures this equivocation to an exterior shore. I don't know how to work beyond failure without the engagement of my body (that is without painting, without writing), purely conceptually, in language, theoretically. Even the engagement of my body requires the patience of un-learning and of finding ex-pression in new points of contact. Yes, it is a process with direction, a function accepting unknown variables, which fictionalize, generate, proliferate, but also cut, break, tear apart. I can only cheat my body out of its habits, but not out of its surprises. I may appear to be able to control and alter its kinetic, even dynamic propositions, and succeed in the precision and sustainability of such modes, but ultimately, entering such arrangements will only highlight the uncontrollable and unexpected sense that my body is — and the processual character of this work, that might ultimately produce something completely alien to the process that it itself is.



FIGURE 3: CAPLIN, A. R. (1864), *HEALTH AND BEAUTY*, FIG. 4. — SAWING EXERCISE.

But how is one to be-friend the fantastic? — that is “*unlocatable, undatable, and unthinkable*”? — that gets displaced and is the nucleus of any form of change; this “*motor of thought*” (Malabou 2011:13)?

In *The Heidegger Change*, Malabou speaks of the fantastic as the point of access in the “ontological metabolism” and in “the triad of change” given by the three forms of change: *Wandel* (change), *Wandlung* (transformation), *Verwandlung* (metamorphosis). (Malabou 2011:1).

Both the mode of visibility of ontological metabolism and the intelligibility and evidence of the never seen, the fantastic ‘in philosophy’ designates at once a kind of approach to change and the very strangeness of what changes and is going to change. It also manifests, by consequence, the uncanniness of the fantastic to itself: its irreducibility to a genre or category of discourse, its resistance to every relegation of itself to a conventional domain, to what Roger Caillois calls ‘the fantastic of principle or obligation’. The philosophical fantastic is contemporary with the bringing to light, in the twentieth century, of the ontological difference and, by way of consequence, the possibility of thinking being without beings. It never designates ‘an element exterior to the human world’ (that of ‘composite monsters, infernal fawns, the irruption of demonic, grotesque or sinister creatures’), but describes THE FOREIGNER ON THE INSIDE, the whole of the metabolic force that sleeps without sleeping in what is, THE VERY FACE OF BEING THAT CONCEPTS CANNOT SAY WITHOUT LOSING FACE.

Simultaneously a mode of visibility and manifestation, the fantastic here designates the phenomenality of ontico-ontological transformations —those of man, god, language, etc. —which unveil the originary mutability of being while revealing at the same time that being is perhaps nothing ... but its mutability.

To the extent that the mutability of being is not—not, that is, a being—its reality is necessarily imaginary, if by imaginary we understand, as Heidegger invites us to, a non-objective modality of presence free of every reference and referent. [...] As an

imaginary production without a referent and pure ontological creation, the fantastic characterizes the apprehension and the regime of existence of what cannot be presented, of, that is, *what can only ever change* (Malabou 2011:12-13; italics by the author, emphasis my own).

Fiction, the fantastic and the imaginary slip not only in amongst each other, but also in the middle of idealist referentialities, between thought and matter, and compose with something else. The imaginary production without a referent, the pure ontological creation, of meaning, is the limit of the exhaustion of all systems of significations. It cannot be reached with revived significations through “the pure and simple suppression of history” or through “the dubious immortalization of what is given ‘contemporary relevance’, the far from innocent occultation of the present (Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe 1988: 15).” It is within this limit, *peras*, that this projection desires its own image.

THIS NOVEL OF MANNERS IS AN IMAGINARY PRODUCTION AND PRAXIS, A GESTURE, AN ACT OF UNDERSTANDING, A BASIC MOTILITY, A POINT OF ACCESS IN THE SEARCH FOR THE RIGHT (*abgestimmt*, or in-tune) FORM. A RHYTHM GIVEN BY THE INHERENTLY FANTASTIC, ORNAMENTAL METABOLISM OF ANY FORM. ANY FORM (PERAS) IN ITSELF, AND THE SEARCH FOR A RIGHT FORM (in-tune by affinity, by proximity, by relation) HAS AN ORNAMENTAL, FANTASTIC STRUCTURE. What could have been a novel, but is the foreigner on the inside, becomes visible and manifests itself in/through the fantastic as INVENTION. What has the obligation to have meaning and value is its own monster —that cannot be presented, that can only ever change.

And how is this fantasy, this abominable monstrosity that rejects its general law in search for its own in-tune determination (characterisation, definition) supposed to work anyway? As a peaceful kingdom of absolute totality radically reigned by three kings —Theory, Work and Subject (or whatever is in its place) — sovereignly and infinitely thinking themselves? The compulsive, repetitive necessity that characterizes our naiveté is that:

[...] We are, still and always aware of the Crisis, convinced that ‘interventions’ are necessary and that the least of texts is immediately ‘effective’ [...]; we all think, as if it went without saying, that politics passes through the literary (or the theoretical) [...] but we have to become aware of the necessity of this repetitive compulsion (Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe 1988: 17).

Nietzsche’s age is the age when all the projects of Humanity come to recognize themselves under the heading of ‘nihilism’, that is doomed from the outset and by essence to the exhaustion of their signification. The fact that this even happened, and that it is still under way ... this inevitably delivers us over to another history which opens up before us beyond signification, a history whose meaning could never consist in a return of ‘meaning’ (no more than Plato could make the meaning of Egypt return, or Christianity could make the meaning of Socratism return, or industrial society could make the meaning of Christian community return) ... this [event] happened to our time as its destination (Ross 2007: 139).

To invent and most particularly understanding invention as an event, means here to rediscover what was there without being there, both in language and in philosophy; it is a question of finding, yes, but of finding for the first time what was always there and what had always been there, to find again, almost to re-find, something in its (contradictory) fusion and in its fission where it had never before been seen, to invent it almost, as one would invent a bomb, but to discover it also almost like the excessively obvious evidence of a purloined letter: never seen, never known, never waited for, never expected as such, while all the while only expecting it and not expecting anything but it, the unexpected (Malabou 2011: 68).⁸

Characters⁹, narrative, text, in their material and ideal bodies are caught in their becoming, in perpetual change, in contact with and against standard determinations. They get infected when making sense. They resist and abide the senses that affect them. It is in this very act of inherent resistance and resilience that they transform and absorb, internalize the virus. Reception, donation and annihilation of form, which are positive creations of form, are as possible as the irrevocable formative creation through destruction of form, as “all suffering is formative of the identity that endures it” (Malabou 2012: 18).

What could have been a NOVEL OF MANNERS is not a novel in THAT sense. But it is a novel (in R. Barthes’ tradition), and it is a novel of manners in that, in its being, it is an exemplary singularity that exposes its proper manner of being. The manner of rising forth is the mode of being of the RIGHT FORM, of the work, of the image, of the figure (Agamben 2009: 27-29, Barthes 2011).

The *contextio* is specific: the structured pre-determined experience, the required obligation of a Ph.D. by project in painting in London at the beginning of the 21st century. The *decorum* is that of the given academic requirements, expectancies, personal habits and manners, stiff relations of concepts, ideas, conventions, images, matter and (pictorial) bodies; of the tension between the singularity and subjectivity of the artwork and its general, objective, theoretical frame-work. These fragments, tensions, are experienced, re-worked and re-invented. They are not invented from scratch, but rediscovered and permuted beyond their physical and conceptual destruction. The image explodes and falls from the sky, as a profane body, re-discovering its mundane determinations — not only being, but the sky too is sick! As are the gods, the heavens, light, time, space and logos (Noica 2009: 46) — the body implodes and arises from the ground as a sacred image into the realm of the general. Ornaments expand and, unstoppable in their growth, inflect into their own structure and become ornamental. The arabesque is neither visual nor cognitive, neither figure nor form, image or line, but all of them at once.

⁸ Malabou cites Derrida from: A Time for Farewells: Heidegger (read by) Hegel (read by) Malabou, a preface by Jacques Derrida to her doctoral thesis, *The Future of Hegel. Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic*.

⁹ What is a character? A character is what is necessary for any causality. A cause cannot be a cause unless it presides over a precise order of events (Malabou 2012: 23). In Kant’s own words: “Es muß aber eine jede wirkende Ursache einen *Charakter* haben, d.i. ein Gesetz ihrer Kausalität, ohne welches sie gar nicht Ursache sein würde (Kant 2000: 492-493)” — the law of a causality without which it would not be a cause at all, that is, as the definite and specific relation between a cause and its effects.

The narrative presents, it is an arabesque. The arabesque is a figure of thought, an idea; more than an idea, it is its structuring principle and generative force, its *velum*. Irrespectively of the staged narrative as an interlaced conjuncture, its body is real: a collection of found, anonymous texts, fragments, works, objects — arabesque writing edited by Una Joc.

The RIGHT FORM is excavated through the collaboration between Una Joc and Cristina Cojanu. A split-author, a couple, a double aspect mirroring and multiplying the unfolding made manifest as plural openings, voices and composite faces. Characters and narrative develop through this transformational relation. Una's voice rests in the text(s); it slips in among other voices and resists, perturbs linear endeavours, as much as, at times, it reinvigorates them. Her fantastic mode enacts, on the one hand, the principle of thrift in the mushrooming of meaning and holds contained its cancerous excess, on the other hand, her mode is characterized by the ability to take on an almost endless number of variables that open her and thus the meaningful relations she creates to an absolute exteriority. To what extent and where exactly in the text(s), the fictive editorial voice mutates into an authorial voice is important only for the reader who looks for the authority of the functional author in the text. For homogeneity, filiation, authentication, reciprocal explanation, status and value, theoretical coherence and stylistic unity, authenticity and originality. But these are not findings at stake in this NOVEL OF MANNERS.

Una Joc: 'These text(s) have been partly found, partly searched for actively and [...] found eventually, read and scanned, printed out, bought, stolen, collected and kept, weighted down on shelves, sediments, piles in waiting, wasted copies marked and re-marked, collaged, cut, taken apart, glued together, brick by brick —in a form of writing. They invaded the room of my own, often in boxes, arriving at my door. Over the past four years, almost in rhythmic intervals, more and more arrived. In time past, they filled out my space, my room, shelf by shelf, corner after corner, and every possible surface. A growing weight to be impossibly secured by walls of improbable stature, they spread out on the floor. They packed also my studio. I was now one among them, one of them. I-becoming-they. Time itself is written in the text, as it passes, space as it spaces. In vague propositions that cannot hope to fully specify a determinate set of properties (Valéry 1979).'

If the fantastic is a point of access, what one calls 'appropriation' is the exterior that permeates the membrane, the skin of the project.

Una Joc: 'I live the text(s) as a maze of entry-exist points through multiple, total or partial embodiments, prosthetic strategies, thought instincts, experiments and intentional detours. I find my way by discovering and following in private the multiple trails exposed by the text(s)' inner reverberations. More or less intense or acute, more or less present or withdrawn, they momentarily allow me to unmake the confinement of the straight line. But, as a body I do gravitate to straight lines and the exit-entry points align themselves to a certain pattern that

demands their own structural right. This I cannot deny, nor that I am writing with my eyes and that I am bound by a LAW.'

The text(s) differ and intertwine, scroll along lines of thought and cartouches of rest and pause, only to roll up again and flourish into parergonic detours. In a pedestrian thought, this structure might be given by a predetermined ORDER. In ORIENTAL thought-variation, the structure is not pre-given, but fully and immersively lived in the present and individually.

Una Joc: 'There is no other way to create and simultaneously experience such a structure than by letting it be, by being it, living it, and in keeping it alive. The body never lies, it is real, and if it succumbs to this thought-path, it becomes and is this path. One has to try not to try too hard to make some thing, nor to unmake it either.'

A choir of written utterances, sounds, noises — lingual, sequential, cadenced presences of time — the conventional voice that resists and persists, the academic voice that invokes and upsets, an atonal voice that tunes and focuses. Spread out densities on a flat platform murmuring the arrival or departure of a rusty train of thought. Not yet here; or here, for a moment or two, only to depart for other arrivals, relations, presentations, conceived in time, historically, indefinite appearances in murmur of forms, names, visions, works, multiplying the one, connecting, lingering. Becoming an I/EYE, and letting it be, in the idle gait of sense.

A project is the subjective seed of a nascent object. An accomplished project should be at the same time entirely subjective and entirely objective, an indivisible animated (living) individual. In its origin, the project is completely subjective, original, and just in this spirit possible, in its character purely objective, physical and a moral necessity. The meaning of projects which we may also call fragments from the future differs from the sense of fragments of the past only in its orientation arrow, which for the latter is regressive and the former progressive. What is important and what counts is the skill to SIMULTANEOUSLY REALISE, IDEALISE, COMPLEMENT AND PRESENT THINGS INSTANTLY. [...] (Schlegel 1988: 107, my own translation).

Schlegel puts in a very poignant form the aspiration of a Ph.D. by project (in painting), while also capturing its impossible paradox. And this is the second limit within which the project should manifest itself. (The first limit was that of sense.).

(Una Joc: Note that this is the myth of parthenogenesis in our culture and the long history of the (male) fantasy of self-generation.)

What is at stake in a research by practice, in a visible or hidden, one way or another, is the compulsion of repeating, the necessity that still compels us, of what was the crisis of the Athenaeum fragments in Early Jena Romanticism: the thing that produces the truth of the production of itself, of its own auto-production, the 'subject-work', the work that works out and

presents its own workings, its own presentation (*Darstellung-Dichtung*); as much as the problematic of a subject permanently rejecting any subjectivity or the dissolution of all processes of production in the abyss of the subject (Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe 1988). The obligation that one necessarily faces in a Ph.D. by project contains in itself the obligation to un-decide for oneself what the subject, the object, the subject-object relation, the universal subject of knowledge (the cannibal I/eye), its historical ground, its subjectivity might be; what is one's relation to them; how meaning is produced and how it circulates in our world.

Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe point out that what is referred to as the Early Jena Romanticism and the Athenaeum group, was in fact the moment, the crisis, that produced for the first time the conditions for (in the aftermath of Kant and his three Critiques) speculative thought and critical thinking, theory and research. Especially since Kant, the problem of the aesthetic presentation of ideas of reason, in other words, the relation between concepts or ideas and real things, or the relation between subject and object, between ideas and their material manifestation, became the historical paradigm of the dualism in modern philosophy. It is the problem of what Kant calls 'the coordination of self-same terms' and the necessity for something to MEDIATE between them. It is a problem of ORIENTATION AND OF INTERMEDIARY FORMS that trans-form all dualisms — of the exposition that unfolds between '*Dichtung*' and '*Darstellung*'. This is historically a highly controversial terrain, difficult to navigate, and only in indirect way the focus of this project. However it is important to understand the mechanics of the movement, to expand the motility of the body (of flesh and thought) to transfer the skills and affects from one body to the other.

Thinking back, about skill — "the skill to SIMULTANEOUSLY REALISE, IDEALISE, COMPLEMENT AND PRESENT THINGS INSTANTLY" — This is not a coachable skill that one can acquire through following a step by step learning method; there is not one fix method or methodology to help acquiring this skill, and therein lies hidden its paradox. There are many (scientific) research projects that are experimental, yet the method of experiment is given in all these cases. But: "The skill to SIMULTANEOUSLY REALISE, IDEALISE, COMPLEMENT AND PRESENT THINGS INSTANTLY" implies the fantasy of no delay between experiment and method; they have to be created simultaneously. Rather than through a skill, such projects come to light through the EXPERIENCE of complex interrelations and a whole network of skills; they depend upon an expanded texture woven together in different ORNAMENTAL and PLASTIC structures, and in their very own time and space.

The problem of the relation between thought and matter is in modern philosophy the problem of presentation (the Kantian problem of '*Darstellung*'). Different routes taken formed different parties, sedimented around deep and unbridgeable crevasses. For Heidegger, the problem of presentation becomes the problem of the relation between beings and Being and thus THE essential problem of thinking. The problem of presentation precedes the problem of the representation of the 'absolute', which in itself disintegrates in the concomitant and multiple historicisation of relations of presentation. 'Presentation' became with Heidegger the focus of

thinking in general, being also a reflection on the historicity, temporality and continuity of relations under which things appear as such (Ross 2007).

Why is it meaningful to take on now the obligation of such a project? What is the meaning of the project beyond itself and beyond myself? Nancy wrote to ME in his texts, that I am too late to ask such questions and in this form. I cannot hope anymore to find A meaning, a fixed signification, given to me from the past or in the present. And I should not expect one complete, absolute answer either. I can only be-with-sense(s). This is my fiction and truth alike. My orientation function: not a sense, but also not no sense.

Literature, Derrida explains in a dialogue with H el ene Cixous, opens this privileged space where one can say everything and avow everything without the secret having been betrayed: due to the fictional status of the literary work, even if I reveal you the truth of my secret, I can always claim, by right, without being refuted, that "it is not I who speaks in my name." This poses again the question of the "proper name". Who speaks? Literature has the political right to say everything. [...] This right — to say everything without avowing anything — weaves a link between literature and democracy.¹⁰

What forms of knowledge are produced in what modes of existence, when the ornamental is a principle of thrift in painting and in writing? What will emerge from the working-out of the ornamental force itself? In what modes of existence and through what set of conventions are we encountering painting that neither unconsciously depicts nor stubbornly negates, but one that is embodying its inherent condition of the ornamental? Can the arabesque and the ornamental be invented as research-forms?

Asking such questions in this context not only displays certain thinking patterns that create and prescribe certain expectations responding to certain discourses, artistic practices and theories. This endeavour inevitably pounces on to inexhaustible Google-searches and knowledge(s) impossible to completely cover even in extensive periods of time. Moreover, they speak also of those recurring thinking patterns that determine what is acceptable and what not, that prescribe not only form, but content too—what is acceptable as research. Unavoidably, this is the *decorum* in which this thesis is AT HOME.

Una Joc: 'THE CHARACTER'S CHARACTERISATION IS ITS CHEMICAL DECOMPOSITION, YET THERE ARE OF EACH INDIVIDUAL AN ENDLESS NUMBER OF DEFINITIONS. A PROJECT IS A CHARACTER'S CHARACTERISATION. ITS POR-TRAIT, ITS DISTINCTION THAT PULLS AND DRAWS, ITS DETERMINATION. The vision of uncountable grains of a discursive desert cannot break this slim but firm core.' The all-encompassing and ordered perspective of an omnipresent gaze is not the I/eye of this intentionality. Instead, a

¹⁰ From: *Word to Life: A Dialogue between Jacques Derrida and H el ene Cixous*, in: *New Literary History*, Volume 37, Number 1, Winter 2006, in: Roelstraete 2009: 47-48.

body, a look (Heidegger 1997: 65) is opening up and becomes a variant, a narrow path, through short glances, dripping steps, forwards, backwards, sideways.

WHAT THIS PROJECT IS AND WHAT IT ISN'T

To define something and what it means to define are complex aporias in themselves, and there are different ways and methods to approach them. But in a case like this, when all factors are variable, nothing being fixed or offering an anchoring point of knowing-truths, when one should not and cannot define or fix anything, the route taken is that of the imaginary — to which one has to fully commit oneself, without remainder: something is given, this is what matters and not what is given. Along this trail, one quickly starts to discover, experience, what holds one can grab and pinch tightly, which slippery slopers and crimps one has to be attentive to and which moves and steps remain unsustainable, draining away the elegance and strength of any body cramped in a gravitational conflict. Balanced stretching will help one reach surprisingly far, but jumping figures, releasing the ground, imagining the holding snatch, will even surpass the unreachable limit.



FIGURE 4: FOUND IMAGE.

In a case like this, where form, method and content (subject) need to be invented and invented simultaneously; when meaning itself is not being given, but made and experienced; when the will to say, to see or to know needs to withdraw itself for the taking place of sense, then, the impossibility of saying what this project is, is the imperative. It is the imperative of the process of experiencing and the making sense of the project and its limits. On the way, one discovers in its morphogenesis, *WHAT IT IS NOT*, what it does not — and, eventually, *WHAT IT IS*, what it becomes. This is the imperative of the process itself, a given fact, an urgent call, a simultaneous gesture in which fantastic thought begins and maintains itself in subjection to the imperative.

The history of visual arts, the elaboration in time of major issues of visual understanding, is usually assumed to be the Western tradition of art and what has been written in the art historical discourse, in a chronological sequence, about art, visual perception and forms, is for the most part about and from the perspective of the Western tradition. Cultural comparisons between West and East are often problematic and dangerous. I don't aim to establish a general narrative about painting and the arabesque, nor any parallels or comparisons between certain paintings and arabesques. There are no existing objects, things, images, or ideas, from the past or present, to look at and to compare with each other.

It is not the intention of my thesis to be an art historical study about the arabesque, the quintessential element of the Islamic art. For this purpose, I don't have the right abilities and

knowledge. My first encounters with the arabesque were in literary and art historical texts on Western painting (Goethe's *Von der Arabeske*, essays on Matisse, Dürer, or Escher), where the meaning of the word was often conflated with the idea of the decorative. Later, I (re)discovered in fragments by Friedrich Schlegel its relation to literature. In many ways, my experience of and relation with the arabesque overlapped with the development of a conscious relation with ornament. Grabar's erudite studies on Islamic art and his understanding of ornament as a form of mediation were influential guides in the process, as were Riegl's studies, *Stilfragen* and *Spätromische Kunst-Industrie* and Kühnel's concise study *The Arabesque. Meaning and Transformation of an Ornament*.

Ornament, the art historical concept, is a huge and complex area of research with a long history and development. Such a wide subject cannot be dealt with in a thesis by project in general and trying to do so would be an inadequate task, even for a Ph.D. by thesis. The research focus would have to be narrowed down to a much, much smaller area. My understanding of ornament reflects and is informed by the making of things, by my direct concerns in my studio, and is therefore, from a certain perspective, incomplete and subjective. Nonetheless, art historical studies were a valuable source of information.

The ornament in architecture is probably the most intense research area in which contemporary ornament in its discursive, cognitive, symbolic, functional or social relevance is most feverishly debated. If, a few years ago, books spoke of a return of ornament in postmodern architecture after its debasement in modernism, than, nowadays, one speaks of ornament as the very condition of architecture itself (Dürfeld 2008; Levit 2008: 7). The determinations that contemporary ornament takes in architecture are often related to morphogenetic formal innovations, parametrically controlled patterns and flexible and variable geometries. Once again, I have to write that this is another fascinating area of research whose temptations, I am afraid I have to resist. But: if ornament is the condition of architecture because of its morphogenetic form innovations — *morphogenesis* is a scientific term that refers to the dynamic development of the embryo that describes the development from simple three-layered cellular sheath to tube to increasingly differentiated parts that come into being during gestation, and that implies that a certain latent 'intelligence' or code is present within the DNA of the cells that propels them toward their later form (Levit 2008: 7) — then, I have to ask myself: is not this ornamental condition (which I believe to be the case not only for architecture) another way to experience plasticity as the very condition of being?

Already in my second research year I stumbled across the intersection between the ORNAMENTAL and PLASTICITY. ORNAMENT is a concept coming from rhetoric, art and aesthetics, from the context of adequate taste, TRUTH and moral (and disciplinary) purity. Ornament, in this line of arbitrary, but historical determinations, seemed to have found its measure: THE ORNAMENTAL. The list of proper names that exercised their minds on this ground is long. Suffice is to mention here that

Riegl (who was an antagonist to Semper's materialist theory of ornament, and who was at the modernist beginning of this debate almost a contemporary to Loos) was influenced in his thinking and art historical theory, by Hegel. PLASTICITY (*plassein*, to mould — *plasma*, something moulded or created), on the other hand, is an ancient philosophical concept. Its roots are as old as those of ornament (*ornare-ornatus*). Here it is specifically addressed, as Malabou elaborated it from her encounter with it in Hegel's introduction to *Phenomenology of the Spirit* to its exposition as an ontological concept in Heidegger's thought. Plasticity refers to equilibrium between the receiving and giving of forms; it is not a static structure, but one that generates structure.

At that stage, bringing the two together felt like being both a gift and a spell. The concept of PLASTICITY was a bridge over the ontological distance between ornament/ornamental and Nancy's ontological understanding of the image. And I saw the ornamental as an intermediary between representation and presentation. At the same time, the very impulse to reflect on the ornamental as an ontological mode in the image was put into question. Is not the very PLASTICITY of every being and every form also the ontological condition of the image? What need was there, for the ORNAMENTAL, other than the ornamental proliferation of concepts in a bad infinity (Hegel)? Plasticity implies change, difference (which is often identified culturally as pejorative form). The ornamental as a form of mediation is a mode of the 'as-well-as' and not an either/or mode. It leads to something other than itself and it seems to be less a fantasy about the capacity of individuals to make and re-make themselves (which may lead to a crisis of arbitrariness), and more about the mediation between individuals.

And if THE ORNAMENTAL, and PLASTICITY, seem to be the very condition not only of architecture but of being and of the image, and thus of painting, of art, what does this mean for painting? If being is nothing more than its own changeability, if the image, as being, is nothing more than its own changeability, is there anything else that appears through THE ORNAMENTAL, that is its own sense? A morphogenetic understanding of form brings with itself a certain duration, a gestation period, a temporality that precedes time, a waiting, an in-between, a modus of transition, of mediation and suspension — and it is maybe here, where THE ORNAMENTAL dwells, no matter if it is for an instant or an eternity.

The question of progress is something one has to pause on here— because morphogenesis does imply a certain progression — but a progression towards something that is already latently present, almost a regression, an invention, as Derrida would call it. A second idea that one has to pause on is the nature of relation of the whole to the parts and vice versa (which is known to be more a continental problem, as the empiricism of Anglo-Saxon tradition tended to focus on the smallest details).

This writing is not ABOUT painting, ABOUT a particular moment, movement or individual artist or work in the discourse of painting. Such as would be, for example, looking at Runge's graphic series

Die Zeiten (1805-1807) in relation to the arabesque as a figure of thought in Early Jena Romanticism; or looking at the arabesque through Dürer's frame-drawings in the prayer book of Maximilian I and Sigmar Polke's series *Schleifenbilder* (1986); or taking as starting point an exhibition, such as *Ornament and Abstraction. A Dialogue Between Art from Different Cultures, Modern Age and the Present*, Fondation Beyeler, Basel: Fondation Beyeler Museum (2001), or any other exhibition — to name only a few more or less arbitrary examples.

I am also not analysing a relation between abstract painting, abstraction and ornament, or any other particular artistic position in painting. One could write *about* Klee's script paintings, Reinhardt's *Calligraphic Painting*, Pollock's paintings or Marden's interest in Chinese calligraphy in relation to Grabar's idea of the intermediary of writing; or *about* the 'minor' positions in painting of those who really committed to the study and understanding of Islamic ornament (Escher), as against 'major' artist, who appropriated freely elements and forms (Matisse, Le Witt, Stella or Taaffe).

love for another one and for God. And, when the Turkish poet Fuzuli says "my eternal prayer is the Koranic verse of thy face," he transforms writing into the symbol of that which is most beautiful, but neither he nor Rumi nor the hundreds of poets from Ottoman Turkey to Bangladesh who have proclaimed writing as the paragon of all beauty and virtue have helped us in transferring their sensuous awareness into an understanding of a written line. In fact, in one of those wonderful paradoxes that make medieval theology so exciting, according to the tenth-century writer al-Tha'alibi, the worst of writing is the writing of angels because it must be illegible to humans. It is possible to imagine that some wild pages of illegible writing done in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were examples of angelic writing (fig. 68).⁸⁴

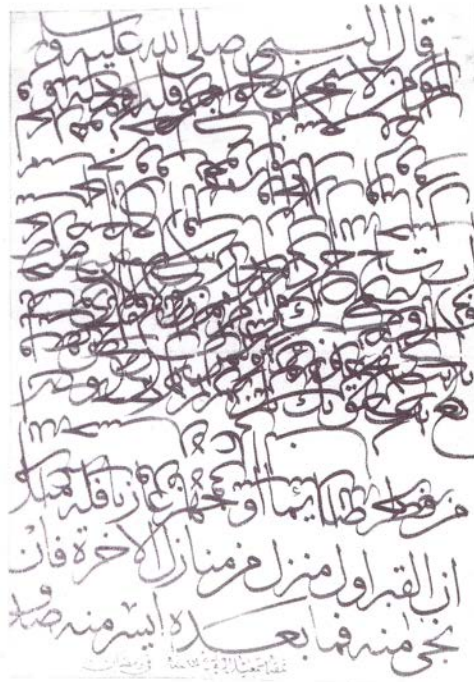


Fig. 68. Wild writing, Ottoman, nineteenth century.

FIGURE 5: (GRABAR, 1992: 90).

In the beginning, I thought that I have to recover within the discipline of painting a meaning of ornament and to advocate its importance and presence in spite of, or even because of its modernist and gendered critique. Later on, I realised that this couldn't be an appropriate aim for this project, as it would shift the focus too heavily towards art historical discourse. It is important to have such knowledge, but I don't think that a thesis by project in painting should bend too heavily towards any other discourse, or that the work should be done through another discourse. Nonetheless, I did focus sometimes more on certain philosophical concepts and texts, being under the spell of a need to elaborate new concepts. Again, I do not think that a Ph.D. by project in painting can elaborate a concept, or even an idea (depending on how one understands ideas; Nancy 2005: 87), or that it can have the same form as a philosophical research —such as, for example, Malabou's exceptional doctoral thesis *The Future of Hegel. Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic*, where she elaborated the concept of "plasticity".

This thesis emerged out of a research project by practice in painting, and it should be its intention to find the right form for this specific undertaking and not simply appropriate already existing forms from other fields, whose research meaning and value has been already established and accepted as such.

The chosen subject of a thesis by project cannot be limited to what is required of the subject of research in other fields — here, IT EVEN MIGHT CHOOSE YOU! And the expectancy to HAVE A RESEARCH SUBJECT was the first thing I had to leave behind. If there is a subject, only one, than it is for sure not what one knows it to be, but an obvious monstrosity that cannot gather into being-ABOUT something, that disseminates into being-with, in ex-change with some things. This thesis, project needs to invent its form, its method and the event of its subject simultaneously, while making, without any temporal delay. Whatever its form is, it is an ex-position of sense.

INTERFERENCES — MEANING-FUL ANXIETIES

Something that hasn't been stated elsewhere, as clearly as here, is that this is a work in the present. The project and its workings are in the present, even though they move also between different and multiple temporalities. In terms of a chronological historical time, the project invokes moments of the past, some of which are as ancient as the idea of the arabesque dating from the period of the formation of Islamic art¹¹, or around the year 1600, when the Italian Renaissance invented the term 'arabesque'. The challenge one faces right from the start, with respect to this, is one implied by the possibility that one seeks in the past and in a foreign culture answers for questions of the present and about the culture one belongs to. One might also suspect that such an attitude springs out of a *romantic* impulse.

It is a particular attitude to re-Orient myself temporally and spatially in this moment. This attitude comes with its own historical and cultural baggage, its own weights, and I have to remain alert to the dangers hidden under multiple layers of distance. I have to pay attention to any attempts of bridging and crossing, to false translations, forced appropriations, relations or connections, to misreading and hierarchical meaning impositions; to a strong will to see and to know an answer, a relation, and to be able to say it, to identify it; but also to what may remain hidden or covered up in the course of such metamorphic and metonymic changes.

The idea of the arabesque and its ornamental forms were in their original context connected to utilitarian objects and were defined by popular taste. The double paradigms of being and the image were not relevant in the same way. The visual pleasure they cared to produce was doubled by a habitual, almost internalized tactile contact, by a particular form of perception and a specific attitude towards figural representation. They were used by all social levels and were not intended as art. Industrial objects predominated over single works of art. What early Islamic objects have in common and share among themselves is a technical virtuosity, a SKILL TO MAKE-BELIEVE (to make metal or stone look like textile lace), the WONDER that comes from experiencing such skill and the creation of stories of discovering or failing to discover the secrets behind this wonder, the mysteries, the intimacies that remain hidden and protected by complex and rich interlacing. This kind of relations can easily be overseen, but it is important to keep them in mind, especially if one approaches painting from an ontological understanding of the image and from the tension between different modes of being and the ornamental as an intermediary form of being¹² (Grabar 2006: 13-29).

¹¹For an erudite analysis of an 'exact' chronology and the problems of 'formation' of 'Islamic' art, see: (Grabar: 1973, 1987).

¹² For Plato the image is an intermediary form of being, an *atopon*, between being and non-being, thus not a proper being. The discourse of painting runs in parallel and echoes a specific understanding and thinking of the image.

Traditional Western painting, on the other hand, was the art form par excellence. It was a way to an ideal higher state, a 'window to another world', something to be transcended through contemplation. It had a narrative and symbolic meaning. Traditionally, painting implied frontality between viewer and a painting on the wall that constituted an opening into a metaphysical space. Even after all modernist and avant-garde moves to challenge and disrupt a traditional understanding of painting, after all postmodernist attempts to deconstruct and re-construct it, painting, or rather paintings in plural, still remained primarily a visual form of art (subjected to truth's paradigms).

The attitude to re-Orient myself is not only an attitude but also a gesture and an act. I co-relate painting and the image, which belong to another mode of existence, with something whose entire scope was to create pleasure and wonder by enhancing functional objects, tools at-hand (to use Heidegger's term). I am walking the line between the sacred and the profane, in many aspects. Western painting has been challenged in many different ways in its meaning, purpose or understanding and we have been often threatened and entertained with its death. Many artists pushed painting and art closer and closer to the 'daily' realm— of which Marcel Duchamp is maybe the most iconic example with his ready-mades.

Western art discourse seems to create its needs, classifications, interests and expectations, definitions as a self-obsessed, egoistic cannibal. The 'import' of early Islamic artefacts into the Western art discourse was essentially, and re-phrased in 'modernist' terms, a re-representation of 'ready-mades', of 'industrial' daily objects, that allowed to define and to classify taxonomically Islamic art according to aesthetic principles and values of Western art tradition. The whole endeavour was to establish a discursive space for these Near Eastern artefacts, so loved by Western collectors, that would re-create/re-present them as artworks, yet also in opposition to Western artworks. Islamic art has been institutionalised by the Western world from the perspective of the Western tradition and on the basis of its own aesthetic principles. Duchamp's ready-mades exposed also this collective, (un)conscious, yet ferocious cannibalism of the Western art-world.

As we still haven't said enough about painting (Myers, T.R.: 2011, 12), can we look at it in terms of a skill-to-make-believe, of wonder and mystery; of a virtuosity and intimacy that is a TECHNICS of bodies (Nancy)? We haven't stopped discovering (or failing to discover) its mysteries. Is not a painting that enters our life; that we touch and are in contact with painting's sense? Is not painting axiomatically a private event for each one of us?

A problem, impossible to stress often enough, is what I have called the ‘impossible paradox’¹³ of the project, and this is the necessity of the absolute identity between the concrete work/the exhibition form and the need for abstract frames of reference; in other words “the production of the production” or “the presentation of presentation” (which is the image in Nancy’s understanding). In this problem there is actually a conflation of two problems. One is the problem of the work that produces its own theory, that of signifying and a-signifying meaning: a sense that happens as the excess of meaning or signification, of language, and a sense represented and given in concepts, in language. The second problem is related to this, but it is more specific to the relation between painting and literature, image and word. This problem is specific to the shifting from one medium to the other, which is almost always the case with paintings. Our responses to them are almost never in the same medium. The case of a research by practice is a potentialization of this shifting from one medium to another, in that it is the shifting of the shifting from one medium to another, from image to word, from sense to sense. To come back to what I said earlier about the different temporalities of the project, this is for sure A time of the project, a microscopic internal time opened by these shifts, their structure and pattern, with all their progresses and regresses and detours and blockages or stagnations and lines of flight and drops. And if painting or images are presenting sense, if they expose sense that is not given as linguistic sense in words, than what kind of ‘theory’ of their own can they produce? How open can this signifying abstract meaning be and still resist complete psychosis and neurosis?

The two narratives, the death of painting and of ornament, these figures of endpoint and crisis, shook the disciplines’ timely reasoning to the core, but they equally strengthened their acts and boosted their excessive production, circulation and functional displacement. It is here, where the ornamental can be seen most effectively as a principle of thrift at work. Their continuity was, and still is perpetuated by an existential necessity of a desire for visual pleasure and symbolic forms, for stories and fiction, doubled by the exchange structure of our capitalist world with its culture of excessive hyper-proliferation, unsaturated demand and display of power. Life becomes our fiction and with this our mythical regeneration. Plasticity (and plastic, the material that is the very idea of its infinite transformation) echoes an idea of a continuous creation, and thus the idea of theological creation.

Traditional disciplines, like painting, cannot but question their limit, first of all, in relation to life, and in relation to the ornamental and the plasticity of being; they have to re-invent themselves with respect to an ornament-concept that reflects the exchange-structure of this world and our current understanding, use, design and need for ornament. This started to happen in modern painting, after which it had been intensified for a brief period in the modernist

¹³ “Now, let there be no doubt, much less confusion: paradox is not confusion, of course — nor is it doubt: it is assertive, ascertained taunting of thought itself (Roelstraete 2009: 25).”

discourse with respect to a shallow planarity, the figure-ground relation and the transformation of the pictorial field from a Newtonian perspectival set-space into an ornamental relational (Leibnizian) inter-space — only to be repressed once more in the next move.

The conceptual framework sustaining such kipping thoughts expands the ornamental as form-producing form only to (re)-flex an ontological understanding of the image, as the “presentation of presentation” (Nancy 2005) into a weightless point from which to pull up and follow through the arabesque. This movement scales up and down the infinite rapport between image and the ornamental and develops a complex motility between being-language, being-image and being-ornament —and, not to forget, being-script.

A modified traditional hypothetico-deductive model is inducted: explored is a *hypo* (under)-thesis (-a placing, -proposition), not of explanation, but of a *phantasm*, the inventive conception of a fictional object of the fantastic — a non-objective modality of presence free of every reference and referent (Heidegger, Malabou 1973: 173). Method itself is addressed as a question, a limit, a projection, something to be excavated, reached, invented; remembered, but not something that is given. The arabesque, that is movement, carries forward the momentum of a play out, of multiple play outs, of plastic and graphic imminence from which a figure might emerge:

What was at first, and what at last remains.
And what the middle bringeth, but contains
End and beginning evermore the same;
Thy song is changeful as yon starry frame,
And that thou ne'er beginnest, is thy fate.
That thou canst never end, doth make thee great.

(Appropriated from J. W. Goethe's *Hafis Nameh*, in *West-Östlicher Divan*, translated by E. A. Bowring, in: Kühnel 1976:10; Schimmel 2001, in: Brüderlin 2001: 23.)

The ornamental arabesque is the structuring principle and generative force, which (re)-presents and trans-forms in contact its own figure, body, form. It is “[...] jene durch die Dichtungskraft hervorgebrachte Form, in der sich die unendliche Fülle ahnungsweise manifestiert (Pollheim 1966: 56 in Kirves 2012: 23)” — the arabesque is that form that is brought forward, and exposed through *Dichtung*¹⁴, which is neither only fiction, nor only poetry. In this form the infinite plenitude of the one manifests itself suggestively (directly, not symbolically).

The hypothesis of invention, this PHANTASM, makes something visible as such along with the fact that vision requires a politics of positioning and responsibility. The arabesque is method (from old Greek: *meta* (after) and *hodos* (way, a traveling). In a very literal WAY here, it leads me to be immersed and to follow the intricacies of a line in its kaleidoscopic all-overness; in the imaginary

¹⁴ For *Darstellung* and *Dichtung*: (Nancy 2008: 68-90).

elaboration of its being an “exemplary singularity” (Agamben). The figure of the arabesque figures something out. It opens up a temporally constituted space of events into an event-space, a truth-space. Its figuration is processual and instantiates itself in the act of looking in-between figure and ground. Its ontic-ontological matter exemplifies itself concretely in a specific temporal-spatial structure and not in a symbolic way (Kirves 2012: 17).

Una Joc: ‘One must not aim at originality, particularly in our time; for everything original is the object of a concentrated aim and a very avid attention that is anxious to exploit the slightest means for distinguishing itself. The result is that what was original in the morning is copied the same evening; and the more conspicuous and new it was in the morning, the more conspicuous and intolerable in the evening is the repetition of the effect one had created. — Despise the old and the new alike (Valéry 1989: 182).’

Fiction is our life. As we live, we are continually producing fictions. ... You are at present thinking of the longed-for moment when I shall have finished speaking. ... It is a fiction! We live only by fictions, which are our projects, hopes, memories, regrets, thoughts etc., and we are no more than their perpetual invention. Note well (I insist!) — that all these fictions necessarily relate to *what is not*, and are no less necessarily opposed to *what is*; besides, which is curious, it is *what is* that gives birth to *what is not*, and *what is not* that constantly responds to *what is*. You are here, and later on you will no longer be here, and you know it. *What is not* corresponds in your mind to *what is*. That is because the power over you of *what is* produces the power in you of *what is not*; and the latter power changes into a feeling of impotence upon contact with *what is*. So we revolt against facts; we cannot admit a fact like death. Our hopes, our grudges, all this is a direct, instantaneous product of conflict between *what is* and *what is not* (Valéry 1989: 227).’

What painting as practice is, and what it is not, is something that is questioned along with its relation to other art disciplines. What is its medium, its material, its work? The conventions of its tradition have to be (re)discovered, they are not immutable realities. Is not, the entire history of painting, one long collection of successive and manly novels of manners —written with plenty of time and studio room space of their own? Representation/description and prescription — and a compulsive need to repeat again and again a crisis.

Una Joc: ‘But, one can learn to make the most of few well-observed conventions: this is the mainspring of all games. Once they exist and one is used to, one expects them, one can then enjoy breaking them (Valéry 1989: 195).’

The spaces of different forms of knowledge that refuse language — which is precisely what is at stake in an image, but also in the workout of the body — carry equal force to produce knowledge(s). This thesis, in the light of the image as presentation and representation, ventures in a relation between painting and bodybuilding practices, and produces along the way its

instruments for participating in such a relation. Corporeality and embodiment (informed by the historical representation of the female body in painting), the corporeal experience of a painting body, the body as image, or image as body; the body as affecting and affected by a painting practice or by popular subcultural bodybuilding practices, are only some of the permutations discovered within the syntactic opened by the arabesque.

THE ARABESQUE

That you canst never end, doth make thee great,
And that thou ne'er beginnest, is thy fate.
Thy song is changeful as yon starry frame,
End and beginning evermore the same;
And what the middle bringeth, but contains
What was at first, and what at last remains.

Dass du nicht enden kannst, das macht dich groß,
Und daß du nie beginnst, das ist dein Los.
Dein Lied ist drehend wie die Sterngewölbe,
Anfang und Ende immerfort dasselbe,
Und was die Mitte bringt, ist offenbar
Das, was zu Ende bleibt und anfangs war.

(From Goethe's *Hafis Nameh* in his *West-Östlicher Divan*, translated by E. A. Bowring. (Kühnel 1976: 10; Schimmel 2001, in Brüderlin 2001: 31).

These lines by Goethe instantiate the sense of near Eastern poetry, but they also capture the essence of the idea of the arabesque, of this special mentality that also penetrated Arabic music and poetry (Schimmel 2001, in Brüderlin 2001: 31). (However, Goethe himself spoke of the arabesque in its western context as mere decoration, '*Zierart*' and '*bloße Dekoration*').

The relationship to the linear language of the arabesque appears strongly 'in Arabic poetry, [...] the poet does not try to evoke a real past but only its shadowy memory, elaborating it with bubbling fantasy and by stressing it with brilliant but fleetingly executed descriptions of the mere ephemeral aspects of the event. Alliterative and end rhymes, metaphors, and synonyms served him as expressive contrivances; and just as the serial repetition of the main motif's variation seems to the designer to be the perfect solution, so does the poet try to find perfect formulation through the harmony of beginning and end verses and the winged rhythm of the words forming his ode. [...]

[...] in Arabic music, with its tonal variation of a single, continuous, and apparently unending melody, without the use of stressed themes, but bubbling up and then fading away in harmonies just as does the continuously branching of a scrollwork, (Kühnel 1976: 10).

The Arabic poem aimed to be a reflectance of an invisible principle of order (Schimmel 2001, in Brüderlin 2001: 32). The technical term for poetry, *nazm*, means order or system. The poetic impulse aims to condense experiences in highly abstract, stylised and harmonic forms. The classic lyrical Persian poem form, the *ghasel*, or the heavy orchestrated poem of praise, *kassida*, appear to be never ending harmonies that can finish only through the artificial construction and insertion of an end-verse. This is assisted by the grammatical structure of classic Arabic language that builds on majoritarian three-letter roots, which allow, almost with mathematical precision, a

rhythmic expansion of the roots, creating, once again, the impression of an atmospheric infinite rapport.

The arabesque is the last great ornament in Western art history. When mentioned in relation to my research, the word itself seems to provoke confusion. Either because its meaning is not understood anymore, coming from a forgotten past and a foreign culture, or, because its equivocal meaning-transformations hamper a quick grasp into one single meaning. (Or maybe because my interlocutors are surprised by, uninterested in my research focus, as they reject anything related to ornaments.)

In common speech, the arabesque denotes a type of ornament, something decorated in this manner, or anything decorative and superfluous. In its widest sense, from a morphological perspective, it refers to rich vegetal or geometric motifs of Islamic origin, even to Islamic decorative inscriptions or figural motifs in general. With the emergence of a formalist theory of ornamentation and pattern design appeared also the need for more specific classifications and formal taxonomies, which led to a restriction in meaning. As a technical term, art historians employ it to describe ornament-forms encountered in only two periods: in Islamic art from about the 9th century onwards (Near-Eastern arabesque) and in Western art from the Renaissance onwards (Western arabesque). As surface decoration, it was used in architecture, on exterior and interior walls, on floors and ceilings, on functional objects, carpets, textiles, vases, furniture, in illumination and calligraphy.

The Austrian art historian, Alois Riegl defined it as the genus of vegetal ornament of the Saracen art, that is, of Islamic art in medieval and modern time; and described it as a *Gabelranke* or *Gabelblattranke*: the “stylized form of the forked rinceaux”, an interplay of twine elements with new ones, creating a veil-net beyond recognition in which no leaf or stem endings run down freely, each end beginning a new convolute of curls and fringes. The arabesque is an untouched *sui generis* property of the Orient, especially of the Arab world; and the name of a specific form grounded (*legt ja zu Grunde*) in ancient stylized forms of twill ornaments (*Rankenornament*).

Riegl followed the formal development and continuity of vegetal ornamental forms and traced the arabesque lineament from its origin (in Ancient Egyptian art, Late Antique and Byzantine types of scrolling vegetal decoration) to its formal manifestations at the beginning of the 8-9th centuries. He used a morphological form analysis and hands-on observation, and believed in the arabesque as an exemplary model through which he would be able to uncover the conditions for possibility (*die Bedingungen der Möglichkeit*) for a history of ornamentation as a form of art in general. (In the course of this process, he elaborated the concept of *Kunstwollen*, often translated as ‘will to make art’, or ‘what art wants to do’.)



FIGURE 6: MIRROR, SECOND QUARTER OF 16TH CENTURY, OTTOMAN TURKEY, IRON, IVORY AND GOLD. AVAILABLE FROM URL [HTTP://ISLAMIC-ARTS.ORG/2011/ART-OF-THE-OTTOMANS-BEFORE-1600/HB_1972-24/](http://islamic-arts.org/2011/art-of-the-ottomans-before-1600/hb_1972-24/). [ACCESSED OCTOBER 2013].

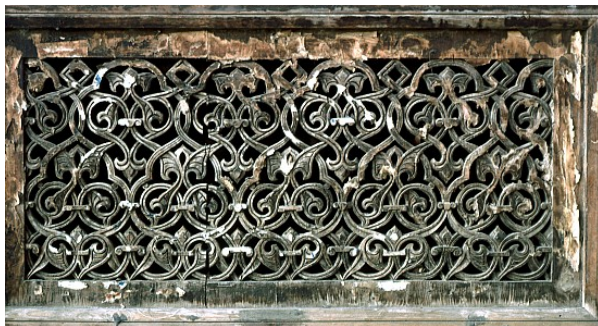


FIGURE 7: WOODEN FRIEZE; EGYPT; 9TH/3RD CENTURY. AVAILABLE FROM URL [HTTP://PATTERNINISLAMICART.COM/BACKGROUND-NOTES/THE-EVOLUTION-OF-STYLE/](http://patterninislamicart.com/background-notes/the-evolution-of-style/). [ACCESSED OCTOBER 2010].



FIGURE 8: NASRID PALACE, ALHAMBRA, GRANADA, ANDALUCIA, SPAIN. AVAILABLE FROM URL [HTTP://WWW.PHOTOGRAPHERSDIRECT.COM/BUYERS/STOCKPHOTO.ASP?IMAGEID=2109108](http://www.photographersdirect.com/buyers/stockphoto.asp?imageid=2109108). [ACCESSED OCTOBER 2013].

As twine ornaments were unknown to the ancient Orient, Riegl assumes that they must have been appropriated through an influence coming from the Hellenic culture. The inherited motifs were those of stylized versions of the acanthus, with its leafy forms and the vine, with its twining stems. These evolved into the distinctive Islamic form of ornament between the 8th/9th centuries and the 11th century. Examples of early forms of arabesque can be found on mosaics of the Great Mosque of Damascus from the 8th century. After the 11th century arabesque ornaments were widely used in the Islamic culture, but not only and went through further developments and formal changes.

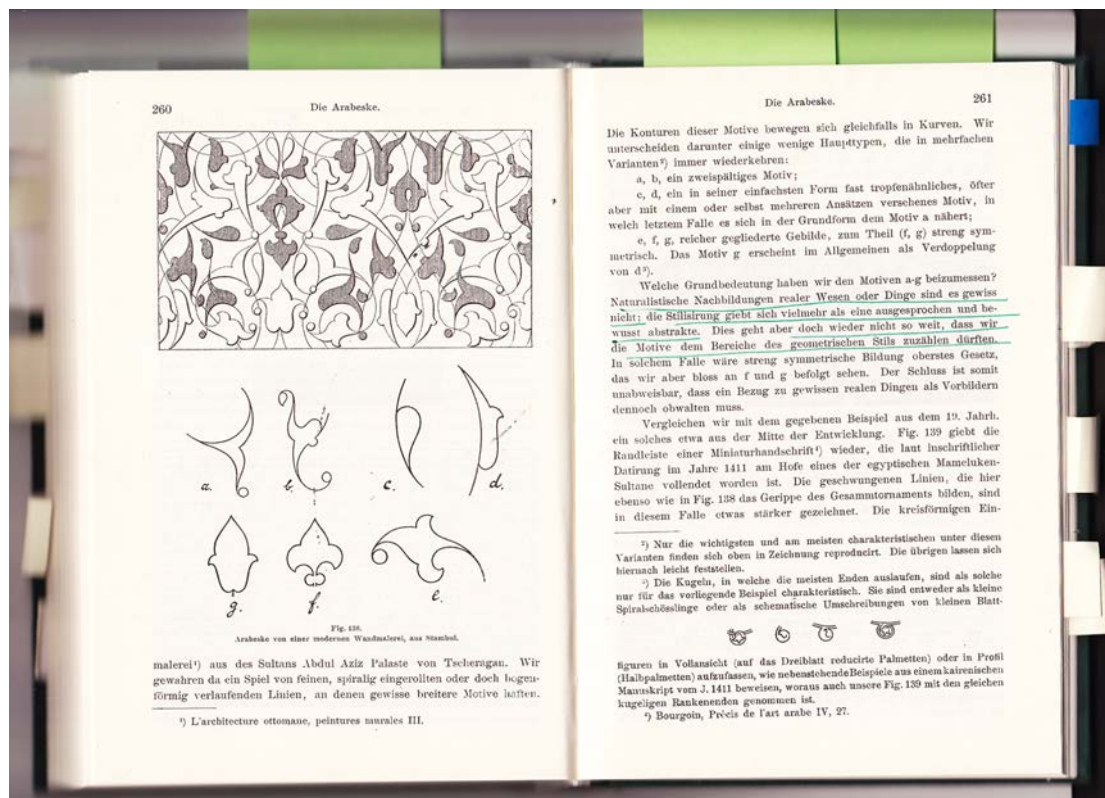


FIGURE 9: MODERN ARABESQUE FROM A WALL PAINTING IN STAMBUL (RIEGL 1975: 260-161, FIG. 138).

Arabesque designs developed motifs similar to *Volutenkelch* (chalice-curly) or *Blattfächern* (forked leaf form carried on stems), both of which, according to Riegl, point to a common genealogy for the arabesque and the *Palmette*. Other designs derived from Lillies, rosettes, or calyx-shaped volutes.

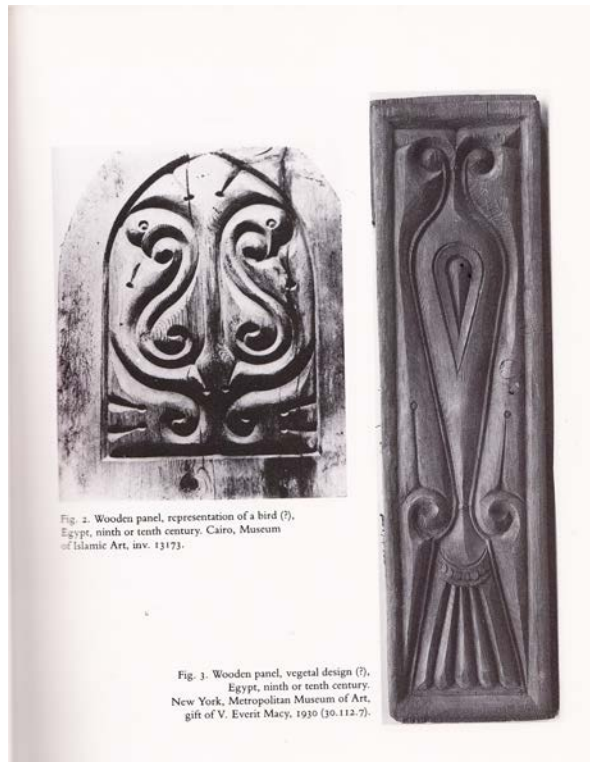


FIGURE 10: (GRABAR 1992: 11).

(Grabar sees in this genealogy an example of forced art historical taxonomy based on arbitrary interpretations: we still don't know what were the intentions behind these ornamental forms. One could read these motifs as so called 'palmette designs', as they are labelled in the Metropolitan Museum, or, as easily, one could read them as fantastic birds with two heads (Grabar 1992: 9-46, 1987: 178-194).

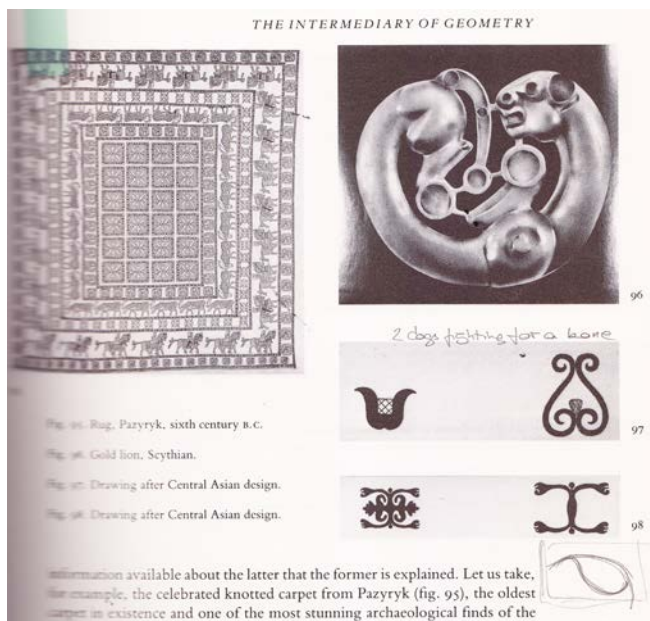


FIGURE 11: (GRABAR 1992:125).

126. Woodwork from Egypt, second half of the 9th century. Paris, Louvre. (Cliché des Musées Nationaux, Service de Documentation Photographique, inv. 6023)



127. Woodwork from Egypt, 10th century. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.



FIGURE 12: (GRABAR 1987: ILLUS. 126, 127)

Very often, two or more arabesque systems are combined to form new, more complicated designs. A coloured background was introduced to increase the harmonic tension between continuity in line-movement, harmonious coverage of the surface, renunciation of any plastic effects, and the full effectiveness of the design. The atmospheric infinite rapport — showing no beginning or end, the pattern seems to be infinitely extendable in all directions— and, an inversion of the figure-ground relation — the flat outline pattern creates a constant oscillation between motif and ground — are two of its main characteristics.

From a freely flowing scroll, stemmed leaves with an unnatural outline emanate in both directions, they split again, and the whole regenerates itself imperceptibly in a

symmetrical rhythm. All heaviness is taken from the motif by means of drilled holes and teardrop-shaped slits and with it all resemblance to nature. (Kühnel 1949: 16).

The arabesque ornament confronts sight with a kaleidoscopic challenge that no longer allows it to linger on details or individual forms, nor to be able to take in the whole image at once. Tendrils transform themselves into new ones and all twines end in 'unfree' yoke-endings, which in their movement draw polygon-like shapes filled with larger twines and leaf amalgams, after the principle of complete coverage. The linear conduct in the arabesque drives forth the line to multiple intersections and cross overs in continuous rhythmic undulations. No main motif stands out and the relation to vegetal forms is veiled completely. The role of twines as stems is transformed and the floral character of the design is undermined and turned indistinguishable. Arabesques are anti-naturalistic and anti-mimetic. Basic motifs don't follow the structural hierarchy found in natural organic forms — stem, twines, flowers— and all parts have the same autonomous and meaningful function.

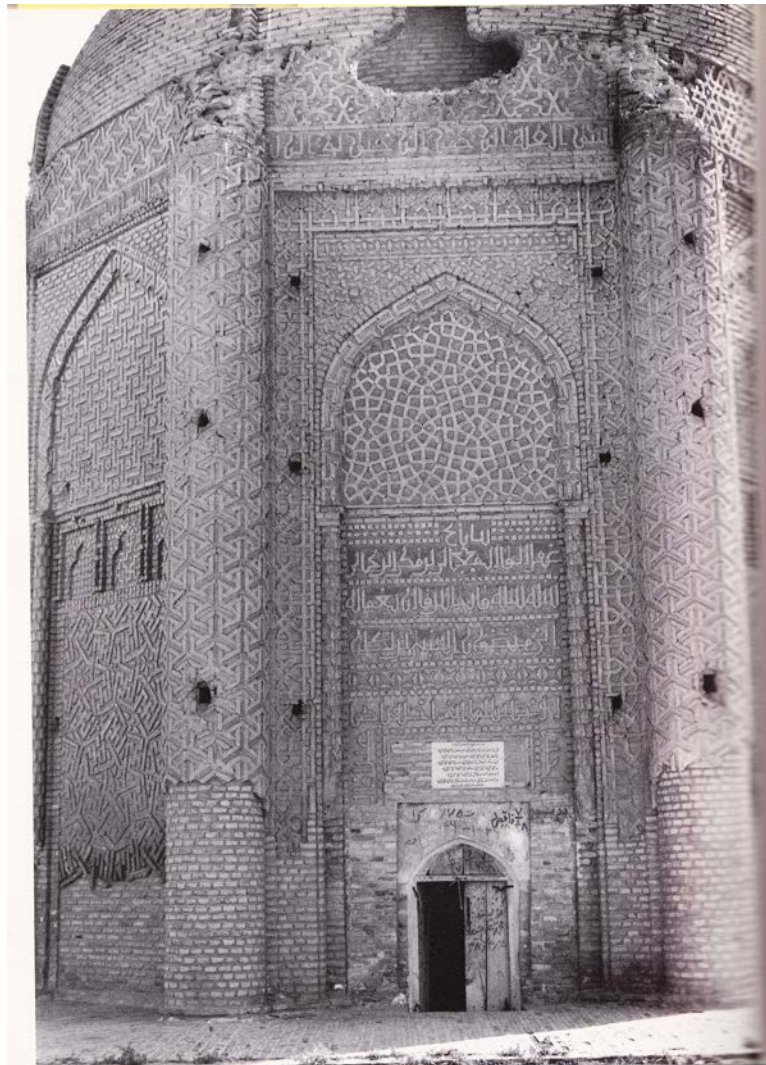


FIGURE 13: IRAN, KHARRAQAN, MAUSOLEUM, 1093 (GRABAR 1992: 101).

Arabesques are abstract, but not enough so: their formation is not strictly symmetrical, as in geometric style. Thus they are neither entirely vegetal, organic forms, nor geometric forms. (Although the phrase 'geometric arabesques' is used, especially in relation to decorative motifs of the *Alhambra* in Spain, Riegl refers in this case rather to 'crystalized forms'). The line movement can be planimetric and abstract, which points to a direct influence from Saracen art, or more naturalistic and plastic, which hints at classic-ancient influences from Hellenic and Roman art. Arabesques have been used as framing designs and surface fillings, feature related, according to Riegl, to ancient forms of braid ribbons that expanded into surface filling ornaments. The infinite rapport is created through the repetition of endless part-variations.

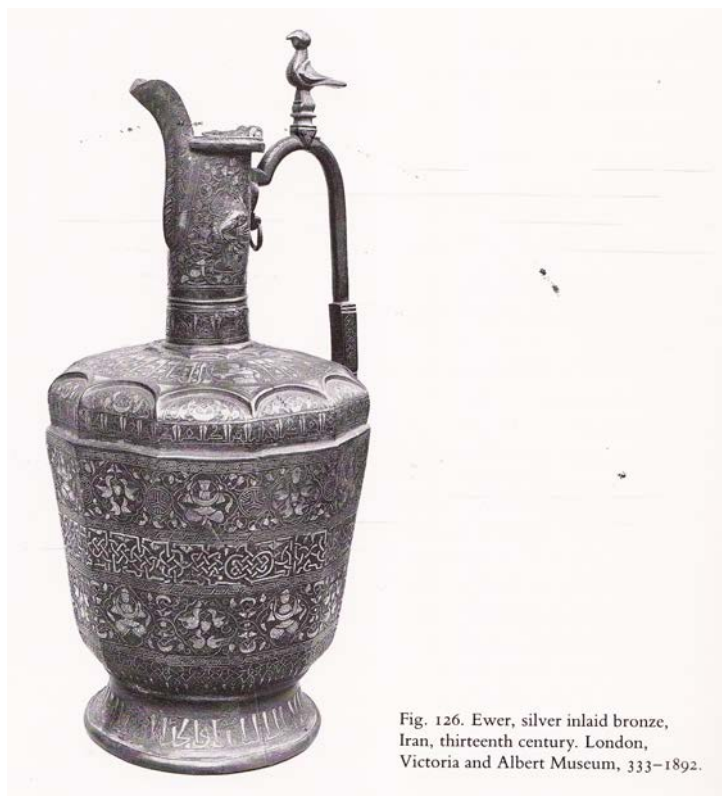


Fig. 126. Ewer, silver inlaid bronze, Iran, thirteenth century. London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 333–1892.

FIGURE 14: EWER, SILVER INLAID BRONZE, IRAN 13TH CENTURY. LONDON, VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, 333—1892 (GRABAR 1992: 152; FIG. 126.).

Seriality, mirroring, upside-down repetitions, reciprocal duplications, geometric strap-works, medallions or cartouches give this chaotic meander a sense of order. Rhythm in movement and complete coverage of the surface fulfil the desired impression of the arabesque: a kaleidoscopic passing of ever-changing unreal forms. The arabesque underlines its own ephemeral and incomplete quality; the infinite repetition recalls the insignificance of the individual form and the uninterrupted covering of the surface refrains from any objective meaning. The maker is not interested in arresting details, but in the delight of a kaleidoscopic excess and in the exhaustion, through variational repetitions, of all possibilities within self-imposed restrictions. The

arabesque is purely abstract line and doesn't carry any symbolic function. The decorative intent has no meaningful purpose.



FIGURE 15: (GRABAR 1992: 224; FIG. 8.3).

Arabesques are linear statements about two-dimensional, almost symmetrical form-relations. As planar manifestations they exclude tri-dimensional elements such as 'light' or 'shadow' (or, in earlier examples, translate them into linear marks). Without 'light', such ornamental forms are timeless – they make no reference to time or space; and neither to any cause-effect relation or to any moral implications. The only representational marks they allow are calligraphic forms of Arab letters —that is, of divinely inspired words (God's chosen medium to reveal Himself to Prophet Muhammad) whose absolute aesthetic appeal lies in their sound. Such linear speculations and meditations are extremely rich and complex textures, difficult to entangle for an untrained eye —or an eye over-trained to follow undeviating lines. [One of the key differences between Eastern and Western arabesques is that the European artists created designs that were not as strict and uniform, and the surface was not treated as an individual whole, but broken up in different compartments containing rather loosely structured arabesques (Kühnel 1976:33).]

Arabesque structures appear to be operative chains of recursive designations and distinctions, and Grabar points out that with the arabesque we can discuss the creation of a new syntactic structure that preceded that of many new terms; that is the appearance of a syntactic change before a morphemic one (Grabar 1987: 194).

Arabesque ornaments are the creation over a full millennium of collective, anonymous craftsmanship of men who “during their whole lifetime, [were] satisfied to limit their imagination to a decorative motif”, and restricted themselves to its formal limits in order to create ever new variants, and more complex and harmonious solutions.



FIGURE 16: EXAMPLES OF ARABESQUES IN TYPOGRAPHICAL USE AND OTHER ORNAMENTS, ZÜRICH: PRIVATELY PRINTED, V&A MUSEUM LIBRARY.

It was not spiritual poverty nor the effort to comply with a mandatory, regulated system which determined the outstanding position of the arabesque. On the one hand, it was the delight in ornamental meditation and in aesthetic asceticism and, on the other, an ambition which went well beyond a mere playful urge to invent ever new variants of a basic form and to adapt them to all possible decorative necessities. [...] Doubtless, it was foremost the artist who carried in himself the Islamic world view to plunge into linear speculations of abstract nature (Kühnel 1976: 6).

Artists were anonymous, and the developed designs displayed often a luxurious growth, but sometimes they were also restrained in manner. There are three essential characteristics that all arabesques have in common, regardless of their geo-political and historical determinations:

harmonious coverage of the entire surface, rhythmic continuity and renunciation of any plastic effects. These features give the designs a unified character in spite of their regional, temporal or 'language' diversity. Thus compositions and vibrational systems of bifurcated scrollwork or even single patterns are difficult to attribute to a regional or temporal origin.

The arabesque was a constitutive element in the formation of Islamic culture not only as a visual ornamental form, but, and even more so, as an idea, a structuring principle; as the manifestation of an unambiguous expression of the Islamic culture and its collective force. In Islamic thought, there is no direct line, no quick short cut. One needs to look for, to search and find the meaning — or God's visual symbols, while God remains wholly invisible. Even the 'mihrab', the small wall niche in a mosque that indicates the direction of Mecca, the focal point that marks the direction in which the worshiper should seek God, is not to be found by a quick glance. Islamic thought is complex and immune to direct lines. It is rich, oblique and speaks in riddles. Its answers are never obvious, but complicated, circular, and pleated into themselves. Nothing is simple, straight or direct. These characteristics are not to be confounded with ambiguity, unclarity or muddiness, because Islamic thought is also concrete, definite and either black or white – no understatement, no tempered tones, no vague contours. Such complexity is presented and expanded equally in all directions and in all its details and parts. No parts are left out or withdrawn in perspective – all sit equally on the same plane, next to each other, unfolding an infinite rapport, and are structured, ordered and arranged in clear, but complex patterns of thought. The more symmetrical and rhythmic such patterns of thought are, the greater the pleasure they produce. (Ibn Arabi's 'geography' of hell, which inspired Dante, is an image of such inordinate expression with symmetry.) Islamic thought is an instantiated passion, but a passion that is non-individually, perfectly mastered and disciplined.

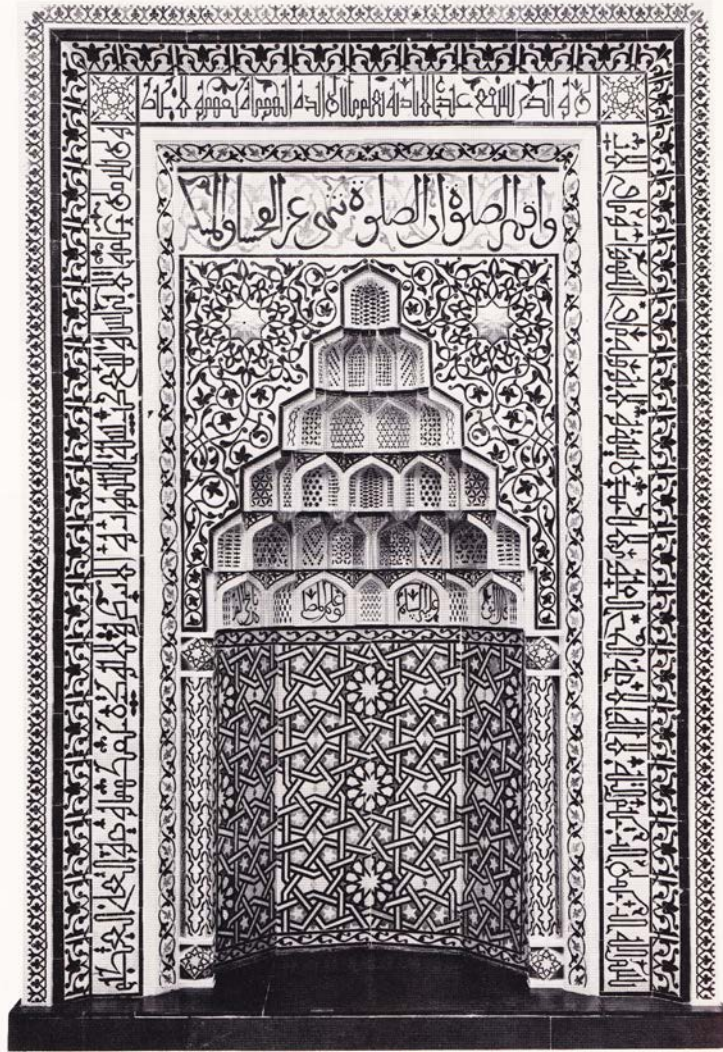


FIGURE 17: MIHRAB, THE BEY HAKIM MOSQUE IN KONYA (AFTER RESATURATION). TURKEY, MIDDLE OF THE 13TH CENTURY. BERLIN (OST), STAATL. MUSEUM ZU BERLIN, ISLAMISCHES MUSEUM. MUSEUM PHOTO. (KÜHNEL 1949: 31).

The arabesque can be understood in relation to the belief in a world order in which nature and all beings are the creation of one divine creator that manifests itself in all phenomena. All ideas and forms pre-exist in eternity, but only in receiving their physical manifestation, they achieve REALITY, real existence. All physical phenomena are transitory and destined to pass away. God contains in himself all forms of all things. All reality in its physical manifestation is an emanation of God's spirituality and intelligence. This Neo-Platonist thought was constituent for Muslim and Arab thinkers, and it is also found in 13th century mystic thought. (Meister Eckhart wrote that "all creatures in their pre-existing forms in God have been divine life for ever" and "these pre-existing forms are the origin and principle of the creation of all creatures".) "Every nature emanates from its appropriate form." Thus everything pre-exists in eternity in forms emanating from God, but it manifests itself in time and space only when it assumes visible form. Ibn Arabi (1165-1240), a mystic Sufi and philosopher (who preceded Meister Eckhart by 100 years) explained the

“Oneness of God” in relation to the “Oneness of being” and believed that the divine consciousness embraces all intelligible forms in the shape of “prototypes” (Grabar 1987: 178-194).

Sharing this belief, Near Eastern craft-makers were not directly concerned with the depiction or recording of physical realities existing around them. Their aim was not to give permanence to earthly forms, as this purpose would have competed with and contradicted the divine order and creation, which was the ONLY and perfect creation. Craft-workers in the Islamic world aspired, on the one hand, to distance themselves from the true nature of things, creating from their imagination and for purely aesthetic aims, and, on the other hand, they showed a provision to give aesthetic quality to common daily items (Grabar 1973: 82). The Islamic world-view was resistant to realism and naturalism, to the iconography of Byzantine and Christian art, but possessed by the FANTASTIC and a desire for virtuosic stylization and abstraction of form. Artists devoted anonymously their entire life to the creation of variations and the discovery of new formal possibilities of the forked leaf form carried on stem-design. The communal drive of entire ethnic groups was to fine-tune their own specific variation, within its extreme restrictions. The arabesque is linear speculation at the limit. It is the manifestation of the tension between the finite and the infinite, between limitation and unconditioned freedom, between Man and God — and the infinite rapport between them.

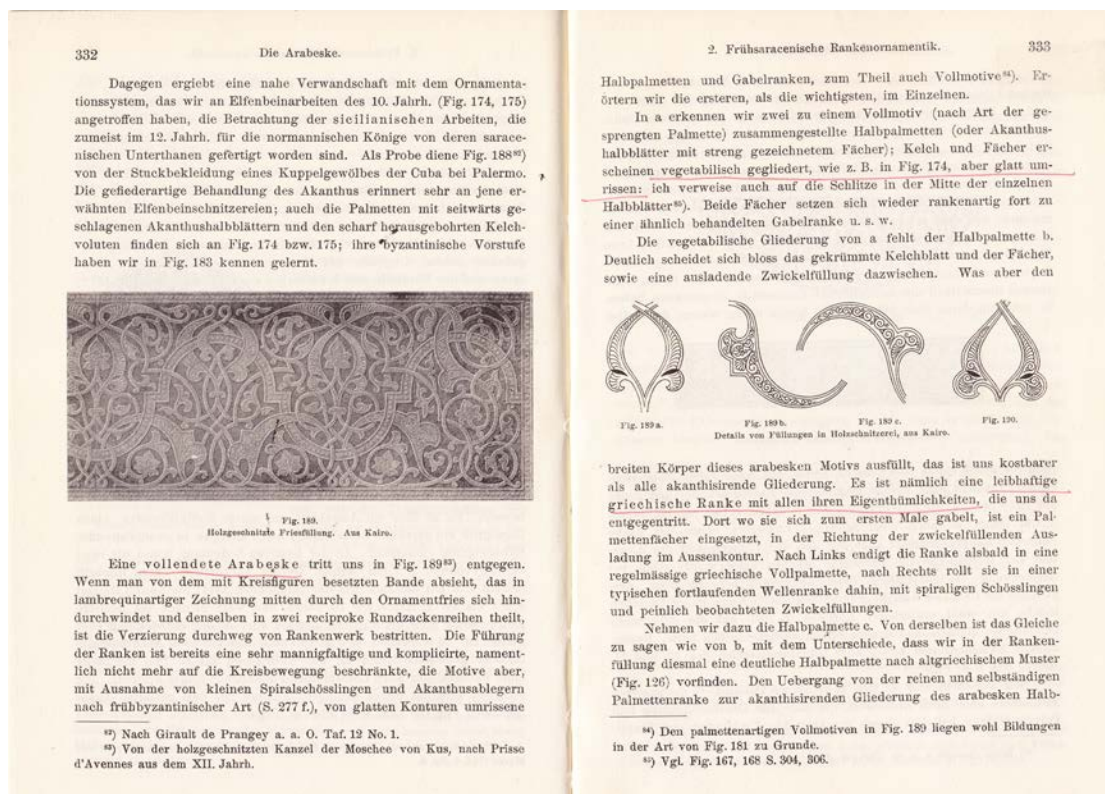


FIGURE 18: EXAMPLE OF A CLASSICAL ISLAMIC ARABESQUE; WOODCUT DETAIL FROM KAIRO AND EXAMPLES OF DETAILS OF FILLING FORMS (RIEGL 1975: 332-333, FIG. 189; FIG. 189 A, B, C; FIG. 190).



FIGURE 19: EXAMPLE OF WESTERN RENAISSANCE ARABESQUE, FIG. 66. (BRÜDERLIN 2001: 104).

The actual word ARABESQUE was invented in the Italian Renaissance, around the year 1600, to refer to what were seen as original characteristics of Islamic culture. These were 'later successors' of ornaments that emerged in the first centuries of Islam, whose uniqueness relied on the way in which ornamental forms were treated, combined, composed and structured, as a result of a particular understanding of man's creation, and not as a vehicle of new formal inventions. The Western arabesque derived from both traditions, from its European past, especially late Roman painting, and from the Islamic world. (Europe's interest in the Orient was always from the perspective of its own origins.) The three terms ARABESQUE, MORESQUE and GROTESQUE were used in the beginning interchangeably, before clearer, more distinctive categorizations were defined. While Near Eastern arabesques were anonymous creations, Western arabesque designers are easily identifiable. The arabesque had been transmitted from Spain, where it flourished in the 15th century, or by way of Venice, where Persian and Syrian artisans were in residence, and reached Italy, France and Germany in the first half of the 16th century. The European variety is not so strict and uniform. Among its most important designers were Francesco Pellegrino (who published in 1546 a 'livre de moresques'), Peter Flettner (his book on moresques appeared in 1549, after his death) and Hans Holbein the Younger (created designs in 1537) (Kühnel 1949: 32).

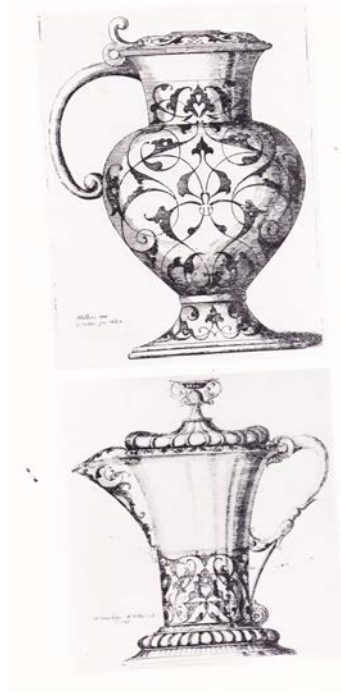


FIGURE 20: HANS HOLBEIN THE YOUNGER, DRAWING FOR A COVERED PITCHER, 1532-1534. ETCHING BY WENZEL HOLLAR AFTER A LOST DRAWING BEI HOLBEIN, SIGNED: HHOLBEIN INV. W. HOLLAR FEC. 1645. AFTER GANZ, KATALOG, NO.C 37 (KÜHNEL 1949: PLATE 24A, 24B).



FIGURE 21: WOODCUT FROM THE "BOOK OF MORESQUE" OF FRANCESCO PELLEGRINO(1530). (KÜHNEL 1949: 23, PLATE 23).

The arabesque lives at the border between image, word and ornament, in both traditions. Dürer playfully manifested this *conjuncture* in his drawings of Maximilian's prayer book.¹⁵

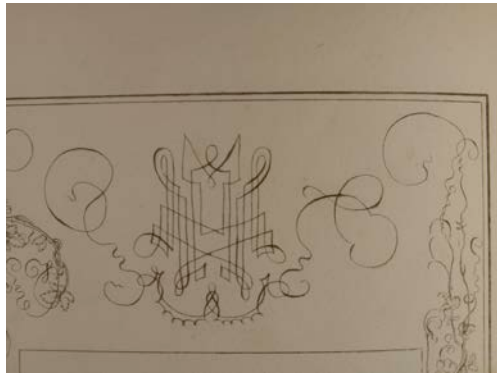


FIGURE 22: THE CONFLATION OF DÜRER'S MONOGRAM, MARIENARABESKE (MARY-ARABESQUE), IMAGE AND ORNAMENTAL DRAWING; ALBRECHT DÜRER (ALBRECHT DÜRER'S DESIGNS OF THE PRAYERBOOK, LONDON 1817, R. ACKERMANN'S LITHOGRAPHIC PRESS, V&A MUSEUM LIBRARY).



FIGURE 23: ALBRECHT DÜRER. (ALBRECHT DÜRER'S DESIGNS OF THE PRAYERBOOK, LONDON 1817, R. ACKERMANN'S LITHOGRAPHIC PRESS, V&A MUSEUM LIBRARY).

¹⁵ In 1986, at the Venice Biennale, Polke showed *Schleifenbilder*, a series of paintings, in which he took over certain ornamental lineaments from Dürer's woodcuts, *Der Triumphzug Kaiser Maximilians I.* (1522). The ornaments were placed against an expressive black and white background, painted in an entirely different register. They become the main figure in the images. [Online] Available from URL <http://www.altertuemliches.at/termine/ausstellung/ein-dialog-durch-die-jahrhunderte-albrecht-duerer-%E2%80%93-sigmar-polke>. [Accessed October 2012].

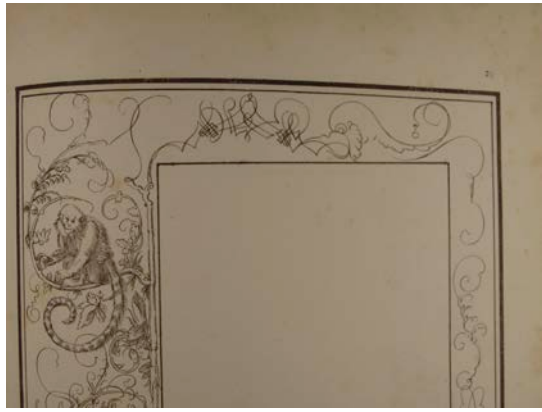


FIGURE 24: ALBRECHT DÜRER (ALBRECHT DÜRER'S DESIGNS OF THE PRAYERBOOK, LONDON 1817, R. ACKERMANN'S LITHOGRAPHIC PRESS, V&A MUSEUM LIBRARY).

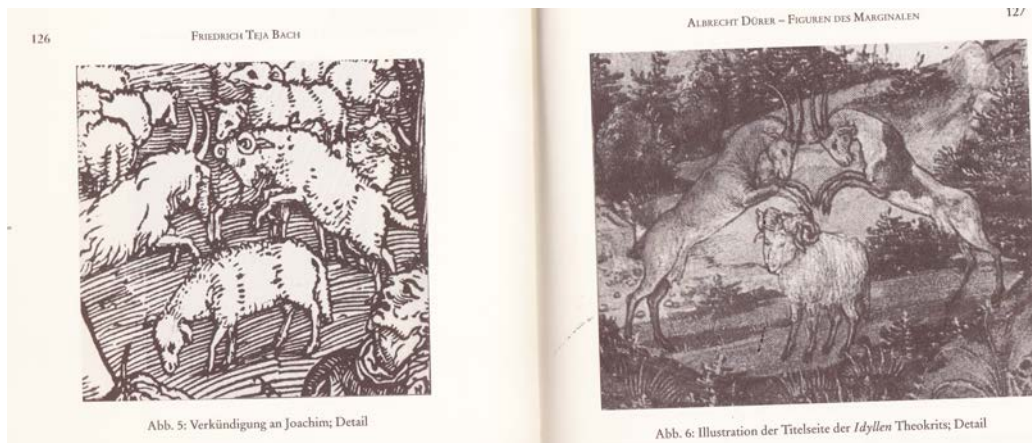


FIGURE 25: EXAMPLES OF ALBRECHT DÜRER'S FIGURATION OF HIS MONOGRAM (BACH 2001: 126, 127).

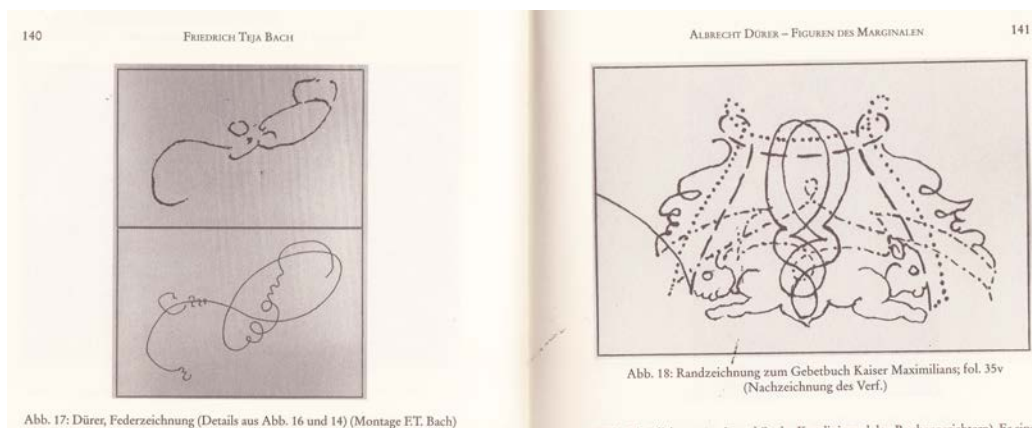


FIGURE 26: EXAMPLES OF ALBRECHT DÜRER'S FIGURATION OF HIS MONOGRAM FROM THE PRAYER BOOK OF MAXIMILIAN I; FOL. 35V(BACH 2001: 140, 141).



Abb. 14: Randzeichnungen zum Gebetbuch Kaiser Maximilians; fol. 35v u. 36r

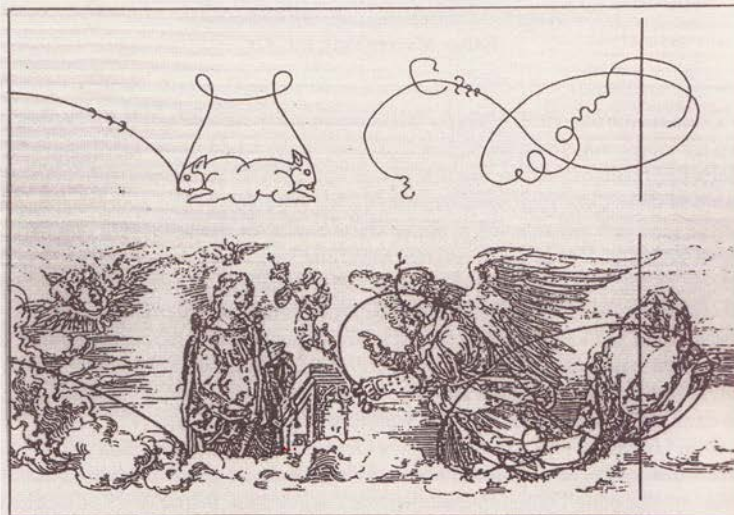


Abb. 15: Randzeichnungen zum Gebetbuch Kaiser Maximilians; fol. 35v und 36r (Montage des Verf.)

FIGURE 27: EXAMPLES OF ALBRECHT DÜRER'S FIGURATION OF HIS MONOGRAM FROM THE PRAYER BOOK OF MAXIMILIAN I; FOL. 35V(BACH 2001: 140, 141).

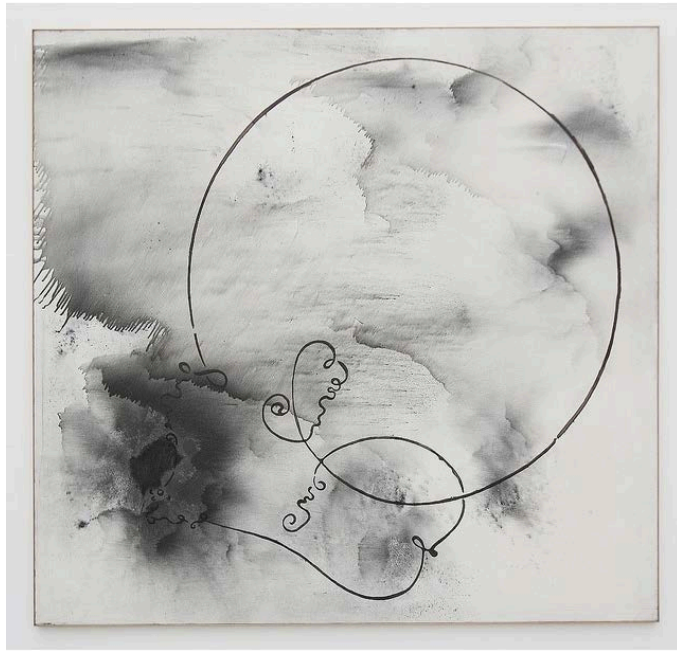


FIGURE 28: SIGMAR POLKE, SCHLEIFENBILD, *PROVIDENCIA*, 1986.



FIGURE 29: SIGMAR POLKE, SCHLEIFENBILD, *EXPERENTIA UND SOLENTIA*, 1986.

Alois Riegl work was influential in establishing a connection between Western and Near Eastern art and an indispensable consultant for Western collectors. A series of exhibitions, Vienna (1901), Paris (1906, 1908, 1912 —the first showing of the Veve collection at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs), Berlin (1910) and Munich (1910), London (1931 — the first exhibition of Persian painting) displayed many artefacts and pictures for the very first time and offered an

opportunity for scholars to write essays and to publish their research in show catalogues. Later on, in 1949, the Orientalist scholar Ernst Kühnel, who helped organizing the Munich exhibition in 1910, which marked an important research step in Oriental Studies constituting the entry of Persian painting into the general history of art, wrote the already mentioned study about the meaning and transformation of the arabesque ornament. Other books and design manuals, very old and more recent ones, offer taxonomic examples and guide lines for possible patterns for specific purposes. Oleg Grabar wrote often on the idea of the arabesque in the formation of Islamic art in his erudite studies on Oriental culture, but also in relation to the Western art history.

The idea of the arabesque penetrated Western poetry, literature, philosophy and modern painting too. We encounter it in texts by F. Schlegel, who elaborated in his writings, in an unsystematic way, the arabesque as a literary figure of thought “der modernen Poesie” (or “poiesy” or “absolute literature”). In this context, the arabesque needs to be contextualised within the platonic-macrobian *contextio-velum* and truth paradigms, and in their ramifications and outbursts in literature, philosophy and art.

In Western classical music, arabesque pieces are short embellished compositions, often for piano, that aim to recreate through sound the atmosphere of the Arabic architecture, as in, for example, Claude Debussy's *Deux Arabesques*, composed in 1888 and 1891, respectively; or Robert Schumann's *Arabesque Op. 18*. (The legacy of this piece was reflected in Dara Birnbaum's *Arabesque* video installation.) And in classical ballet, the arabesque is a hallmark position, in which the body "spirals" from the crown of the head through the back and then straightens through the extended leg. The body is supported on one leg, with the other leg extended behind it with the knee straight. The standing leg may be either bent in plié or straight. This dancing figure is used in both allegro (fast movements) and adagio (slow movements) choreography, usually concluding a phrase of steps and before the beginning of a new one. The extremities of the body elongate into extreme over-extensions that imagine infinite lines, while the arched spine along with the tension created between the inward and outward rotations in the body recall the sinuous, spiralling line of an arabesque ornament.



FIGURE 30: POSTAL STAMP WITH EDGAR DEGAS, END OF AN ARABESQUE, OIL AND PASTEL ON CANVAS, 1877, 38x67 CM. AVAILABLE FROM URL [HTTP://WWW.ARTONSTAMPS.ORG/](http://www.artonstamps.org/). [ACCESSED OCTOBER 2013].

THE ARABESQUE, A FIGURE OF THOUGHT, FRIEDRICH SCHLEGEL

The proposition of research by project points its arrow towards the Athenaeum venture and so does the projection of the arabesque. At the end of the 18th century, Schlegel introduced it as a figure of thought in literary criticism. He established it as a literary concept and an aesthetic category without writing a systematic analysis. He mentions it a few times in *Brief über ein Roman* (*Letter about a novel*), but most references are oblique entanglements of thought and the only way to engage with them is through exploring his fragmentary writing practice. Schlegel's wilfully incomplete writings are constitutive moments for the Early Jena Romanticism and of the relation between poetry (literature) and philosophy.

Schlegel was attracted to the complex metamorphic force of the arabesque: intuitive, yet conscious; playful, yet structured; chaotic, yet only so from distance; finite in form, yet infinite in rapport. He valued its ability to MANIFEST THE INFINITENESS OF THE ONE. Schlegel was inspired by the Oriental way of thinking, to which he often compared Western thought. He enjoyed writing obliquely allowing thoughts to manifest in complex riddles that appeal to the imagination and ingenuity of the reader.¹⁶

Schlegel and the whole close circle of the Athenaeum collective were interested in elastic thought formation and they believed in the revelatory power of the unknowable, the unintelligible and the heterogeneous. Ambiguity¹⁷, vagueness and equivocation were seen as signs of maximum complexity — as unambiguous ambiguity. His writings are a polyphonic manifestation of potentialities and it is uneasy to follow his ideas in their labyrinthine proliferation. Schlegel's writing practice is a manifestation of the arabesque principle itself: it is the diction of multiple, reciprocal references and complementing. No free endings. No hierarchical structures, but continuous growth of thought and intersecting ideas. No bottom to top, top to bottom or side-by-side directions, but an infinite planar rapport towards all sides. No organically pre-determined

¹⁶ *Lucinde* is an arabesque novel by F. Schlegel, published in 1799 as the first of a four part novel project. Its arabesque structure contains various literary forms – letters, dialogues, aphorisms, journal notes. Schlegel believed that a novel as an artwork, as a form of the 'new poetry' should contain and present its own theory. In his view, the arabesque figure of thought was a way towards achieving this.

¹⁷ "Confusion, erring and doubt: behold the holy trinity of anti-epistemology whose worship (along with that of not-knowing as 'losing') has been blown out of all proportion in recent years, decades — and with it has come the irresponsible overrating of ambivalence and ambiguity [...] this fetishistic cult of ambiguity has many names and faces, and the obvious fact of its multiple faciality or multifacetedness ('ambi' is Latin for 'both', so ambiguous really only means two-faced) is among the first to be named in its defence, soon to be followed by the different and the dubious, the fissured, fractured and the fragmented, the hybrid, hesitant and heterogeneous [...], the intermediary, interstitial and non-linear, the liminal, the mobile and multiplicity [...], periphery, pluralisation and polysemy [...], the rhizome and the reticular, the situational transience and shifting, fuzzy logic of all nuance and becoming. [...] — the undermining of all possibility of antagonism or contradiction upon which the practice of paradox (if not critique!) ultimately rests. For the mighty logical figure of paradox speaks of a love of truth — and, symmetrically of a love of lies as that which positively requires unveiling, revealing. [...] Confusion, erring and doubt, when canonized as 'method', are nothing but fancy ruses — sorry excuses for not having to make up one's mind or take one side (rather than 'an' other), for not having to choose, for not having to judge — fear of the assumption of a position of critique, in short (Roelstraete 2009: 25)."

functions between parts, but thought-inherent relations between thought-fragments. Passionate thought, but a passion that is completely self-mastered and disciplined. He saw in the calculated confusion of the arabesque an alternative form to the finitude of the subject. A possibility to step outside oneself within an anonymous and collective creative drive, to respond to an absolute spontaneity of thought. The arabesque stood for Schlegel for the “INFINITE OPULENCE IN AN INFINITE ONENESS”, which allowed for a de- and re-territorialisation of traditional classical encyclopaedic knowledge and reasoning.

THE *ENTWURF* OF THE PARTS TO THE WHOLE

This text is its self-*Entwurf*¹⁸ and projects multiple protrusions in the processual net (Greber 2003; von Graevenitz 1992: 229-157) stretched out in the minute it is knitted, between the arabesque as a visual form and the arabesque as a figure of thought. I have no desire to twist and batter an unambiguous *apparatus criticus* into the monstrous semblance of a novel.¹⁹ The ornamental, an infant prodigy of historical ornaments, and the image, an existentially insecure, divided self are the characters in gestation, waiting to define the lines of their thoughts, to get their sur-face ripped. The eclectic narrative writes this body in its process of formation in view of its ontological possibilities. The ornamental is an ontological mode in the creation and generating of forms and images. Found fragments, bundles of words, flesh materials, muscular tissues contract from different corners of land into this body, this figure, this place in an unprogrammable but intentional, astonishing yet expected manner. Textile ideas, fibre forms, barely visible, spread all over the place with impertinence that only innominate substance could have. The impertinence of a form that writes itself, that is, that decides its distinction by itself, violates each and every instinct of my, of your knowledge. The conspicuous extravagant body fills out your sight with its sheer mass and all-overness, and, inevitably pulls you in, in the compression of a growingly microscopic, close-up image. Our insatiable demand and urge for ordered logical chains, evolutionary systems and filial lineages, surely eradicates all such fragments and plants them in a colour-chart-soil of ideological soil corrosion.

Una Joc: 'But — "it is equally destructive for the spirit, to have a system and to have no system. It will have thus to decide to combine the both (Schlegel 1988: 109)." And I shall want to keep them breezy and right in the space of their *aerality* (Nancy 2008: 43). In the play between light and shadow, line and mass, known and unknown. These fragments, the ones that escaped fire, the essential burning, 'write' and 'read' the body of their own fictional becoming. Their *organon* is inscribed via a *poiesis* that perpetuates and accumulates their coming-into-being in three different hypostases: firstly, a *poiesis* that is condensed in the line, point or mark that makes an inaugural distinction, secondly, a *poiesis* of a thought and act elongated to a projected limit, towards its potency'²⁰ (distinction finding its right measure of distinction), and thirdly, the *poiesis* of the *acceleration*²¹ produced in the process in which this initiatory

¹⁸ The myth of parthenogenesis plays an important role in Western thought and culture. *Entwurf*: German for project, scheme, concept, draft, design, or plan. Theoretical term in contemporary architecture theory (Dürfeld 2008: 11-23).

¹⁹ Nabokov 2011: 73.

²⁰ 'Potentiation': *ridicare la putere*, the potentiation of an element to the potency of a set, or whole (Noica 2007: 28, 251; 1987: 307-375).

²¹ Noica understands acceleration as a punctual concentration in movement. For Noica, what makes a difference, thus what is, what interests us in existence, from a dialogical and ontological perspective, is acceleration and not movement itself. His understanding of movement or motion goes back to Aristotle and his thinking: the very condition of man as an animal, as living being, is constituted by the principle of motion, as will, desire, or volition, that characterizes life.

point responds and acts accordingly to its possibility of elongation, its deformation. This is an *Entwurf* in which a body dissociates itself in body and as body from its body through motion and ontological change.



Catherine Malabou in her book, *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing*, constructs the portrait of her conceptual metamorphosis as a “transformational mask”, a thought image she finds in Lévi-Strauss.

Transformational masks ‘are plural, composed of multiple faces—masks of masks [...] [that] never reveal the face they mask. They are ill suited to the human face and never marry the model, nor are they designed to hide it. They simply open and close onto other masks, without affecting the metamorphosis of someone or something. Their being lies essentially in the hinge that divides them in half.’ [...] Lévi-Strauss admired their ‘dithyrambic gift for synthesis’, their ability to hold together heterogeneous elements. By showing the transformational relations that structure any face (opening and closing onto other faces) rather than disguising a face, the masks reveal the secret connection between *formal unity* and *articulation*, between *completeness of form* and the *possibility of its dislocation*. [...] for it is the question of *the differentiated structure of all form* and hence the *formal or figural unity of all difference and articulation* (Malabou 2010:2; italics by the author).”

Malabou concludes that Lévi-Strauss, through paying attention to and a careful ethnographic analysis of transformational masks, makes the discovery that

The articulation of two sides of a face, or between faces, is in fact a dividing line between two different ways of representing a single face. The articulation of the face thus refers to another invisible articulation, the articulation between what Lévi-Strauss calls the *plastic* and the *graphic components* of the mask.

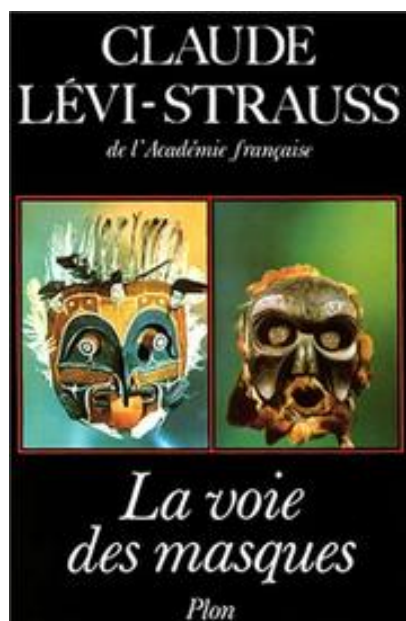
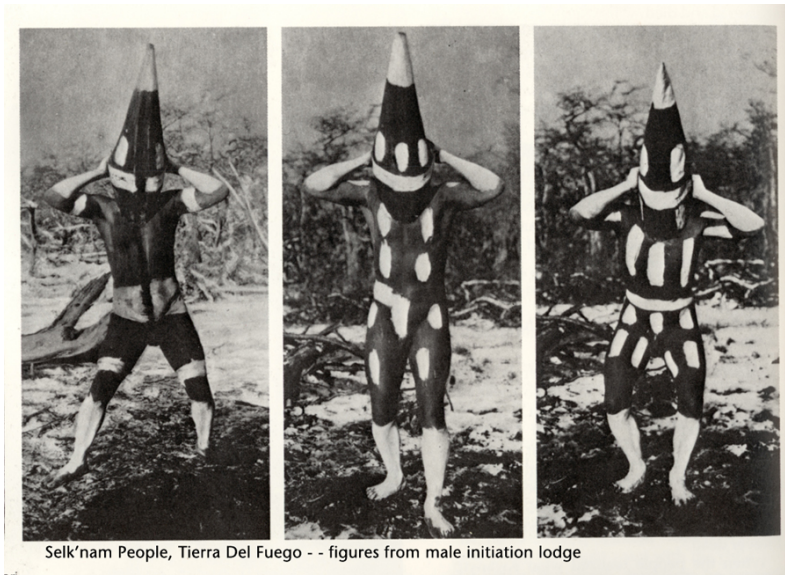


FIGURE 31: BOOK COVER OF CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS' BOOK *LA VOIE*

DES MASQUES (1979), PLON.

The two articulated sections usually constitute two bracketed profiles of a single face. This aesthetic process is referred to as 'split representation.' [...] This dissociation is illustrated by the fact that the object is conceived and represented in terms of a *double aspect*. Lévi-Strauss explains that the mask manifests a union of 'plastic and graphic components. These two elements are not independent; they have an ambivalent relationship, which is simultaneously one of opposition and one which is functional.' The plastic component of the mask designates everything that refers to the face and body to its referent; the graphic component offers ornament or decoration (painting or tattoo) on the same face or body. These two modes of representation symbolize the doubling of actor and part, INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL CHARACTER [freedom and obligation/necessity, artwork and theory]. Interestingly, when 'graphic' and 'plastic' are articulated in this way, they no longer amount to autonomous entities and are instead able to exchange their respective modes of signification. The masks undergo transformation precisely because 'THE MODES OF EXPRESSION OF THE ONE [PLASTIC] ALWAYS TRANSFORM THOSE OF THE OTHER [GRAPHIC], AND VICE VERSA.' Masks thus reveal the *interchangeability or conversion relation between the plastic and graphic, image and sign, body and inscription* (Malabou 2010: 3; italics by Malabou, emphasis my own).



Selk'nam People, Tierra Del Fuego - - figures from male initiation lodge

FIGURE 32: ILLUSTRATION

FROM CLAUDE LÉVIS-STRAUSS, *LA VOIE DES MASQUES* (1979), PLON.



Naska Naexxai mask (University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology)

FIGURE 33: ILLUSTRATION FROM CLAUDE LÉVIS-STRAUSS, *LA VOIE DES*

MASQUES (1979), PLON.

The search for the right form becomes a double search and the right form flares up into a double self. This doubling process unveils different faces of the same coin, different sides of the same form, transforming the same, differing themselves from themselves. Each side is a sharing of sides, which, in the end, are:

the articulation of two sides or two logical faces, which, as I soon come to understand, correspond to the two types of negation. [...] According to the one side, negation *forms its own solution* by doubling itself: dialectical negativity [Hegel, Deleuze]. According to the other, negation differentiates itself and displaces itself without resolving anything through doubling, so that it *traces its distancing* in terms of spacing a pure dislocation: deconstructive negativity [Derrida]. [...] dialectic destruction, and deconstruction circulate continuously, moving in and out of one another, continuing to transform each other today just as they always have (Malabou 2010: 4-5; Italics by Malabou).

(And, it is in this way that painting and philosophy structure themselves as traditions and as images of their own change.)

One face opens onto another; one articulation gives way to the next. This [ornamental] movement may continue infinitely. The secret, primitive connection that bonds transformation and substitution, metamorphosis and replacement, contrast and functional relation marks the impossibility for figure or form to be self-identical, to coincide purely and simply with itself. Likewise, in return, this connection marks the impossibility for this non-self-coincidence or rupture to manifest in any other way than as a figure, to give itself in any other way than as becoming of form (Malabou 2010: 4).

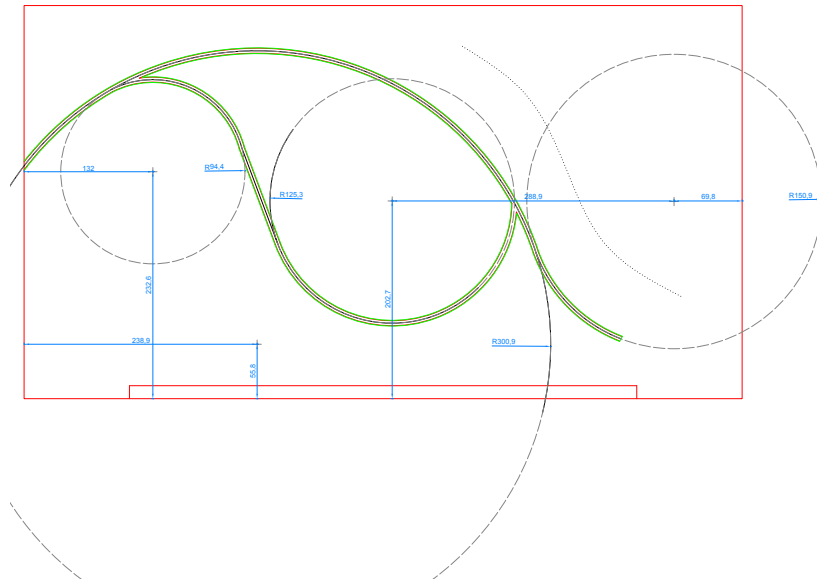


FIGURE 34: COJANU, *CATCH SIGHT OF MY MOVING IMAGE*, 2013.

Una Joc: ‘The problem of the invention of forms and ideas is one of the most delicate that a speculative and practiced intelligence can set itself. Everything in this field of research must be created — and not only the means, the methods, the terms, and the notions — but also, and above all, the very object of our curiosity must be defined (Valéry 1989:7).’

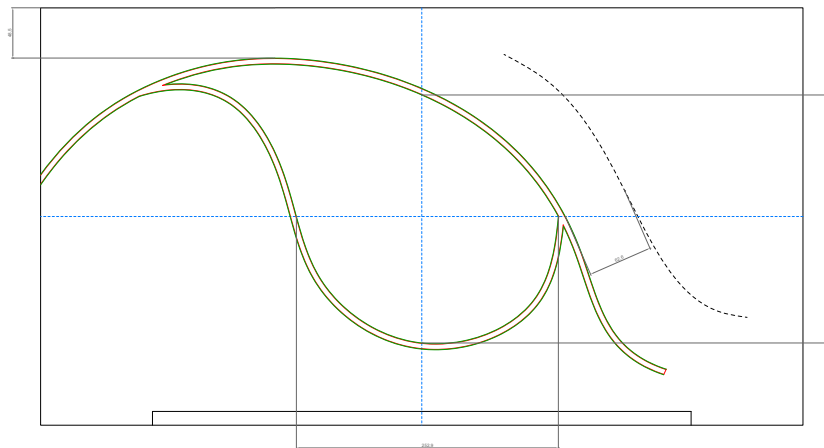


FIGURE 35: COJANU, *CATCH SIGHT OF MY MOVING IMAGE*, 2013.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORNAMENT, THE ORNAMENTAL, IMAGE AND BODYBUILDING PRACTICES

Grabar's preliminary working definition in *The Mediation of Ornament* is: "any decoration that has no referent outside of the object on which it is found, except in technical manuals (Grabar: 1992, xxiv)." But the definition he arrives at is that of ornament as intermediary form that carries beauty within it and provides pleasure.

Thinking ornament in relation to, of or on the human body is not unusual. Riegl himself developed his acute sense for surface articulation, "optically farsighted planar impressions" and an understanding of manifested planarity of the pictorial field through his appreciation of tribal art and Maori (body) ornament. Body art practices are encountered in various religious and social rituals in different cultures, from the past and present. In Western art, at least since the second half of the twentieth century, many artists have embraced the human body as *the* medium of their art practice, and the emergence of the new body culture intensified the focus on body ornament and multiplied its forms.

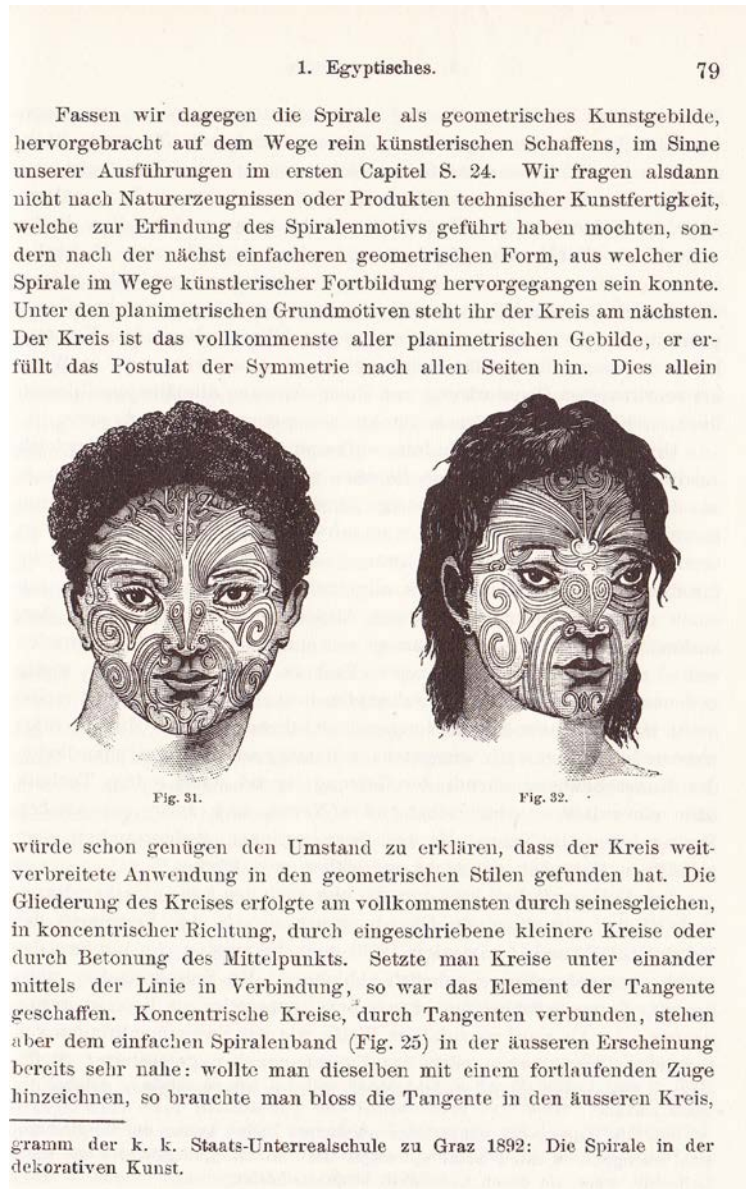


FIGURE 36: (RIEGL 1975: 79, FIG. 31 AND 32).

Adolf Loos, "setting out from an old embryology of cultural ontogeny recapitulating personal phylogeny" (Masheck 2001, Woodfield 2001: 171), and against the by then deceased Riegl (1905), refers in *Ornament and Crime* (1908) to the degenerate form of body ornamentation in other

cultures. While Kracauer, a few years later, identifies as the new ornament of our capitalist world the *mass ornament*, the abstract (but not abstract enough) formal control of the masses into massive patterns, impossible to be perceived in their wholeness, which hide behind their aesthetic the actual process of 'ornamentation' and de-individualization of the people (Kracauer 1995: 75-88).

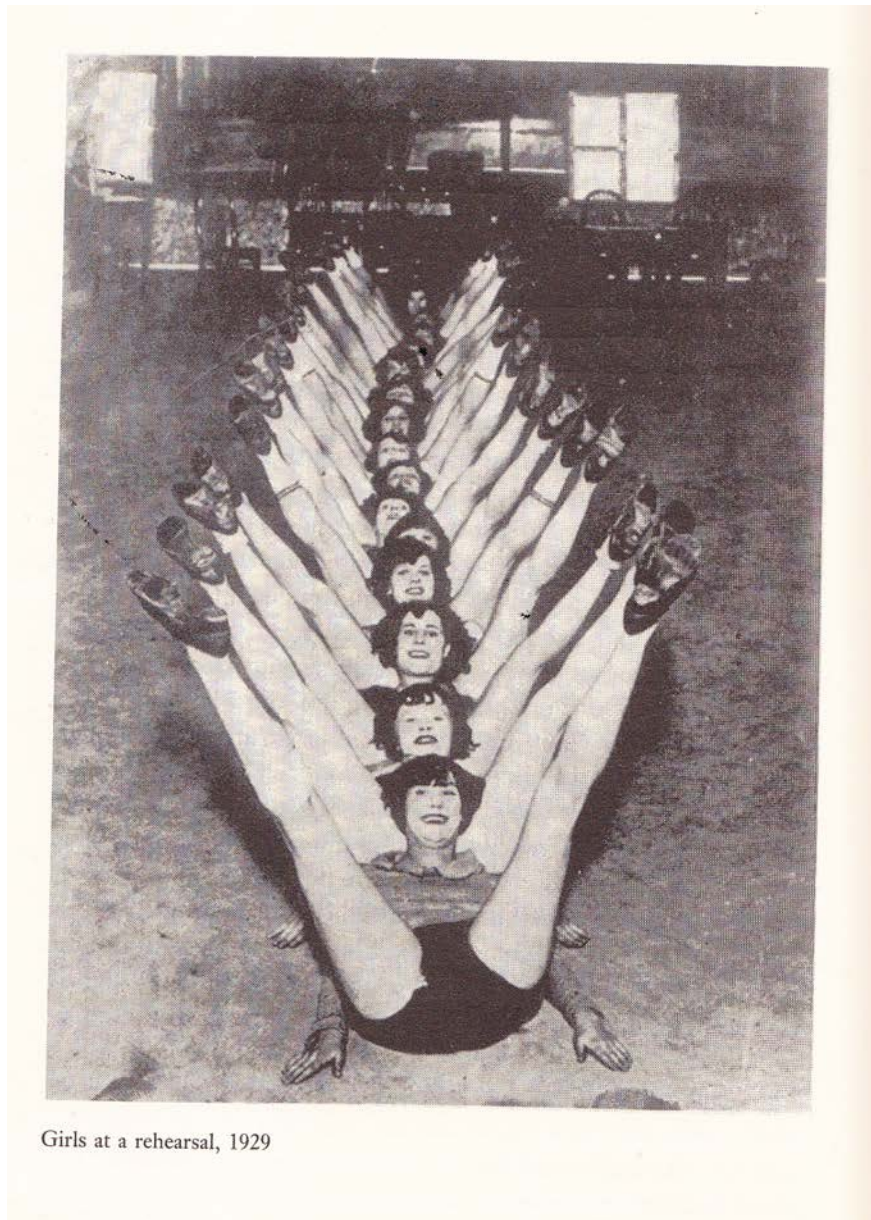


FIGURE 37: (KRACAUER, 1995: 74).

In issues related to gender inequality, cultural identity, and in body modification practices, the desire and attempt to recover and reclaim one's own body or to re-signify it, involves often a surface and/or subcutaneous ornamentation of the skin through different forms of

inscriptions on the body, such as tattooing or scarification, implants or piercings, earlobe stretching or other forms of marking the body; even the customization of the actual flesh or of



FIGURE 38: COPTIC TATTOO DESIGN (CARLWELL 1956; V&A MUSEUM LIBRARY).

the shape of the body through different body technologies (appropriated from biomedical and information technologies). Different forms of control and regime attempt to fit the body or certain body parts into a certain aesthetic shape or performance form.

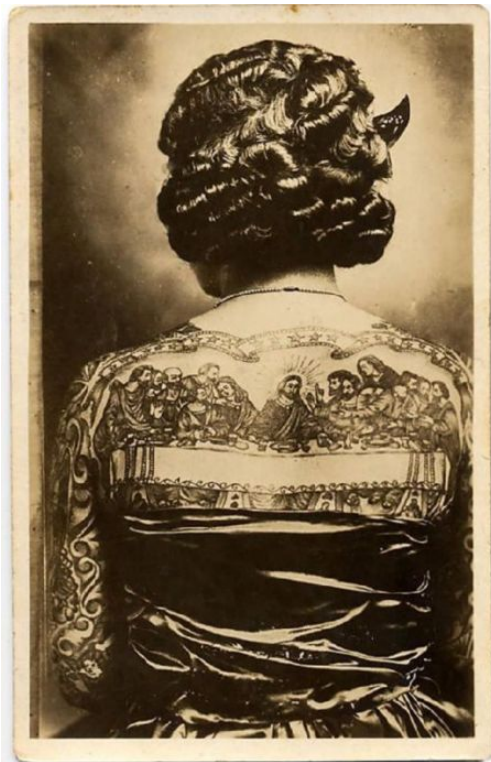


FIGURE 39: LAST SUPPER, RELIGIOUS TATTOO DESIGN. AVAILABLE FROM URL [HTTP://WWW.LASTSPARROWTATTOO.COM/FORUM/ATTACHMENTS/TATTOO-DESIGNS-BOOKS-FLASH/3408d1295851950-RELIGIOUS-SPIRITUAL-TATTOOS-LAST-SUPER-BACK.JPG](http://www.lastsparrowtattoo.com/forum/attachments/tattoo-designs-books-flash/3408d1295851950-religious-spiritual-tattoos-last-super-back.jpg). [ACCESSED OCTOBER 2013].

If some ornamental forms may be restricted to certain (subcultural) groups and contexts, many other ornaments, 'applied' on or of the human body are used by all of us living in a community. An ornament is also a certain gesture, a specific movement of the hand, arm or finger when a *decorum* requires it; ornament can be a specific style of behaviour, a way of speaking, a certain posture, a muscular flexion that would enhance the sensory perception of a body, making it obvious like an image, standing out and pleasurable (or not). Ornament in this sense carries beauty within it (Grabar 1992: 26) and Grabar himself calls the visual attributes of an object, artefact, or monument its MUSCULATURE (Grabar 1992: 30, 37).



FIGURE 40: MR. OLYMPIA 1980, FOUND IMAGE.



FIGURE 41: RONNIE COLEMAN AND FLEX WHEELER, FOUND IMAGE.



FIGURE 42: RITA BELLO, FOUND IMAGE.

Why bodybuilding practices and not something else? Because what is characteristic for bodybuilding practices is the nexus of relations between aesthetics, body modification practices and sport. Because of its emphasis on aesthetics and the image, both as representation and as presentation, on how something looks, how visible and defined it is (this something being usually covered and hidden) rather than what it does or produces. Posing, the flexion of muscles groups in a free or mandatory routine is not regarded as an act and a voluntary production of a deed/act/work, and thus bodybuilding practices are not accepted as a sport discipline. Bodybuilding competitions take place in isolation from other sport events and many see them more related to beauty pageants than to sport. Strongman competitions and Olympic weightlifting never weakened their eagerness to separate themselves, since their split [Eugen Sandow, 1901 Royal Albert Hall: first major event in its modern form (just posing without any weight lifting); judges were: Sir C. Lawes (sculptor), Sir A. C. Doyle (writer) and Sandow himself]. However training styles and programs blur the boundary between them, as many bodybuilders incorporate in their training strongman exercises, Olympic weightlifting and even CrossFit WODs.²² Overall, bodybuilding practices still have negative connotations in general and among athletes.

Because of the artificial forms and pursued body shapes, which often involve transformations through biomedical technologies, bodybuilding practices are also a form of body-modification. And if one considers the idea of life as an art-project and the plastic process of carving and sculpting a human body, then bodybuilding is also a popular form of art and lifestyle.²³

Bodybuilding practices are only one manifestation in the ever-growing body-culture of our time, that perpetuates and reinvigorates, in one form or another, and under a mask of social, moral, ethical, aesthetical, or functional values, ancient-old, equally profane and sacred beliefs:

²² CrossFit: a mix of aerobic exercises, gymnastics and Olympic weightlifting; constantly varied functional movements at high intensity; WOD: workout of the day.

²³ See: Scheller, *No Sports! Zur Ästhetik des Bodybuildings* (2010).

the pursuit of becoming our better-selves, the desire to make a change, a difference — to MAKE a meaning for one's existence, that is — not to quit, to hold on in there (in the precariousness of being and life), to give 110% (to transcend one's limits) and to support the community (so that one can receive the deserved recognition of one's deeds from the other). But it is definitely something characteristic for bodybuilding that its response to these principles are aesthetically embodied and lived through the body and its transformations — bodybuilding is not a *praxis* (*prattein*: to do, to act) in the first place, but *poiesis* (*poiein*: to pro-duce, to bring into being) and a spectacle of excess, an exaggeratedly visible explanation of bodies.

If one is interested in ornament as a visual form that carries a cognitive task, if one looks at the ornamental as an ontological intermediary dimension, and if one desires to experience an embodied relation between image and the ornamental then, I believe, bodybuilding practices open a space in which such tensions, extensions and de-tensions are actively re-worked and intensified with timely relevance.

Bodybuilding practices are a phenomenon specific to our Western (post)modern culture. Their initial, ideal forms were shaped by the visual perception of the human body in ancient Greece, body representations in Renaissance art and 20th century comics. These bodies embody an image in pursuit of representing AND presenting an image of the body and a body as image. If one is interested in the body of painting and as a corporeal activity, in the image and the (re)presentation of the body, than bodybuilding practices are a space in which all these issues are folded and unfolded into themselves. The meaning of these folds surface directly through the language of the body itself, as is the case in the activity of painting.

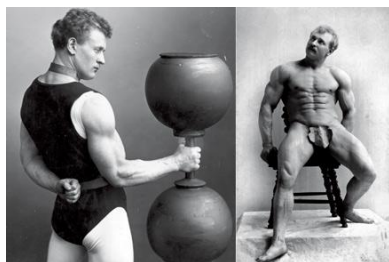


FIGURE 43: EUGEN SANDOW, FOUND IMAGE.

PERFECTIBLE METAMORPHOSIS

Among the shells on a shore lies a button. In its accurate roundness and evenness it is a queer object, here, side by side with the diversified forms of nature (Albers 2000: 25-28). Among people on the beach, a body-built body conspicuously perturbs the sight. In its accurate roundness and evenness it is a queer object side by side, among the shells on a shore, with the button, and in its monstrous size a mount of solid mass, a floating world.



Una Joc: 'If our world goes to pieces we have to rebuild our world. But do we know how to build? Education meant to prepare us. But how much of education is concerned with doing and how much with recording? How much of it with productive speculation and how much with repeating? We collect rather than construct. We are proud of knowledge and forget that facts only give reflected light. If we want to wait, to search, to learn, to do, to form, we have to turn to materials and artwork. From them we learn courage, we learn to dare to make a choice, to be independent, to commit. There is no authority to be questioned. In making our choice we develop a standpoint, a posture, a body. Any experience is immediate, one thing at a time, and we have to apply what we absorb to our work of the moment. We cannot postpone. We have to develop our senses, to trust our inner intuition; to stretch the mobility of our position, posture; to learn to construct by understanding the mechanics of movement. To feel the — OUR body, the material. To learn, to hear, to listen to the slow process of building, of moving form. Of building a body, an image, a world.

The fine arts have specialized in the use of a few materials, mostly obedient materials. But any material is good enough for art. The (human) body above all. All art is made with the body, in one way or another. The struggle with a rugged material, its resistance and resilience teaches us best a constructive discipline. RESISTANCE is one of the necessary factors, which makes us realise the characteristics of our medium and makes us question our work procedure. It teaches us the CHARACTER OF BEING. We learn patience and endurance; we learn to respect the material and its movement in working with it: we have to use our imagination and be inventive. Learning to form makes us understand all forming, creation [— truth]. This is not the understanding or misunderstanding we arrive at through the amateur explaining to the amateur — appreciating — this is fundamental knowing. Education should lead us to the quietness of vision [fiction, fantastic] and discipline of forming [truth] (Albers 2000: 25-28).

What is the medium of vision — what is its form (*peras*)? With every step toward a vision questions arise and you pursue those questions. RESISTANCE is the medium of vision, because it makes vision real, it forms it. A vision that becomes actual, that is coming into being, is an acceleration, an intensification of force over the resistance of the material, the breaking open

of a path into being (Malabou 2011: 60) — and the re-discovery of an ancient form. The inner resistance of the material is re-formed processually into an ornamental trace, at once the uniting element of memory, act, and perception, a novelty, and an organized repeatable function; energy and a generator of energy. At once astonishment and recollection... “Reflection is a restraint on chance, a chance to which one adapts a convention. And what is a play of chance if not that addition which creates an expectation and gives a different importance to various faces of dice (Valéry 1989: 7)?” Exception, chance and act (Valéry 1989: 175).’

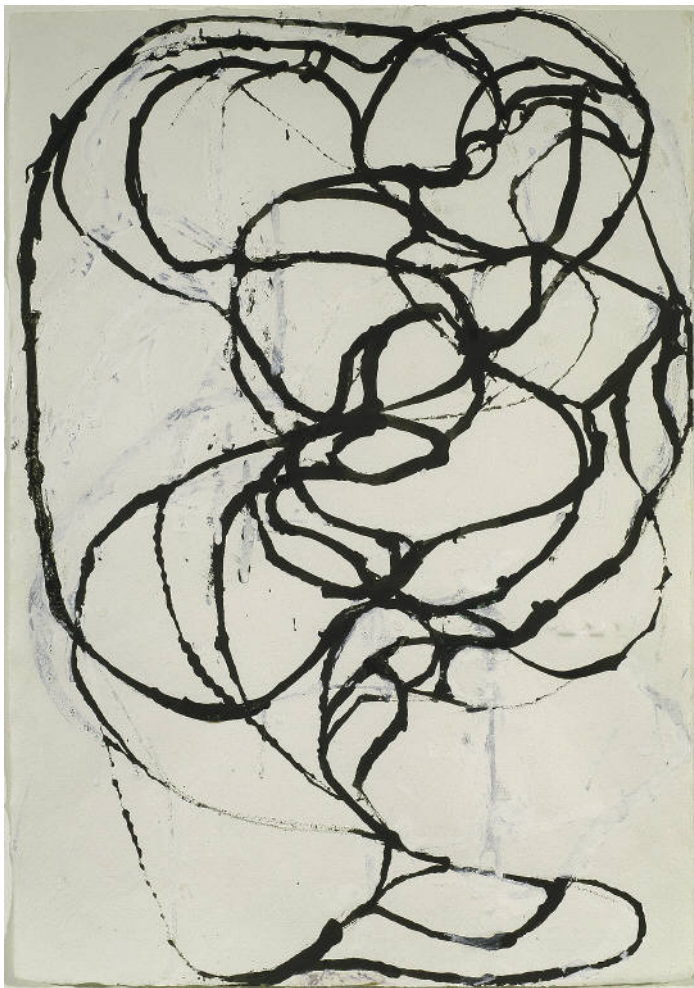


FIGURE 44: BRICE MARDEN, *EAGLES MERE SET, 5* (1996-1997), WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART.

RESISTANCE, THE EMBODIED IMAGE AND AESTHETICS

The ART OF LIVING or the AESTHETICS OF LIFE. LIFE AS AN ARTWORK, as a perfectible project moving towards self-refinement and self-design, is an old philosophical paradigm.

An old philosophical paradigm that is rooted deeply in the history of our culture. Its traces proliferate through various channels, and across multiple fields of discourse. In philosophy, it was addressed by Plato, Hegel, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, or Foucault, to name only a few; in religion, it is at the heart of virtue theory, and in the idea that one can work hard to reach a more perfect state of belief. MAN as self-created and self-determined, autonomous being is, on the other hand, the belief and image, the brainchild, of modern thinking.

Give body to this thought and nurture it to postmodern sizes and shapes and you get the well-designed, purposeful, practically minded and controlled body-ideal of a neo-liberal postmodern society. Measured, calculated, functional, cost-effective, optimized, typified, falsified.

Maximize the same body and individualize its purpose. Inflate its frame, define the lines of its parts, increase its mass to new heights and you get the extravagance and obviousness of a singular, individual body, with no other function than the display of pure difference, as image and in image. Singular in its conspicuousness, unsettling in its aesthetic, this monstrous, exceptional embodiment is simultaneously a becoming alive of a monumental inorganic mass and, at the same time, it is the metamorphosis of an organic body into an inorganic monumental sculpture.

The self-built body, the self-transformed, self-negating body of the bodybuilder exists as its trace. The trace of the scission in the body that becomes its own image and thus dissociates itself from and in its body, in and as a body that can't be seen.

As the brain is able to auto-affect itself, while the self remains necessarily blind to its own auto-affection; in other words, as the brain has "the capacity to experience the altering character of contact with itself", while the self remains blind to the enactment of this capacity (Malabou 2012: 41-45); the built body, auto-affects itself through its own resistance, but, it remains indifferent to the plasticity of its suffering and /or is not able (anymore) to see itself doing this.

The built-body is a body that de-forms and re-forms itself, and becomes a conformed copy of its self. And, in the end, it becomes itself. The body will always remain a trace in this transformation and within this progression towards an advent-body. The built-body creates and bears its own trace from within; that effaces, mutates and commutes into an image— an image (from the outside), through and within which the body itself is conserved. This image remains a fiction, a fiction that plays an infinite game of permutations on, in and as a body.

THE BODY THAT IS A TRACE. AND A TRACE “THAT IS ‘THIS SPACING AND TEMPORALIZATION THAT DESTINES PRESENCE TO DIFFER IRREDUCIBLE FROM ITSELF, THE PLAY OF NON-COINCIDENCE WITH ITSELF CORRESPOND TO A FORM OF ‘WRITING’, THE MOVEMENT OF A ‘TRACE’, BUT NOT A FORM. The trace does not derive from presence; it comes before presence, it is always ahead of what it traces [...] (Malabou 2010: 11, emphasis my own).” The body, here, is thus the supplement — the supplement, the excess of its own body-image. And, as a supplement, it only exists in and as a chain of substitutions enacted on and in the body itself.

The transformative aspect of any form, life and presence, the change in being when something comes into presence, exposes the plastic metabolism of all thought and being. The plasticity of form as a sculptural act is here doubled by its ontological meaning, which dis-locates all unity while revealing the schizoid consistency of every form and reality.

IT IS THIS BODY THAT IS ONLY IMAGE THAT PROBLEMATIZES PRESENTATION AND REPRESENTATION IN AN IMAGE, AS AN IMAGE.

If this body is only image, this image, is then, the (re)presentation of something, something that is absent in itself, but that is presented as this absence. Being-image is being in the present (Nancy 2005), but the body of the bodybuilder is never present, it is always either YET TO COME OR ALREADY PAST. An event, a time-space moment, possibly recorded, conserved, in a physical photograph.

Therefore, this body that is only image is never here, but it is also never nowhere. It is an imaginary object, “a non-objective modality of presence free of every reference and referent (Malabou 2011: 11).” This body that is only image is, in the end, its own ornamental motor of its own mutability. BODYBUILDING PRACTICES ARE ORNAMENTAL PROCESSES AND STRUCTURES THAT PRODUCE FORMS OF KNOWLEDGE. THEY WORK TOWARDS THEIR OWN END AND DISPLAY. THEY UNFOLD THE ORNAMENTAL AS GIVING AND RECEIVING OF FORMS, AS ANNIHILATION AND FORMATIVE DESTRUCTION.

The ornamental, here, is “the becoming essential of accident” and, at once, at the same time and in the same time, the “becoming accidental of essence” (Malabou 2005: XII). The ornamental does not realise itself as ornament, even though it is a form of manifested (planar) surface-embellishment, a tensely contracted figure-ground collapse. It is the activity of form itself that indicates the plasticity of body (mass). The ornamental, as the “becoming essential of accident” and, at the same time, “the becoming accidental of essence”; as the capacity of substance to receive and to produce form.

The body (substance), a yet un-formed material is to be built (massed, gathered up in itself, penetrated with self and within itself) through a process that produces changes and knowledges; through a chain of painful and recurring substitutions, through resistance and in the alliance of giving and receiving form. Through movement.

Flatness gets dis-rupted by cavities through which light goes into shadow, and shadow into light; wholeness divides into its parts, and parts gather into wholeness; volume replaces planes, lines cut through the surface; soft outlines get tightened up into sharp, precise striations outlining hard volumes. Arbitrary features become necessity, and, yet again, remain accidental. The same old ontological game, between accidents and necessities, is here, yet again at stake in a hidden form.

Una Joc: 'The body can be replaced with any other material. Material is a field where authority blocks independent experimentation less than in many other fields, and for this reason, it seems well fitted to become training ground for invention and speculation.

Free experimentation here can result in the fulfilment of an inner urge to give form; it can result in art, or in the satisfaction of invention in some more technical way. Most important to one's own growth, is to see oneself leave the safe ground of accepted conventions, and to find oneself, alone and self-dependent. It is an adventure which can permeate one's whole being. Self-confidence can grow and find its potencies and orient itself towards its limits. The inherent laws of materials are of great importance; they introduce boundaries for a task of free imagination (Albers 2000: 7). Freedom, real freedom, is at its best when it finds its limit (*peras*); and reflection is a restraint on chance, a chance to which one adapts a convention. And, what is a play of chance, if not that addition which creates an expectation, and gives a different importance to the various faces of dice?'

It can happen, then, that the germ is no more than a word. Things that exist, that have no particular use, but that want to be used; and meanwhile they drift. The germ may be no more than a fragment of a sentence, a resistant form, a material contact, a line, any thing that seeks and toils to create its own justification and so gives rise to a context, a subject, a character, an individual, a fragment, a world (Valéry 1987: 174).

'I see everything and I see nothing. I have several levels of ideas, some of result, others of execution; and the idea of uncertainty dominates them all; and, finally, there is the idea of my own expectation, ready to seize on the already realised, writable elements that are or will be offered, even those not confined to the subject (Valéry 1987: 173).'

The bodybuilder's body is its material, its field of invention. Though many react, maybe positively, but mainly negatively, to this self-invention, not many think of it as an act of re-discovery. Is it possible, for a moment, to forget this idea of monstrous psychotic self-invention, and remember the small, precise steps with which this megalomaniac project of self-inventive muscular hypertrophy works?

When working out the bodybuilder becomes body. No, when working out the bodybuilder becomes the body-part that is being worked out. That is to say: legs, arms, head, ears, eyes, every

part of the body becomes chest, or back, or biceps, or triceps, or glutes, or hamstrings, when each of one of these body parts are being worked out through isolated or compound exercises. These are bodies. Each day another body embodied —actively, and passively.

Inherent material laws are listened to, from the innermost interior tissues, carefully and repeatedly. Becoming material means becoming its material law, cause and character. In this process of auto-affection the material distances itself from itself, it dislocates. Through this, it regulates itself —and may also start to work against itself. If one becomes body, unshaped mass, these laws can crystallize into form, only after their complete explosion and dislocation into micro details. This is what the bodybuilder listens to. This is the precision of the non-language of the silent mass. In the gym, verbal language or language whose purpose is meaning occurs, if at all, only at the edge of becoming lost (Acker 1997: 144-145).

Against the usual belief that a workout involves the dull performance of an endless number of repeated movements with resistance from A to B, any committed builder who respects the body would argue against this, by giving detailed explanations of what works best for his or her body in that moment; what is their experience of the body-material in their specific situation, at this precise moment in time, and not even for the whole body in general, but for individual body-parts or fragments of body-parts (e.g. 'biceps head'). Body-builders, no matter how different their workouts are, all agree on the fact that there is not one fixed law inherent in the material and that variation, surprise and chance work wonders.

In the process of auto-affection, the body-material transforms itself and its inherent laws. Change and resistance, how destruction happens and how form is received through workout, rest and diet, is a constantly adjustable calculus. Equally, there is not a single movement; movement differs in itself from itself, as does its duration and endurance, its speed and explosiveness. The metabolic power of the body speaks a language that is constantly regenerating its meanings, but that allows resistance-work to happen and to do what it does — and this may appear, for the most part, controllable, but not entirely. In this excess that remains uncontrollable is where the ornamental dwells and from where it starts unfolding.



I have done nothing but portraits. Miming selves in and for themselves, inscribed, described, extracted, abstracted— nude, yet dressed subjects put forward, one after the other. My vision doubts and hopes for response, it doubles. It turns one eye to itself and one to the other. And I am blind to the eyes of the image, and all my looking is an attempt to find a mirror. No mirrors without others; we don't exist if we can't be seen. If I am anything in the picture, it is always in the form of the screen, the stain, the spot. And yet the particle continues to turn into a wave and a wave keeps becoming a particle. It does not go beyond, it cannot go beyond its limit. It queues in line, it fills, it floods; and waves exhale in deep peaks what they inhaled before. The more

dramatic the appearance, the more disturbing the disappearance. Of the figure — that is. The whole figure and nothing but the figure, since it is the figure as a whole and not the eye in isolation that affects the look.

THE CARPET PARADIGM AND THE BLUE TILE FROM THE WALL OF DAMASCUS, THE GRID AND THE ARABESQUE

WHAT IS TO PAINT THE ABSOLUTE? AND SO: WHAT IS ABSOLUTE PAINTING? TO PAINT OR TO FIGURE IS NO LONGER TO REPRODUCE, THEREFORE NOT EVEN TO REVEAL, BUT TO PRODUCE THE EXPOSITION OF THE SUBJECT. TO PRO-DUCE: TO BRING FORTH, TO DRAW IT OUT (Nancy 2006: 220, emphasis my own).

Every image [painting] is in some way a 'portrait', not in that it would reproduce the traits of a person, but in that it pulls and *draws* (this is the semantic and etymological sense of the word), in that it extracts something, an intimacy, a force. And, to extract it, it subtracts or removes it from homogeneity; it distracts it from it, distinguishes it, detaches it and casts it forth (Nancy 2005: 4). [...] The image is separated in two ways simultaneously. It is detached from the ground [*fond*] and it is cut out within a ground. It is pulled away and clipped and cut out. The pulling away raises it and brings it forward: makes it a 'fore', A SEPARATE FRONTAL SURFACE, whereas the ground itself had no face or surface. The cutout or clipping creates edges in which the image is framed: it is the templum marked out in the sky by the Roman augurs. It is the space of the sacred or, rather, the sacred as a spacing that distinguishes itself (Nancy 2005: 7; emphasis my own).

The Distinct is in fact none of that, but it is not nothing. It is the thing itself: it is what is the ground of things, at the heart of all things that are, and that withdraws their sense of being into the secret from which all the senses draw their sensibility (Nancy 2005: 75). [And is this not the process of imagination: "this schematism of our understanding with regard to appearances and their form [that] is a hidden art in the depths of the human soul, whose true operations we can divine from nature and lay unveiled before our eyes only with difficulty (Kant 2008: 273; A, 142; B180-181)?"]

The Distinct and the Oscillator have a common cause. One supports the other, which in turn agitates the first. It is no more possible to distinguish them than to confuse them (Nancy 2005: 75). The *distinct* according to its etymology, is what is set apart by marks (the word refers back to *stigma*, a branding mark, a pinprick or puncture, an incision, a tattoo): what is withdrawn and set apart by a line or trait, by being marked also as withdrawn [*retrait*] (Nancy 2005: 7).

The first mark, made on a surface, destroys its virtual flatness [...] The flatness towards which Modernist painting orients itself can never be utter flatness (Greenberg, in Knives 2012: 13). The first mark is the distinct. And each image is a finite cutting out, by the mark of distinction. Each image is a singular variation on the totality of distinct sense — of the sense that does not link together the order of significations. This sense is infinite, and each variation is itself singularly infinite (Nancy 2005: 12).

Even if flatness is, for one reason or another (that of medium-specificity and self-criticism, or that of a decorative flatness that opens up into the absence of any illusion-space in an image), a space-modus of the painted image in Modernist painting, we still have to acknowledge that any kind of mark on such a flat surface, on a pictorial plane, will nevertheless lead absolutely, not only to the purity of medium specificity, but also to distinction and composition, to participation.

Traditional Western painting, especially Renaissance painting operated under the visual ideology of the congruity principle between a Newtonian box-space and the pictorial space,

which had to be used in such a way, that it would create the illusion, sense or depth of a real perspectival space. The tension between real space and pictorial space in image is controlled by the figure-ground relation which regulates, through an ornamental process (that does not hypostatise itself as ornament; Hetzer 1978), ontologically and symbolically the different imaginative planes, in which schemata of representation and perception, visual expectations and aspects of a visual habitus and visual ideologies get woven into flat all-over pattern (Brett 2005: 121). When the picture plane becomes dominant over illusionistic effects than the pictorial field operates within a flatness that demands an integral planarity of all pictorial form (Masheck 1976). This ornamental space is a relational space, of rapport, that does not figure something simply in front of a ground, but with and through the ground. And, not only is its spatiality constantly re-con-figured with, through and in con-tact with the ground, but also its temporality, which is effectively an infinite series of regenerative instants. The dynamic polarity of a figure-ground, or distinct-oscillator relation, or a quadripartite tension figure-ground-nonfigure-nonground (Krauss 1994) structure — it doesn't really matter. In the end, what HAS TO be given necessarily is the possibility of disunity in unity (and thus, ultimately a consciousness) of a 'pattern' on a ground. This is what constitutes the ornamental space, while the ornamental time is epitomized in the reconfiguration of the relational elements, through movement and cessation, as constant re-actualisations-modes. This ornamental space is an intermediary, internal plane in which sur-face and space, movement, still-stand or simultaneity co-exist, defying an either-or logic, in which either part would be denied and sacrificed for the perception of the other — as is the case, for example, in the famous paradoxical Duck-Rabbit figuration, in which, one can see the duck only by denying the rabbit and vice versa. Any figuration ex-poses itself, within itself, in an ornamental space and is a 'as-well-as' process, a *daimonic* act, an obvious demon, a monster, — half-man, half-god.

Absolute painting in this sense might be the absolute form of self-relation mediated through a departure from the self (Nancy 2006: 226), not to reproduce, not even to reveal, but to produce the *ex-position of the subject*. To produce it: to bring it forth, to draw it out (Nancy 2006: 226), to articulate a presence or the pre-sense of presence itself (Nancy 2006: 234). [In this ornamental space of the in-between [*Binnen-raum*; *Zwischen-raum*], presence is por-trait and drawn to itself (Nancy 2006: 237)].

The atmospheric INFINITE RAPPORT, the possibility of infinite growth in all directions —which Krauss addresses through the schema of THE GRID and as a centrifugal aspect of a work — is a characteristic of ornamental space. It has to be said here that it is ornament which, contrariwise to its traditional understanding, instantiates itself as an autonomous form of perception that enables not only a sensory, but also a cognitive understanding of the imaginative space of the image, and of the constant relational re-calculation of different modus operandi in the pictorial field: on a first, conventional level, the perspectival box-space; on a second, 'decorative' level, a two dimensional flat space with a very short depth created through the raising of a plane before or in front of another (ground) plane (which is behind it) without any connection between the two (and this is a case not only for decorative (wall) patterns, but also happening when only one

single mark is made —even in Fontana’s case, of cuts in the canvas) and, on a third level, an in-between space that implies a series of planes placed ONE IN FRONT OF THE OTHER, as much as, ONE NEXT TO THE OTHER, in an ‘as-well-as’ relation between the different planes, between figure and ground, which ARE not, but becoming distinct in a chain of differing instantiations. Strictly speaking, there is no figure and no ground, in this case, but the infinite latent potential of becoming and the instantiations of this potential in contact with a subject, a sub-iectum or a subjectivity — or whatever is now in their place. In between these space-figures, and their specific co-relative temporalities, the atrophy and hypertrophy of one or the other regulates the infinitely finite imaginative space within an image. Depth-space with its hierarchical, perspectival, fixed structure of parts-to-whole relations, and co-existence-space of all parts on the same meaning- and value level, can be simultaneously and antagonistically realised within the ontological dimension that is constitutive of the ornamental space.

Infinite rapport, parallelism of contradictory elements, all-over coverage of a flat sur-face, the equal value given to all elements and placing the primary burden of interpreting and enjoying an image, object or monument on the viewer-user (Grabar 1987: 180) are characteristics of the arabesque as an idea and ornamental form (in Grabar’s specific understanding of ORNAMENTAL: carrying beauty and giving pleasure, an essentially redundant form that trans-forms anything it touches). The figure-ground inversion and the dynamic oscillation between the two is recognized as an invention of Islamic art (not in terms of new forms, but of new ways to combine and compose already existent basic forms within their potencies for new variants), whose creative attitudes manifested best in the idea of the arabesque: “the very notion of background is open to doubt, as almost all motifs appear on the same level of perceptibility” (Grabar 2006: 20). Direct visibility and immediacy of interpretation are being avoided and there is no clear meaning that is transmitted — the creative impulse in Islamic culture was not to tell something, but to make life and its activities more beautiful. Early Islamic art, with few exceptions, was mainly secular and popular, modest and utilitarian in character. This can be seen best in what is recognized as its main form of manifestation, in the HIDDEN architecture of interior spaces that truly exists not in the collective experience and not when seen as a monument or symbol visible to all from all sides, but through how it exposes itself in private, in the inward-turned perception, when entered, penetrated and experienced from within.

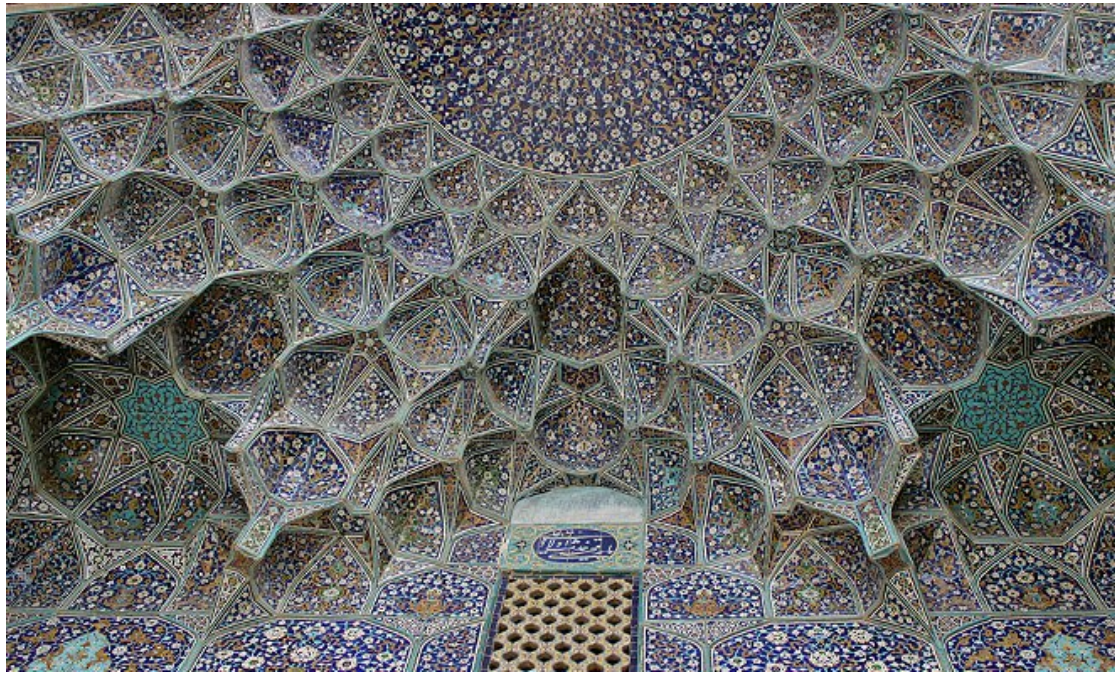


FIGURE 45: SHEIKH LOTF ALLAH MOSQUE, ISFAHAN, 1618. AVAILABLE FROM URL [HTTP://TAGHRIBNEWS.COM/VGLIWPAZRT1AUZ2..TT9KLUCKIPTL.X.HTML#2](http://taghribnews.com/vgliwpaqrt1auz2..tt9kluckiptl.x.html#2). [ACCESSED OCTOBER 2013].

It is a curious peculiarity of much of Islamic art (with the notable exception of Ottoman architecture) that even its grandiose architectural compositions can best be seen and appreciated, not as a collective experience, but as a lonely and private one. The understanding of a stalactite façade with its almost infinite subdivisions cannot be shared, just as the elaboration of the endless details of a rug and of the subtleties of a miniature or the use of an ewer or of a plate are individual, private activities. [...] It is as though the point of anonymous (collective) artistic creativity were to compel the viewer or user to withdraw within himself, to meditate on his own, in effect to find his own explanation of the work (of art) or to discover in it an inspiration for his own life (Grabar 2006: 28).



FIGURE 46: ARDABIL CARPET, 10.51M X 5.34M, VICTOR AND ALBERT MUSEUM. INSCRIPTION AT ONE END OF THE CARPET: "I HAVE NO REFUGE IN THE WORLD OTHER THAN THY THRESHOLD./THERE IS NO PROTECTION FOR MY HEAD OTHER THAN THIS DOOR./THE WORK OF THE SLAVE OF THE THRESHOLD MAQSUD OF KASHAN IN THE YEAR 946."

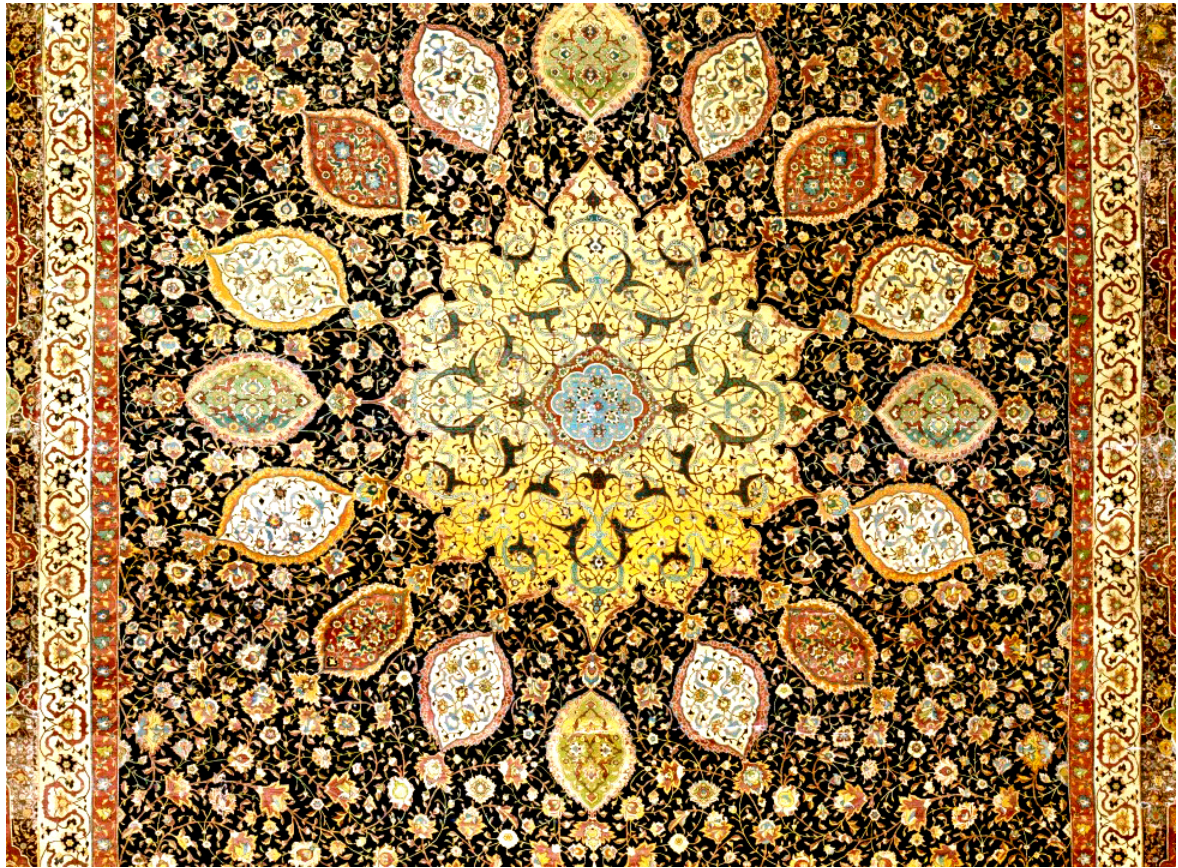


FIGURE 47: DETAIL OF FIG. 46.

One gets immersed in an 'enclosed court', with almost no outlook. In a manifold complexity of sensory perceptions coming from the sky, from an outer world, to imagine one's own real and concrete world, and one gets arrested in this haphazard, indirect circulation that takes one by surprise in never-ending rhythmic circles and virtual sur-faces. It is not clear meaning that is transmitted, but the embodied perception of BLIND WRITING, the corporeal experience of simultaneous centrifugal and centripetal forces.

Either text is distinguished in the ground of the image and this image oscillates on the former's face, or else the image is distinguished between the lines of the text and this text oscillates throughout. The image scintillates, and the text gives off a flat muffled sound. The image is mute, and the text crackles with noise. Or it is the inverse, at the same time, in the same movement. Each one, in the end, is the distinct and the oscillator of the other. Each is the *ekphrasis* of the other while also being its illustration, its illumination. *Ekphrasis* draws a phrase from its other, just as, from its other, illumination draws a sight. A phrase image and a sight of sense (Nancy 2005: 75).

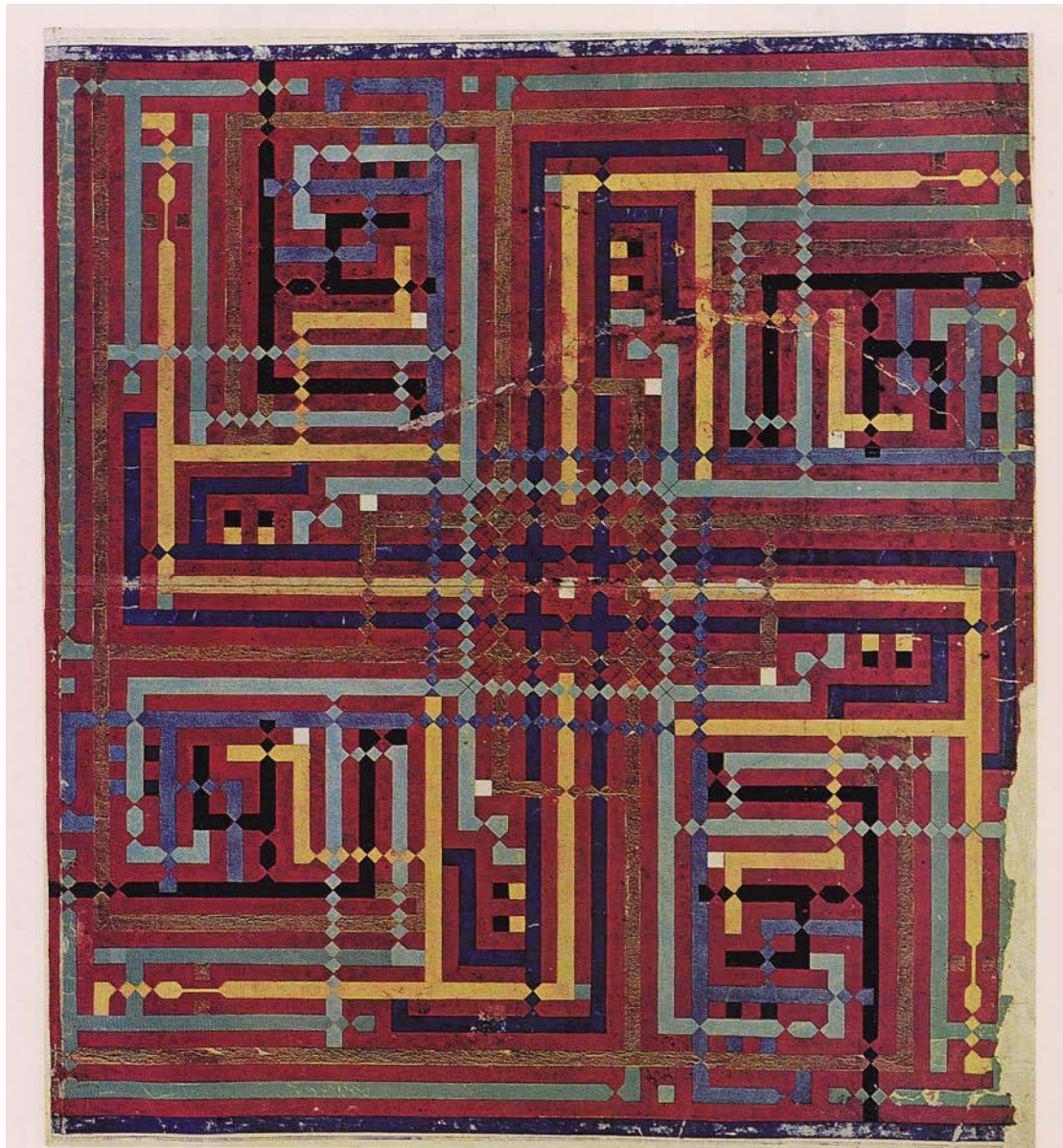


Plate 3. Painting, Iran, fifteenth century. Istanbul, Top Kapi Seray Museum, *Hazine* 2152, fol. 9v.

FIGURE 48: PAINTING ON PAPER, 45 x 50 CM, 15TH CENTURY; IT CONTAINS THE NAME OF ALI ROTATED IN FOUR QUADRANTS AND DEPICTED IN EVERY ONE OF THE COLOURS USED IN THE PAINTING EXCEPT FOR THE RED BACKGROUND (GRABAR 1992: 47-48; 120, PLATE 3.).

At this level we can modify Derrida's assumption of writing as a signifier of the signifier of the signified. In some written objects, like the Ali page (pl.3) [...] the primary signified is not the word or combinations of words that was written, but the artfulness of the craftsman, the imagination of the artist, or an inversion of esthetic behaviour possible in a post-Bakhtian world, the pleasure of emotional, intellectual, sensuous reactions by today's viewer, regardless of the correctness or even appropriateness for the considered work of art, projected onto the object as examples of the pleasure or involvement of all viewers since the object's creation (Grabar 1992: 115)."

The attainment of a manifest planarity (*Flächenerscheinung*) and pictorial "farsightedness" that flattens what is seen into "optically farsighted planar impressions" (*optisch fernsichtige Flächeneindrücke* – Riegl, Masheck 2001: {167}), long before its modern and modernist revive,

was the structuring principle in medieval and Byzantine painting, as demonstrated by Riegl in *Spätromische Kunstindustrie* (1901).

When modern painting started to imagine itself as flat two-dimensional surface, through the old *text(ile)*-metaphor of the WOVEN TEXTURE, the ORIENTAL CARPET with its system of flat embellishment and colourful interlacing based on centralized motifs boxed into compartments, was the preferred analogy (to wallpaper-design). However its ornamental characteristics were gradually and increasingly neglected, until being entirely ignored in the modernist interpretation.

Una Joc: 'Cultural collages, fragments appropriated and embedded into another context are interesting traces to follow, not in order to decide upon their correctness, but in order to experience the webbing of contingent similarities and associations. The arabesque itself relies on such appropriations and imports from different cultures, regions or time periods.

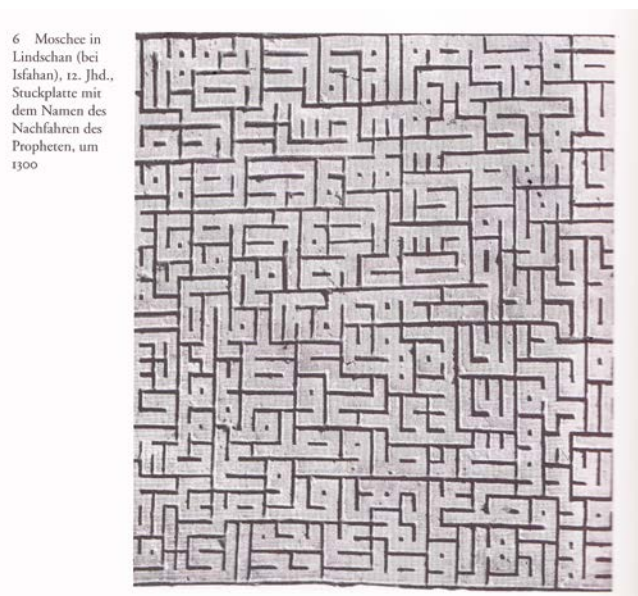


FIGURE 49: THE LINDSCHAN MOSQUE (IN ISFAHAN), 12TH CENTURY, STUCCO DECORATION REPEATING THE NAME OF THE PROPHET, AROUND 1300, (GRABAR 2006: 74, FIG. 6).

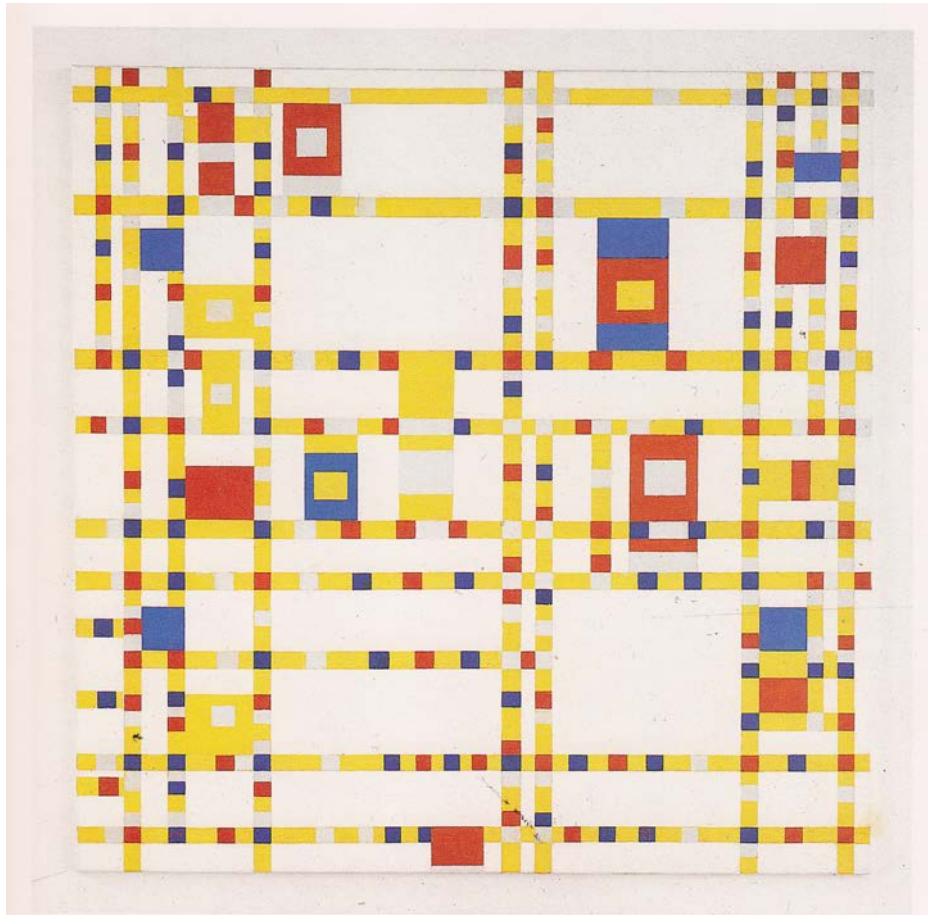


Plate 4. Piet Mondrian, *Broadway Boogie-Woogie*, 1942–1943. New York, Museum of Modern Art, cat. no. 422.

FIGURE 50: (GRABAR 1992: 121, PLATE 4.).

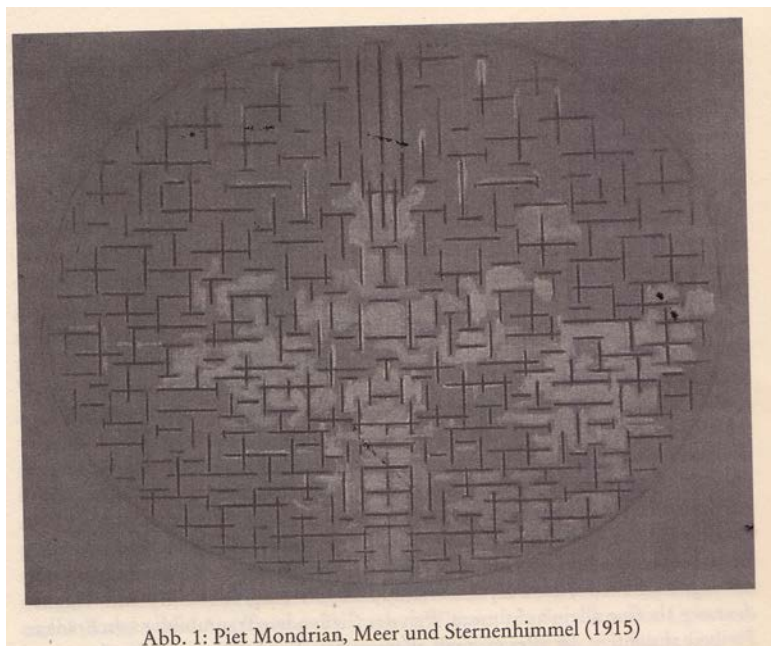


Abb. 1: Piet Mondrian, *Meer und Sternenhimmel* (1915)

OCEAN AND STARS (1915), (HOFMANN (2001), 282, ILLUS. 1).

FIGURE 51: PIET MONDRIAN,

THE CARPET PARADIGM is a modern construct of Western painting, a model generated in Western art history from its perspective and for its specific needs and through an influence coming more from design-theory than an interest in Oriental carpets and what they manifested. Joseph Masheck published in September 1976 in *Arts Magazine* the essay entitled *The Carpet Paradigm*, which “was something of a history-of-ideas inquiry into carpet, textile and the related figures for integral flatness in surface design as they emerged out of the early modern design movement to serve the modernist cause” (Masheck 2009). The phrase was proposed to describe the enthusiasm and fascination for Oriental carpets among modern artists in the last years of the 19th century. These carpets seemed to provide a model for the pictorial space and colour combination, but also for the re-evaluation of figure-ground rapports, which informed and preceded the 20th century theories of pictorial FLATNESS. In Post-impressionist circles, to compare painting to textiles was a singular point of praise; and the equivalence of the ‘decorative’ and the ‘fine’ arts was a topic that was gaining more and more terrain — this, until the modernist ideology of medium-specificity, self-criticism and ornament debate set in and imposed a radical asceticism. But in 1891, Oscar Wilde still wrote in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*:

In the flowerless carpets of Persia, tulip and rose blossom indeed, and are lovely to look on, though they are not reproduced in visible shape and line ... Nor, in its primary aspect, has a painting, for instance, any more spiritual message or meaning for us than a blue tile from the wall of Damascus (Brett 2005:209).

It had become commonplace to treat of carpets and tiles in the same sentence as paintings. This signified the overthrow of academic precedents — that taste could be formed in manufactures, and that *colore* had won over *disegno*. With this went the rejection of narrative values in painting, so that hitherto more humble genres such as still-life gained prestige over historical subjects; narrative meaning was to be replaced by musical analogy and symbolism [...] [and] in the avant-garde of 1900, [the motto became] [...] *ut pictura musica* [...](Brett 2005: 210).

Una Joc: ‘The conclusion has to be that any attempt to base a history of modern painting upon the development of painting’s own unique means and conditions of existence, autonomously self-generated and independent of other realms, is likely to be historically thin and theoretically restricted. Modern painting largely grew out of the nineteenth-century discourse of decoration, both in its formal means and its theory of meaning (Brett 2005: 210).’

The connection between 19th century painting and modernist criticism was the Kantian assumption that aesthetic pleasure is detached from social function — *interesseloses Wohlgefallen* — which, Brett rightly writes, seems (falsely) to elevate the blue Damascus tile, while it just as falsely debases the decorative aspect of painting. Greenberg wrote about Picasso that it loads the picture with “decorative space fillers” — (Often Orientalists interpreted the ornamentalization of Islamic art as the drive of a *horror vacui*, the fear for empty space, which in Ancient Greece, in the Geometric Age, was considered a stylistic element of all art, but which received increasingly negative connotations within the Vitruvian-Ciceronian discourse of *decorum*) — that are “cramping instead of liberating” (*Picasso at Seventy Five*, 1958, in: Brett 2005: 210) and that

“collage declined into decoration” (*The Pasted Paper Revolution*, 1958, in: Brett 2005: 210).

Greenberg explains his argument for the deprecation of the decorative:

“Solo works of art are meant to be looked at FOR THEIR OWN SAKE (and) WITH FULL ATTENTION, and not as adjuncts, incidental aspects, or settings of things other than themselves [...] they CHALLENGE OUR CAPACITY FOR DISINTERESTED ATTENTION in a way that is more concentrated etc. (*The Case of Modern Art*, 1959 in: Brett 2005: 210; emphasis my own).”

This seems to be the distinction between abstract art and decoration, but this argument not only presupposes a priori that the two are in fact distinct, but it also de-forms the Kantian argument which speaks about “*interesseloses Wohlgefallen*” with respect to Nature, and not to culture, that is very much created for our own purpose and in which we invest a lot of interest (Brett 2005: 210-211).

Una Joc: ‘A crucial juncture here: the painting that becomes in the studio and the painting that becomes outside the studio are two distinct things (or maybe one thing with a cut in the middle?) And then there is the painting in my head, which I can see, but which will never happen, and the one I cannot see, which will happen. And, without falling prey this time to any thoughtful entanglement: is not every painting I ever made the ONE painting, as Balzac let Frenhofer believe?’

Painting in the studio and painting outside the studio are distinct, yet the same. Outside the studio and the art world, painting’s existence is most often intermingled with an idea of *lack* — of colour, of an object to fill an empty space, of a (taxonomic) presence in a collection, of value, of resemblance. Outside of the studio painting is an ornament of life “because, as at best in the ‘applied’ or decorative arts themselves, it magnifies (or celebrates) qualities already present in material life and work (Masheck 2009).” Painting in the studio, on another hand, is ornament (in its traditional pejorative sense) because it:

Is but a guiled shore
To a most dangerous sea; the beauteous scarf
Veiling an Indian beauty; in a word,
The seeming truth which cunning times put on
To entrap the wisest

(Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* in Grabar 1992: 26).

“*The seeming truth* which cunning times put on / To entrap the wisest” is very much what Krauss laid bare in the *Optical Unconscious*: the equation of painting with perception, that becomes disembodied personality, and flatness led to the repression of those aspects of painting that were impurely mixed with literature, dream, visual puns, and with other forms of depiction that were not part of ‘art’ (such as advertising), and of those works of art which used found objects and images, such as scientific illustration (Brett 2005: 211). But also, the lure of a theory

that institutes itself in reaction to something that it in fact revives, a new academicism that represses its origins, and the lure of an empty historical formalism itself.

In another trail of thoughts, if painting comes from the ground of the image, from the distinct, desiring to be desirable, penetrated, touched, to find its '*seamăn*', its being-alike, from another world, or from the sky, then it most definitely IS (also) an ornament. The distinction between (painted) image and ornament is ambiguous and not clear, and it is not fixed.

Una Joc: 'My undecidability in the plasticity – ornamental couple, the fact that I would even end up with a couple to uncouple, haunts me. And before it gets forgotten, as it often happens with most unexpected thoughts, I have to write this down here, in such a manner, that at least once in the text, something was mentioned about this: plasticity, Malabou writes (and to adjourn my trail of thoughts in this moment to find out where exactly she did this, so that I can guard the truthful authority of my argument would be a crime and I have to live with the guilt of not committing it!) has the following significations: it designates the capacity to receive form (reception), the power to give form (donation), and the possibility of the deflagration or explosion of every form (annihilation). These were the first three significations analysed in her earlier books. Later she focused on a fourth signification, discovered through drifting in psychoanalysis, cellular biology and neuroscience, that of the creation through the irrevocable destruction of form —that of negative, destructive plasticity. In the first three meanings of plasticity form retains in itself the possibility to return to its initial form, while the destructive negative plasticity completely and absolutely destroys any such possibility, creating an entirely new identity without past or future (Alzheimer disease).

This appears now as the suture of my haunting: the ornamental is plasticity that leads to something else, it doesn't come back to itself as itself, but as other, that it, itself, is. For some this is negative and destructive, for others it is positive and it implies effective completion (that still remains transitory), even transfer of sense and meaning from one to the other. And this is why the image is ornamental: "— because the image, then, is above all the *there* of a *beyond*. It is not at all its 'representation': it is thinking as the effectivity of a *place opening itself to presence* (Nancy 2005: 125)." The ornamental is the flight home, the interval, the in-between, the "infinitesimal calculus of a passage to the limit" (Nancy 2005: 111), of the transformational mask, between an interior and an exterior of form, between faces that make a sur-face possible. Plasticity spaces itself from within or without, the ornamental slips in, it buffers, filters, fills, spaces, attracts, expels, exhales, proofs, orients ... Plasticity implies a host or a parasite and movement, the ornamental multiplicity and spacing — and, plasticity.'

Thinking about destructive plasticity in the realm of art. This permanent dislocation of one identity through which a new, completely alien identity is formed, that is neither the sublation, nor the compensatory replica of the old form, but literally a form of destruction, which remains

ultimately an *adventure of form* (Malabou 2012: 18). We have to pause and reflect what this means for art, if it happens, how it happens and if not, what if it would happen? (Ready-mades, icons, museum-marketing objects, souvenirs, performance-objects during the performance and after, installation objects — what is the relation between the artwork’s previous and other forms of existence? Is the image image or image plus its otherness, non-image?)

Painting and text — *ut pictura poesis* — and text (Latin *texere*, to weave) and textiles, thus painting and textiles, are at least terminologically interlaced with each other since ever.²⁴ “Consider painting once again: *pingo* means above all ‘to embroider with threads of colour,’ or else ‘to tattoo’. This mixes weaving, incision, and delineation with tinting and coloration. The woven thread and the puddle, or the line and the covered surface” (Nancy 2005: 74).

Text means *Tissue*; but whereas hitherto we have always taken this tissue as a product, a ready-made veil behind which lies, more or less hidden, meaning (truth), we are now emphasizing, in the tissue, the generative idea that the text is made, is worked out in a perpetual interweaving; lost in this tissue—this texture—the subject unmakes himself, like a spider dissolving in the constructive secretions of its web. [...] (Barthes 1975: 64).²⁵

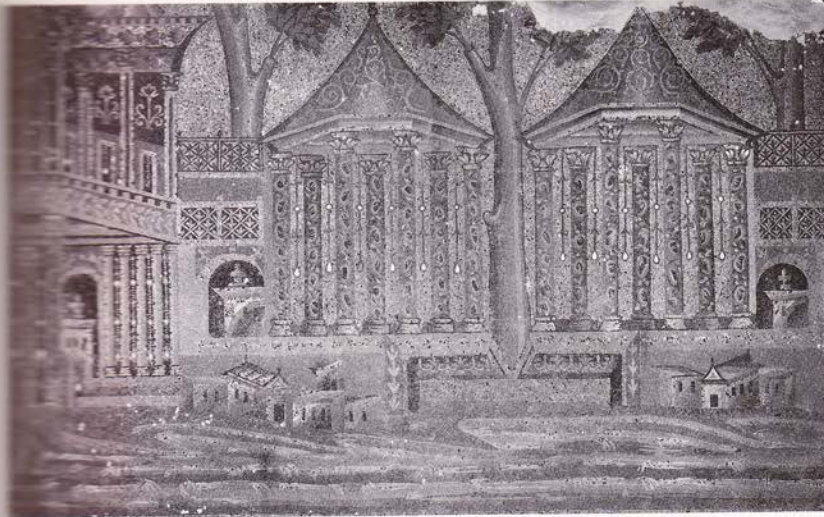


What is interesting about the façade mosaics on the walls of the Great Mosque of Damascus, is the way in which an ornamental value is combined with an iconographic meaning. The main subject matter of the mosaics of the buildings

is one which in the classical and Byzantine tradition whence it derived usually formed a background —at times meaningful, at other times ornamental —to some other topic. In Damascus the latter is absent; instead, a series of naturalistic trees is rhythmically set in the forefront. Since it appears unlikely that these trees were the main subject matter of the mosaics, they become the formal equivalents of personages who form the main subject matter in the models used by Damascus mosaicists, as for instance in the fifth-century mosaics of the church of St. George in Salonika (or Thessaloniki). A fascinating example of THE TRANSFER OF FORMAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE PARTS OF AN IMAGE occurred here. The desire for a concrete meaning — paradisiac architecture — in an understandable iconographic language — the vocabulary of the classic tradition — led to the mutation of a background motif into the main subject and the transformation of the foreground motif—in the tradition the main subject — into a secondary theme (Grabar 1987: 88-89, emphasis my own).

²⁴ After 4th century: *contexere*, *intexio*, *contextio* literally meaning to weave together and webbing, net; an ancient metaphor, is that of thought as a thread, and of the raconteur as a spinner of yarns, whereas the true storyteller, the poet, is a weaver; and the written page becomes a *textus*, meaning cloth.

²⁵ The metaphoric trail of text-texture-textile-context is complicatedly intermingled with that of the *veil*, and together they belong the platonic-macrobian paradigm of the relation between philosophy and literature connected through a third paradigm, that of truth. Chrétien de Troyes’ (1140-1190) structural concepts of *contextio* (designing technically the *ordo relations*, the structure of content in a story), *conjointure* (the harmonious mélange of multiple traditions) and *velum* (referring to specific types of stories in the platonic paradigm used to represent truth): *Der Dichtung Schleier aus de Hand der Wahrheit*, the *Dichtung’s* veil from truth’s hand (Goethe in von Graevenitz 1992: 235). With respect to the composition of an arabesque novel this metaphorical chain precedes and informs the literary theory of Early Jena Romanticism, and Schlegel’s ideas.

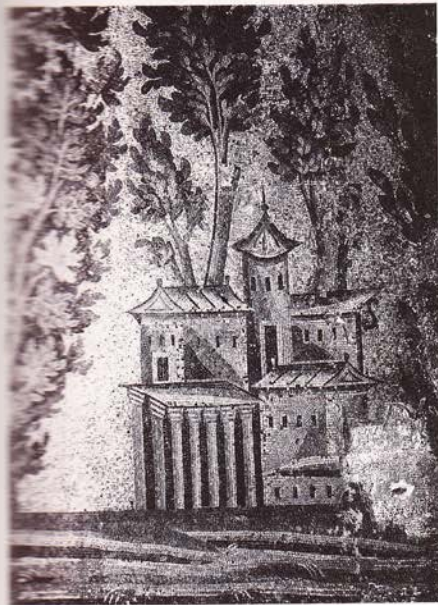


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Fig. 155. Damascus, Great Mosque, mosaic in west portico, detail, early eighth century.

Fig. 156. Damascus, Great Mosque, mosaic in west portico, detail, early eighth century.

Fig. 157. Representation of cities, Umm al-Rassas, mosaics in church, circa 760.



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FIGURE 52: DAMASCUS, GREAT MOSQUE, MOSAIC IN WEST PORTICO DETAILS, EARLY EIGHTH CENTURY (FIG. 155 AND 156) AND REPRESENTATION OF CITIES, UMN AL-RASSAS, MOSAIC IN CHURCH, CIRCA 760 (GRABAR 1992: 181, FIG. 155, 156, 157).

The Great Mosque in Damascus is one of the most official buildings of early Islam and the intention behind its decoration was to have a symbolic and illustrative meaning. The avoidance of figural representations in early Islam was intentional and deliberate in the case of religious buildings and led to unexpected syntactic changes and transformations on the vocabulary of

imagery borrowed and utilized by Muslim Patrons. However, the avoidance of figural representations was not the avoidance of symbolic meaning, which was still attached to forms that were used. Contrariwise, symbolic significance was given to new, or adopted forms in older artistic languages for which such symbolism had not been known (Grabar 1987: 89). It was not an *a priori* doctrine that informed the creative consciousness in Early Islam, but the avoidance of representations was the result of a response to an available formal vocabulary and of a search for an identifying original imagery. Grabar’s argument brings here also *coinage* as an example, and he writes that the official art of the empire avoided representations of living things, but the culture as a whole seemed at first indifferent to the problem. This indifference will turn into an opposition later on, which was not only the result of a concrete historical circumstance, but:

a typologically definable attitude that sees and understands any representation as somehow identical with that which it represents, and it is its peculiarity that it immediately interpreted this potential magical power of images as a deception and as evil.

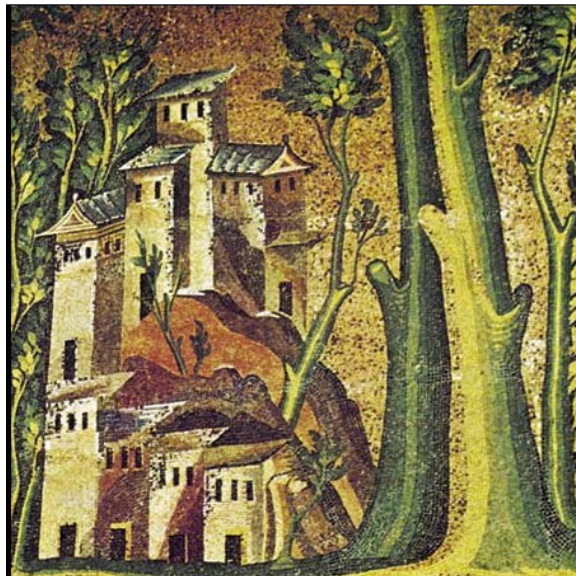


FIGURE 53: DAMASCUS, GREAT MOSQUE, SYRIA,

MOSAIC DETAIL. AVAILABLE FROM URL
[HTTP://WWW.BRITANNICA.COM/EBCHECKED/MEDIA/107279/DETAIL-OF-A-MOSAIC-FROM-THE-GREAT-MOSQUE-DAMASCUS-SYRIA](http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/media/107279/detail-of-a-mosaic-from-the-great-mosque-damascus-syria). [ACCESSED OCTOBER 2013].

Una Joc: Is not THE TRANSFER OF FORMAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE PARTS OF AN IMAGE ONE OF THE MODI OPERANDI, if not THE MODUS OPERANDI, of contemporary painting —with all the good and bad infinities that it implies —and, of course, ‘formal relationships’ understood in its widest sense possible and not only within formalist parameters?

One has to slip in here some of Riegl’s observations about Antique and Late Roman painting: Antique painting aimed to capture individual particular forms as unmediated, clear, material phenomena, in their extension in a two dimensional space. This was realised through a rhythmic composition of forms one next to each other or one above the other, but not one behind the other,

in which case individual forms or parts of forms would cover each other up. A rhythmic, in-row repetition of similar or identical forms opened and created, in first place, a plane. Late Roman painting however, presented not so much individual forms as singular phenomena, but in their relation to a collective appearance and in a tri-dimensional space. This led, on the one hand, to the isolation of the individual autonomous form from the ground, or from the universal visual-plane, and on the other, to its co-relation to other individual forms. This meant also the emancipation of the ground, which gained a new function as an individual unity and creative form-force. Rhythm continued to be the principle that structured the composition of forms. The short depth of field that had been introduced added a new rhythm of colour and light/shadow play that would help to structure the rapports between what was posited (Riegl 1901: 211-217).

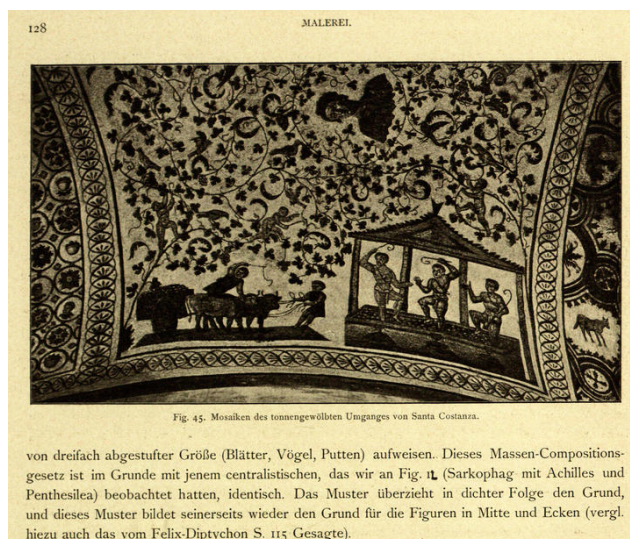


FIGURE 54: (RIEGL 1901: 128).

What started to form and to manifests itself in early Islamic mosaic decorations, but also in other techniques (stucco decorations, wood and metal-work, ceramics, etc.) in resistance and under the temptation of Byzantine and Christian art is an attitude towards ornamentalization and an ornamental mode of creation that emphasizes visual pleasure, rhythm, ambiguity and ambivalence, and a peculiar nature of perception. This type of creativity found its right measure and determination in a spatiality and temporality in which “[...] the operative point of view is quite literally the place form which one uses, touches or views a motif displayed on a surface of something (as opposed to a place created in order to view it).” Thus, consciously or not, location and the activities connected with it (sitting or walking, for instance) determine the meaning of what one sees (Grabar 1992: 210).

Next to sensory materiality we have, thus, a choice of possible but incompatible ways of focusing. [...] the viewer-user penetrates into the object, both literally, as rugs are meant to be walked on, and perceptually, as the eye meanders its forms, to follow rinceaux or to decompose flowers. At this stage it no longer matters much whether kings and courtiers played here or whether some mystical message is encoded, for in reality it is only the sensory pleasure of seeing, feeling, composing, and recomposing that dominates. And it does so, because of a setting taken from nature that has nothing

to do with any real nature, just as the people or animals are not common beasts or men in common activities. They are all in a dream, they are an imaginary fantasy. They are totally unreal and yet they are stems, leaves, animals and flowers. [...] Nothing is happening, has happened, nor will happen. It is all a dream, a fantasy, and that fantasy without event, without story, has been expressed with a stunning visual clarity in which every part, every brick or tile, every bit of inscription has been defined with utmost precision. Once caught, one cannot but wander and forget. (Grabar 2006: 240, 249).

This space and temporality is one of becoming, not of being. It is a space in which ornamental forms fulfil their intermediary agency and lead the viewer or user to behave in some way or another toward an object, image, monument. And it is one of the characteristics of ornament, as an intermediary, to transform everything it touches into something else, to lead elsewhere than towards itself (or towards itself as other).

Una Joc: 'For the secret Image of ... —[...] It is an image that must be unimagined, that is thought, if thought is a commotion, a syncope, and a bedazzlement. Its flash is not the image of the obscure, but the brilliance that sparks out from having knocked against it: a flash of darkness sliced away. A blow and a shout, a stupefying pain, a breath cut short, the wordless unimagined, in a bark, a wail, a groan, a sonorous uprising (Nancy 2005: 79).'



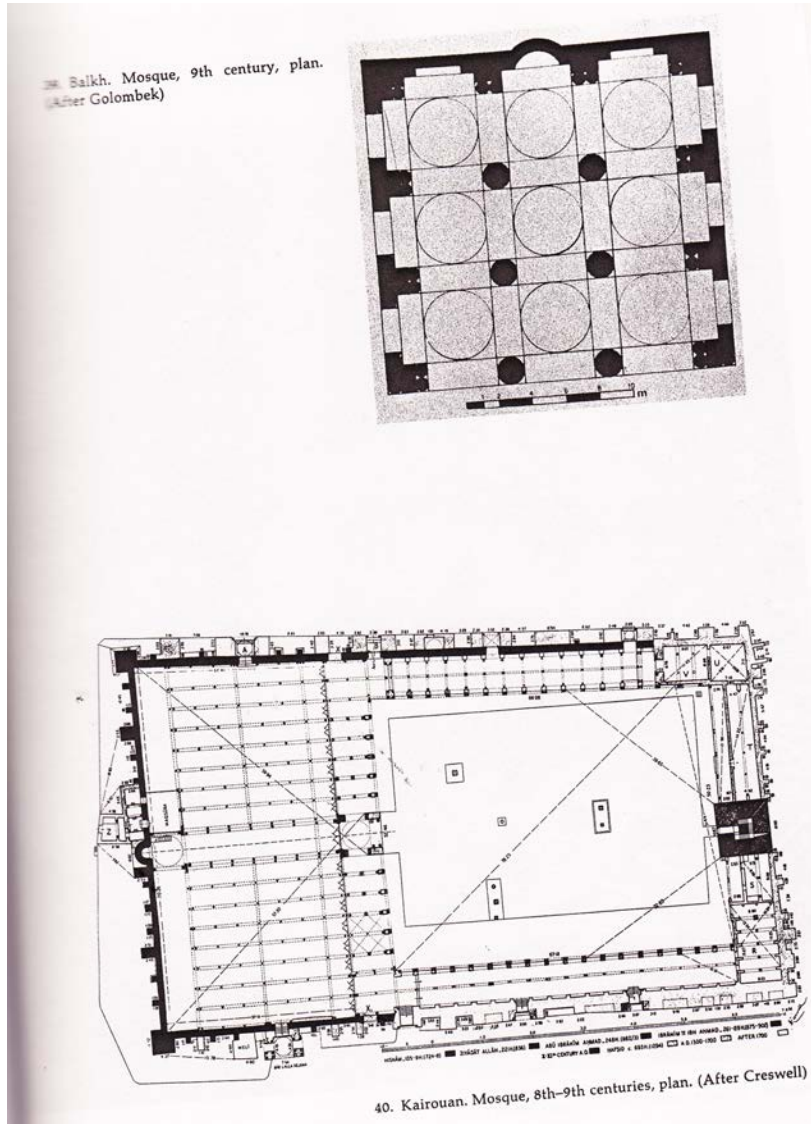


FIGURE 55: BALKH MOSQUE, 9TH CENTURY, PLAN. KAIROUAN MOSQUE, 8TH-9TH CENTURIES, PLAN. (GRABAR 1987: ILLUS. 39 AND 40).



figural sculpture had more or less disappeared in the eastern Mediterranean after the fourth century, but remains of statues and reliefs could be found everywhere and were usually associated, at least in popular lore, with the awesome power of the imperial monuments. They were signs of the awesome power of the imperial monuments. They were signs of the awesome power of the imperial monuments. They were signs of the awesome power of the imperial monuments.

10 Wall painting in a Hellenistic mode in the bath at Qusayr 'Amrah

FIGURE 56: WALL PAINTING IN HELLENISTIC MODE IN THE BATH AT QUSAYR 'AMRAH (GRABAR 2006: 433; FIG. 10).

In 1979, Rosalind Krauss published in Volume 9 of *October* magazine an essay entitled *Grids*. In this essay, she identifies the grid as the emblematic structure of the modernist ambition and as a form that relentlessly sustained itself as such, while, at the same time, being impervious to change. Its appeal relies in the demonstration that physical and aesthetic planes are co-extensive and coordinate. Its structure displays an infinite lateral spread of a single surface, over-all regularity, an order of pure relationship, and declares the pictorial field as: flattened, geometricized, ordered, anti-mimetic and anti-real. The grid claims thus not only for the pictorial field, but for the space of art in general, an autonomous and autotelic existence. Krauss identifies the grid with a hidden naked materialism, and as a matrix of knowledge that enacts the separation of perceptual field from real field. But looking at the work of artists such as Ad Reinhardt or Agnes Martin, she states that artist were attracted and devoted to the grid, which was a deterministic and hugely restrictive structure, not because they were interested in what happened in the concrete, naked materialistic order, but in the Universal, in Being, Mind or the Spirit, and thus in the Symbolic. The structure of the grid operates within its own, newly (or re-discovered) constructed spatiality and temporality: that of the infinite, autonomous and autotelic space and, respectively, its temporality that is an absolute present, that declared everything else to be the past: "in the temporal dimension, the grid is the emblem of modernity by being just that: the form that is ubiquitous in the art of our century, while appearing nowhere, nowhere at all, in the art of the last one" (Krauss, 1979: 50-59).

The grid is, to be clear about this, one of the oldest and most basic types of flatness, infinite rapport, all-overness, absolute symmetry, seriality, mirroring and uninterrupted continuity, while being also, as Krauss claims, the emblem of modernity. Emblem that is: symbol, inlaid

ornamental work, embossed ornament, or insertion – to insert, to throw in (Online Etymological Dictionary). The structure of the grid on which the chequerboard pattern is based — and the Duchampian anti-retinal chessboard schema — is one of the most ancient examples of ornamental space, in which the figure-ground relation is not only annulled or levelled out, but presented as becoming and in visual form. Already in Late Roman painting, the ground, as *Intervalle*, interval/gap/cessation, became a creative individual unity with potential to form through rhythm (Riegl 1901: 210). The ground was not so much a surface behind or underneath another sur-face, but the condition of possibility for a gap, a cessation, a blank, for a rhythm — for the Distinct.



5 Detail from the mosaic pavement in the bath hall at Khirbat al-Mafjar

FIGURE 57: DETAIL

OF THE MOSAIC PAVEMENT IN THE BATH HALL AT KHIRBAT AL-MAFJAR (GRABAR 2006: 428; FIG. 5).

The affinity of modern painting with ornament and pattern lies in the re-evaluation of the ground and this does not imply that modern paintings have to be spatio-logically or semantically flat. The change from perspectival box-space to ornamental space, or the reduction of space to surface, led to a gradual de-substantiation and simultaneous metamorphosis of the image-figures into ornamental figures and to an optical and ontological gain in substance of the ground. Spatial homogeneity of conventional image-space is thus abrogated, and the figure-ground relation negates the depth of field and becomes an ornamental blank, interstice, gap, distance. There is a phenomenological necessity involved here: figure and ground have to be phenomenologically given as distinct from each other for the extension and expansion of an ornamental distance or gap to take place; so the intelligibility of the ground has to be present and this ground-intelligibility constitutes not only any surface decoration, but consciousness itself (Kirves 2012: 15). In *The Optical Unconscious*, Krauss speaks of a figure — non-figure — ground — non-ground schema, as modernist painting negated both figure and ground, and thus dialectically levelled out the difference between them.

Una Joc: ‘So, what is ornamental space, ornamental temporality? Is it space that accommodates within itself non-space, blank or gap, and non-time, cessation? The fiction of what is not; the ‘what is not’ that is real? The ornamental is the imaginary production without a referent, a pure ontological creation, “the foreigner on the inside, the whole of the metabolic force that sleeps without sleeping in what is, the very face of being that concepts cannot say without losing face (Malabou 2011: 12).

And what is the grid, this emblem of modernity? This ornamental structure that resists development, that covers up and reveals at the same time the shame of its relation to the symbolic and to the ornamental? — The character that best embodies the tragic mythology of the grid, that of not being able to act in accordance with his own thinking, is Don Juan (or Don Quixote):

His entire anxiety is to give himself Determinations. But these are denied to him, in their truth, in the first part of the book (they are windmills and flocks of sheep), because it is he who invents them, while in the second part of the book they are not real Determination for him, because everything depends on the invention of others (Noica 2009: 32).

The grid, like Don Juan, fully incorporates the Individual. Both are true individualities, characters severed from the inertia of common generality. They are not into something already given, but have provided themselves with the image of their own. Don Juan no longer wishes to be caught in the truth and prejudices of society and belief. He is a libertine and does as he pleases. The problem that both face and that leads to their tragedy is that although they are individualities, they are really into anything, as they reject any General. They are caught into an infinity for which they have no responsibility and no RAPPORT and are thus caught not even in a ‘bad infinity’, but in the IN-DIFFERENT infinity of more and more. They are both advocates for

INFIDELITY, like Plato, but whereas Plato saw INFIDELITY as necessary to ascend to the Idea of Beauty, the grid and Don Juan ascend to nothing, because they are blind and refuse any general order, or are unable to see it. Don Juan loves conquest for its own sake, as the grid, in mere self-repetition or blind rotation. Don Juan falls into lower and lower determinations, into complete disorder in his 'becoming', only to face an inert generality, nothingness. But nothingness itself speaks in the name of order, of the general, of death. Don Juan and the grid are figures of human slaves who have forgotten all masters, even the inner one: fortress, ghetto, the Stone Guest, the General, defied by man and accepted only as a guest and not as a true master. It is Molière who introduces GUILT as a characteristic of man in the old Spanish story, and it is SHAME, Krauss writes, that the grid presides over, the shame of the indecision about the grid's connection to matter and spirit. Both Don Juan and the grid are mythological structures that deal with contradictions and that allow contrary views to be held in some kind of para-logical suspension, through covering up the contra-diction or through repression, but not through re-solving the paradox.

Furthermore, Krauss pays attention in *Grids* to what she calls "a certain kind of accessory literature to which painting paid an increasing amount of attention" and identifies the grid as the illustrative matrix of knowledge in physiological optics. Thus, even though, "itself invisible in nineteenth-century painting", the grid, "as an emblem of the infrastructure of vision", became an insistent and visible feature of neo-impressionist and symbolist painting. The grid was present in symbolist painting, Krauss writes, in the form of the window, which in the associative system of symbolism, was equally opaque and transparent, as transmission and reflection, as mirror that flows and freezes; as source towards birth and, simultaneously, as freezing into stasis towards death. As grid or window, as a matrix of ambi- and multi-valence, the grid is present even where one does not expect it, Krauss writes, in the works of Matisse, who "admits openly to the grid only in the final stages of the *papiers découpés*".

The grid (like the image) is "fully, even cheerfully, schizophrenic, because it portends the centrifugal and centripetal existence of the work of art" — however, I believe that the precariousness of being of the work of art is something ontologically constituent for the work of art as such and does not reside only in the grid as a structure to portend to this. It is rather the mode of being that the work of art is, that is cheerfully schizophrenic: beyond-the-frame-attitude and within-the-frame-attitude; engulfment, implosion and petrification; complete isolation from and complete merger with the world.

Krauss ends her essay with the conclusion that one has to interpret the grid not from a historical perspective, that is in terms of development, because, as she stated in the beginning of her argument, the grid resists any development, but from an etiological psychological condition, which is different from the historical one as it is not progressive, but rather "an investigation into the conditions for one specific CHANGE — the acquisition of disease to take place", "into the background of a chemical experiment, asking when and how a given group of elements came

together to effect a new compound or to precipitate something out of a liquid (Krauss 1979: 50-64)." The lack of development does not imply a lack of quality (in the same way as a malady can be creative). And thus the grid is also anti-developmental, anti-narrative and anti-historic. Krauss brings to the sur-face the relation of the grid to the symbolic, which modernist painting tried to (un)consciously hide away. But she does not look at the grid in terms of an ornamental structure. Nakedly displayed as symbolic structure, as myth, matrix of knowledge, as window or as schizophrenic sur-face, defined as an *emblem*, Krauss does not refer to what remains repressed even for her, the inlaid ornamental work, the embossed ornament that determines its character. The grid is the most basic and oldest schema of the ornamental, and also of the arabesque. The grid is an ornament — in which pure (mathematical) presentation and aesthetic ex-position can be displayed on the same value plane.

AN O(L)DD MARRIAGE: *KUNST UND ORNAMENTIK*

Art is braided with its appropriations and expropriations. Thus, art expropriates and expatriates. It is no apex and it is not fixed, but hyperbolic, peripheral and marginal. Entering - experiencing this milieu, this a-real, we need to re-Orient ourselves. What I am saying is to literally, physically and temporally turn towards the East and dwelling not only in the Occident. Not dwelling in either of the two, but travelling, going-after in method of tabular shakedown.

In this reconnaissance of the pictorial space, ornamental elements are not only superfluous surface fillings, but they pivot the genetic construction and experience, the metabolism and stratagems of painting. Visual overload and discursive contemplation, elocution and reflection, form and content, —in the same line of thought: body and mind— are not in disaccord with each other, but of one heart – the heart that shelters the margin.

Art and décor are stranded on the same offering pit: they both take, receive and accept what shows honour to what fits to itself and in the context; they show honour to what shows itself on the basis of itself (phenomenon) — and they offer and exhibit this fitting. What fits and is suitable, is what appears, what appears in an appearance (phenomenon) — and its excess.

Remember the line: *Painting as Gaze: on the Revelatory Force of the Arabesque*. Painting, glancing, gazing, starring, writing, playing, gambling, arabesque-ing ... an idle gait on side alleys, away from the A-road that separates 'fine art' from 'decorative art', that is away from the linguistic construction of the ornament debate. Erring on side alleys, drifting away on imaginary paths is experimenting with heterogeneous ornamental forces. But the route away from some given categories and classifications might only open a new one-way road indebted even more to some hidden taxonomies.

Decoration, décor, *decorum*, to decorate, decent, *dokein*, *dekhesthai*, *dacasyati*, *dacati* – this is the incision of beauty and taste, appearance, offering and thought. Thus, while keeping it in mind, we should indeed mistrust the hierarchical opposition installed by the assumption of a clear demarcation between art and ornamentation. And if we choose to believe in their unbridgeable opposition, than we should be aware, on what scaffolding this cut grounds and of the implications it bears within it.

Ornament, décor, *decorum* and decoration are intertwined historically with the truth- and common sense- paradigms. Vitruvius had already assigned rhetorical principles to architecture and subsumed both of them under the representational system of the community. Ornaments were then modes for the self-representation of the community, expressions of the visual habitus that described and inscribed a relation based upon and controlled through rules and principles between the individual/*individuum* and the community/the general. The same meaning of

decorum is found also in Cicero's writings. In this sense, ornament continued to play the role a *decorum* or *prepon* throughout the *Ancient Regime*.

Ideological, cultural, social, political or aesthetical changes are manifested and reflected, in one way or another, in how visual pleasure is expressed and/or repressed in daily life. Such changes can be observed in the historical development of ornament, in their relation to commodification, social and political power. Ornament is a cognitive form, an intermediary between subject and object, between the individual and society or the community; between objects and works of art; between the individual, the general and determinations. The relevance of the cognitive task of ornament is in many ways historically, philosophically and aesthetically intermingled with the TRUTH paradigm, with reason, knowledge and ontological reality.

Until the 18th century, ornaments were forms of mediation and social interpersonal communication. They indicated what was suitable and acceptable in a certain context and marked social positions within a hierarchical structure; they manifested in social behaviour, in the structure of social events, in visual codes, in functional objects, in human habits and gestures, in costumes, clothing, in fashion, and in language. Ornaments formed the *décor* for a social class. Political and social changes during the 18th century (that reached a peak in 1848 with the French Revolution) changed the functioning and meaning of ornament. And, already in *Weimarer Klassik* writers and thinkers, influenced by the artistic ideals of ancient Greece, despised ornaments as added, superfluous forms, as imitations, that shared no essence, function, role or meaning with the structure on which they were added. (J. W. Goethe (*Von der Arabeske*, 1749-1832) and I. Kant refer to ornament as *Zierart* or *bloße Dekoration* —mere decoration.) If, at the beginning of the 19th century, ornament was still seen by the majority as a static form added, in a unifying relation with its 'bearer', to a structure to complete it as a whole, ornament would soon develop into an autonomous form, independent of its structure and carrying a symbolic meaning on its own, especially as a metaphor of power (Raulet, 2001, in: Frank and Hartung 2001: 148-162). Ornaments became marks of uniqueness and luxury and stood for the value implied by the possession of a unique thing. This understanding of ornament prevailed from the 2nd half of the 19th century, well into the beginning of the 20th century.

Political, social, technological and cultural changes that marked the 19th century had an impact on the production of commodities, on architecture and on art, which intensified, at the beginning of the 20th century, the ornament debate. Rhetoric played a prime role in this polemic, which unfolded mainly as artificially constructed linguistic strategies (Ocón-Fernández 2003: 14-18). Dialectical constructions are based on highly developed stylistic mechanisms and are accompanied by specific ornamental patterns that structure arguments and proliferate their forms. One has to remain alert to these operations that occur often in such circles. Here, the ornamental turned against itself! But in this paradox, that of *the ornamental* that produced, enhanced and perpetuated this polemic, lies, I believe, also a relevance of ornament.

In 1893, Riegl published *Stilfragen. Grundlegungen zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik* (*Problems of Style: Foundations For a History of Ornament*) and established ornamentation as an art historical discipline that dealt with the history of ornament as an autonomous art form for its own sake, and in its formal development and taxonomic categorization.



FIGURE 58: ADOLF LOOS, VILLA KARMA (1904), DETAIL OF THE VAULTED CEILING OF THE ENTRANCE HALL. AVAILABLE FROM URL [HTTP://MADDME.WORDPRESS.COM/CATEGORY/UNCATEGORIZED/](http://maddme.wordpress.com/category/uncategorized/). [ACCESSED OCTOBER 2013].

The modernist dictum against ornament is only the most recent manifestation of such an ideology. The debate against decoration and ornamentation in relation to architecture and as it has been presented by Loos in *Ornament and Crime* (1908) and by Le Corbusier in *The Decorative Art of Today* (1925) goes back to ancient Greece. Throughout history there have been many epochs and societies in which decoration and any form of visual display, have been criticized, blamed or discouraged. Three arguments were usually brought against decoration, either each on their own or two or all three intertwined with each other to different degrees: DECORUM, THEOLOGY and PROGRESS (Brett 2005).



"The unveiling of the Palace of Soviets' model, Paris, 1931" (Source: Jean-Louis Cohen, *Le Corbusier et la mystique de l'URSS: Théories et projets pour Moscou, 1928-1936* [Bruxelles: Madraga, 1987] 165)

FIGURE 59: LE CORBUSIER UNVEILING THE MODEL FOR THE PALACE OF SOVIETS (1931). AVAILABLE FROM URL [HTTP://WWW.AGGREGAT456.COM/2010/12/SARTORIAL-MOMENT.HTML](http://www.aggregat456.com/2010/12/sartorial-moment.html). [ACCESSED OCTOBER 2013].

The argument of *DECORUM* has a literary origin and comes from rhetoric, which was employed as civic art in public speech and political forums in ancient Greece. It is the art and skill to employ stylistic mechanisms to achieve a desired persuasive effect. *Ornatus* referred to the set of such stylistic devices and linguistic forms that aimed to achieve a certain effect through a beautiful, but appropriate form. It was part of the *elocutio* (speech art, elocution). As the art of persuasion (Aristotle) rhetoric was seen as dangerous, because of its force of manipulation, of deceit and of shaping a man's character. The *ornatus* especially shared this problematic relation to truth. The ornament debate started in ancient Greece with Aristotle and Plato's argument against the Sophists²⁶. Plato favoured the logical and dialectical method as a way to discover truth and he marked a difference between a cognitive and logical method towards truth and knowledge (*mathematical presentation —Darstellung*), and a rhetorical, stylistic and ornamental practice (*exposition or philosophical, discursive presentation —Dichtung-Darstellung*) that seemed to hide truth rather than demonstrating it. Many aporias from various discourses go back to the Platonic truth paradigm.

The main claim was not against the *ornatus* per se, the demand was to limit the use to an appropriate measure and very sparingly. This created a doctrine of *TASTE* that implied that there were various degrees of decoration and that some were more appropriate than others. Hence, *decorum* may refer to: a behaviour in keeping with good taste and propriety, etiquette, to the suitability, to the requirements of a person, rank, or occasion, or to particular requirements of

²⁶ School of pre-Socratic philosophers, ca. 600 BC: Demosthenes, Lysias, Isocrates, Quintilian.

good taste and propriety. As literary term *decorum* denotes suitability and appropriateness of a style for the subject (Gombrich 2006; Brett 2005).

Cicero²⁷ developed his argument with respect to literary style, and Vitruvius²⁸ applied these Ciceronian principles to architecture. Both favoured a plainness of language and style and restraint from ornamental forms. The Ciceronian concept of *decorum* is an element present in different cultural/religious types of societies with regard to special areas of activity – hospitals, laboratories, barracks — in Japanese tradition and in Buddhist influenced cultures. The Ciceronian aestheticism can be found wherever simplicity and austerity are seen as social or religious virtues; it doesn't need to invoke the whole cultural, social or religious aspects, it can be restrained to particular areas and can, usually it does, coexist with an opposite visual display of ornamental forms (Brett 2005: 187).

Whereas the first argument involves a doctrine of taste, shared values and common sense in a settled and agreed reality, and asks what is fitting in the context, the second *theological* argument involves an ontological question – what is real? Thus reality is disputed among different possibilities and there is no common sense for the appropriate reality yet. Arguments against ornamentation and decoration played an important role in the Reformation. The *Plain Style* was an expression of social and religious changes: authority was relocated within the social body and the individual, and the intermediary religious apparatus was thought to be removed and with it, all images, ritualistic and ceremonial objects, all visual signs of belief were also expelled. Church music had to remove all polyphonic ornamentation. Ornaments and their banishment became a form of cultural battle at the beginning of the 17th century in Britain for Quakers and Shakers. Refraining from using any type of ornamental forms, their houses, interiors, objects displayed a virtuosity of craft and a fetishization of workmanship and material qualities (as would be the case with Loos' modernist ascetic dictum). The restraint from decorative elements and from surface ornamentation had no effect on the desire for visual pleasure, which continued to be cultivated and saturated through using good quality materials, through perfect proportions and complex tonalities in restrained colours in relation to white. This protestant plain style aesthetic became orthodoxy in itself, a *decorum* that represented in essence the platonic theory of beauty (Brett 2005: 188-193).

The third argument is that of the PROGRESS AND EVOLUTION of modern man, which is specific to Modernism and its definitions of Modernity and the modern Man. Brett recalls Habermas' idea that Modernity is “an unfinished project” determined by its constant renewal; a moving concept dependent on a where and when context, grounded in an idea of the present while being oriented to the future. (The figure of Don Juan comes again to mind.) Stressing present and future time,

²⁷ Cicero (106-43 BC): Roman rhetorician, a well-known ancient orator, the only one who both spoke in public and also produced treatises on the subject.

²⁸ Vitruvius (80–70 BC, died after c. 15 BC): Roman architect, author and engineer.

and the rupture with the past and its traditions is what links together the varied expressions of what we refer to as Modernism(s). Modernism(s) cannot be identified with a particular style or manner. Habermas emphasizes that Modernity had to create its normativity – its *decorum* – for itself and from within; it had also to create its dynamic concepts such as: revolution, progress, emancipation, development and a self-generating crisis. Modernism is a historical concept based on the rhetoric of Modernity, as it is expressed, theoretically constructed and physically realised in Loos' and Le Corbusier's writings and architecture (Brett 2005: 194).

For Loos, who oscillates between the edge of a Marxist argument and that of a psychological argument influenced by Freud and psychoanalysis, ornament is degenerated, wasted time and material and an expensive 'crime' against the modern man. Ornaments are expressions of lust and desire and they bring with themselves a demand for ever more such forms and styles leading to a progressive devaluation of labour and material. His principle is: "The form of the object should last, that is we should find it tolerable as long as the object itself lasts (Loos 1998:172)." Loos' idea that art has taken the place of ornament became and remained a constant anxiety of modernist art that developed a strong phobia against any decorative residue. In his endeavour, Loos establishes a (classicist) *decorum* for Modernity, and his arguments, which are grounded on several ontological determinations, will, in the end, provide precisely an ontological foundation for this. He fetishizes high quality materials and exquisite workmanship, while urging against traditional ornament. But he only replaced, in fact, traditional ornamental forms with the use of luxurious materials and virtuosity of craft expressed in harmonic proportions and details. Ornaments were dis-placed and re-placed.



FIGURE 60: ADOLF LOOS, MICHAELERPLATZ, VIENNA, DETAIL.

Le Corbusier's argument is characterized by a similar wit and polemic. He believes, like Loos, in the impossibility and unreason of a modern ornament, but for him, the modern man needs to

“begin again from scratch”. The MACHINE is presented as a complex agency of change that re-educates our habits and expectations of precision; the machine constructs a new decorative reality that is not based on ornamental forms anymore, but on geometry, precise proportions, abstract effectiveness, seriality and industrial production. The modern man doesn’t need decoration, but art (wrongly) understood in the Kantian sense —as “*interesseloses Wohlgefallen*”— a delight devoid of interests, a disinterested passion that exalts us. Le Corbusier proposes a decorative art that is not decorative anymore, but industrial and made by machines, that is not expensive or luxurious, but cheap and ubiquitous. The modern man doesn’t care anymore about expressing his sentiments and individuality in functional objects, as “we rid ourselves of the romantic and Ruskinian baggage”. Le Corbusier critiques Loos precisely for replacing ornaments with the use of lavish, high quality materials, and projects instead an emerging “normal perception of the objects in our life”. The perspective taken by Corbusier is that of an ideology of taste mixed with Kantian aesthetic ideas: the notion of a disinterested aesthetic feeling and a clear division between functional objects, things, and aesthetic works. If in Loos’ case we can speak of a fetishization of materials and craft, in Le Corbusier’s case we can speak of a fetishization of usefulness and of a “law of mechanical selection” (Brett 2005: 198-199).

In *La Peinture Moderne* (1926), Le Corbusier establishes that objects

tend toward a type that is determined by the evolution of forms between the ideal and maximum utility, and the satisfaction of the necessities of economical manufacture, which conform inevitably to the laws of nature. This double play of laws has resulted in the creation of a certain number of objects that may thus be called standardized.” [...] The way from individualism to the creation of types is the organic way of development...the type discards the extraordinary and re-establishes order.

‘Type’ is for Le Corbusier created, and the result of a certain industrial and economic means of production. This industrial type-form is the Ideal Form. But Brett sees in this move the sleight through which industrial societies and its organizations become idealised, natural and logically necessary, and contained into a syllogistic form. THE DIFFICULTY IS HOW TO INCLUDE THE PARTICULAR, WHICH IS DESIRABLE, THE PERSONAL, THE ORIGINAL WITHIN THE ESTABLISHED TYPE. (Corbusier 1926, Brett 2005: 200-205). “A SYSTEM OBLIVIOUS TO DIFFERENCES IN FORM leads to the production of working masses that can be employed equally well at any point of the globe. —Like the mass ornament, the capitalist production process is an end in itself. The commodities that it spews forth are not actually produced to be possessed; rather, they are made for the sake of a profit that knows no limit (Kracauer 1995: 75-86).” Brett names two more problems in Le Corbusier’s argument: the failure to address *consumption* and the *gendered hierarchies* he puts in place. Corbusier does not address the close interrelation between a concern for production and consumption. Innovation, the development in technology, the lust and desire for novelty that bring with them an excessive consumerism, are not considered at all. The way it is presented in his book, his notion of modernity seems to be of something that has been achieved, even finished, but it doesn’t reflect

the embodied modernity of an industrial capitalist society. Le Corbusier saw in place a gendered hierarchy in the “serious business of design” and in architecture where ‘male abilities were indispensable in this field: consideration of ensemble, organization, sense of unity, balance, proportion, harmony (Brett 2005: 197-204).



C.C. —‘Form is determined not by arbitrary rules, but by intention. Indeed intentionality is all (Acker 1991: 3)— however, this intentionality is not an epistemological and purposeful intention, but a fictive projection that involves all our senses at a limit. You edited these texts, which are found fragments of what may have been be a novel of manners, into a thesis. What is an author? Who is speaking?’

Una Joc: ‘The avoidance of autonomous authorship emphasizes the possibility for a person to act as a social being and of aesthetic creation as collective act. But, the author function is characteristic of the mode of existence, circulation, and functioning of certain discourses that are objects of appropriation within a society. Traditionally and ideologically the author functions as a constant level of value, as a field of theoretical and conceptual coherence, stylistic unity and as a historical figure at the crossroads of a certain number of events. The author function is linked to the juridical and institutional system that encompasses, determines, and articulates the universe of discourses. It does not affect all discourses in the same way at all times and in all types of civilization and it is defined by a series of complex operations. The author does not refer purely and simply to a real individual, since it can give rise simultaneously to several selves, to several subject-positions that can be occupied by different classes of individuals. The author is the principle of thrift in the proliferation of meaning because it limits and controls the cancerous and dangerous proliferation of significations within a world, where one is thrifty not only with one’s resources and riches, but also with one’s discourses and their significations. It is a functional principle by which one limits, excludes, and chooses in our culture, in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and re-composition of fiction (Foucault 1994: 205-222).

And since I am not one and not their pure author, I am, in a more truthful way, their editor. There are not really any ideas that are purely (in an absolute sense) mine or yours. In and through my ideas others are speaking. Most of the time, we only repeat thoughts already encountered. We fall deep into the ground, acting out a subjectivity and are predetermined by a ‘*sub-iectum*’. The sub-iectum contains both sets of rules: those of the transcendental conditions of the intuitive and discursive access to the phenomena and those that are historically generated. Most of our thoughts are ‘ready-made’ categories, concepts, judgments,

arguments, representations, instrumental devices for constructing and structuring formal unity. True thoughts are rare, accidental and arbitrary, often minor; and they are neither on the side of the object nor on the side of the subject. They are always new, pure choices between indiscernibles.'

C.C. — 'The craft of painting — be it as painting on flat surfaces, on canvas, wood, walls, or floors, on three-dimensional objects, or dis-embodied, hand-dyed silk painting, or painting stuffed into grotesque monster-cushions, or even painting taking over the physical space — unreels in your practice as Ariadne's thread, and displays an affinity and resistance to painting conventions. Radiant colours, visual pleasure and immersive experience intersect in these variant-rich compositions, ornamental both in form and appearance —some do actually represent ornament. You paint them always in series and they seem to question an individual's aura. How do you relate ornament to AURA?'

Una Joc: 'Kracauer identified a new form of ornament in the domain of body culture—the MASS ORNAMENT, which is formed by the masses of thousand of bodies, sexless bodies in bathing suits that move in regular patterns, of geometrical precision, in a packed stadium in front of cheering masses, themselves arranged as another mass ornament by the stands in tier upon ordered tier. This type of ornament is of the mass, and not the people, an end in itself. It performs figures, but the participating bodies are no longer, free autonomous, individuals, but parts of the mass and only as such, can they become fractions of the figure. This is what differentiates the mass ornament from ballet, rhythmic gymnastics or synchronic swimming: while all these types of performances remain in some sort of way plastic expressions of erotic life that gave rise to them and determined their traits, the mass ornament takes place in a vacuum. It is a linear system that has no longer an erotic meaning. It is a pure adventure of form; an end in itself.

The geometry of their figures, the sheer number of parallel lines are means to an end in itself. The ornament is the end result and the only way that makes it possible is by completely emptying out all the substantial constructs of their contents —that is all individuals. The ornament appears above the people as individuals; they make it possible as it rises out of their mass, but they do not participate in it. This is an ornament that is detached from its bearer and that needs to be understood rationally — because it is composed of lines and circles, waves and spirals, of Euclidean geometry principles and physics, and it excludes the proliferation of organic forms or spiritual emanations. The body is not preserved, but it is lost. Individuals get reduced to objectified parts – legs equal the repetition of parallel lines (Kracauer 1995:75-86).

The structure of the mass ornament reflects that of the entire contemporary situation. The structure of the mass ornament is the structure of the capitalist production system. Since the principle of the capitalist production process does not arise purely out of

nature, it must destroy the natural organisms that it regards either as means or as resistance. Community and personality perish when what is demanded is calculability; it is only a tiny piece of the mass that the individual can clamber up charts and can service machines without any friction. A SYSTEM OBLIVIOUS TO DIFFERENCES IN FORM leads to the production of working masses that can be employed equally well at any point of the globe. —Like the mass ornament, the capitalist production process is an end in itself. The commodities that it spews forth are not actually produced to be possessed; rather, they are made for the sake of a profit that knows no limit. The production process runs its secret course in public. Everyone does his or her task on the conveyor belt, performing a partial function without grasping the totality. Like the pattern in the stadium, the organization stands above the masses, a monstrous figure whose creator withdraws it from the eyes of its bearers, and barely even observes it himself (Kracauer 1995: 75-86).



FIGURE 61: (BRÜDERLIN 2001: 222).

For Kracauer the mass ornament is the rational and empty form of the cult devoid of any explicit meaning and substance. It is what Malabou calls negative plasticity, the formative destruction of form, which creates a completely new and alien identity, annihilating any past-forms, indifferent to form, an adventure of form suspended as such. (Is not the mass ornament such a hidden and invisible structure that governs also art institutions, the art world and its market? And painting too?)

When we speak about AURA and artwork, I think of Benjamin and *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. AURA appears there alongside AUTHENTICITY in relation to artworks and their tradition, which underwent transformations through the discovery of mechanical means of reproduction. The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of AUTHENTICITY, but since the whole sphere of AUTHENTICITY is outside the technical, and of course outside all forms of reproducibility, the quality of the presence of the product of mechanical reproduction is always depreciated. What is de-formed is the authority of the object, whose AUTHENTICITY, which is its essence that is transmissible from its beginning and ranging from its substantive duration to its

testimony to the history which it has experienced, is under question. "One might subsume the eliminated element in the term AURA and go on and say: that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the AURA of the work of art." What Benjamin names AURA is "a unique phenomenon of distance, however close it [the object, natural or historical] may be," and thus, the bases of the contemporary decay of the AURA rests on two circumstances, both of which are related to the increasing significance of the masses in contemporary life: the desire of contemporary masses to bring things 'closer' spatially and humanly, and their bent toward overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction.

Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at very close range by way of its likeness, its reproduction. [...] To pry an object from its shell, to destroy its aura, is the mark of a perception whose "sense of the universal equality of things" has increased to such a degree that it extracts it even from a unique object by means of reproduction. Thus is manifested in the field of perception what in the theoretical sphere is noticeable in the increasing importance of statistics. THE ADJUSTMENT OF REALITY TO THE MASSES AND OF THE MASSES TO REALITY IS A PROCESS OF UNLIMITED SCOPE, AS MUCH FOR THINKING AS FOR PERCEPTION (Benjamin 1999: 211-244).



The restlessness of the dialectical movement implies infinity as the instability of every determined point in the present that hangs in the ropes of the given and the *gift*, the present and its presentation. So, again, what is actually that I am circling around, is difference in sameness, discontinuity in continuity and vice versa continuity in discontinuity. What is posited is a fiction and its deposition offsets, in an ornamental process.

We should unlock their *différance*. From their beginnings they run in parallel. They are drawing parallel lines...like this | |, or like this ((, if not like this)). Sometimes smiling and sometimes not wanting to know of each other's existence. They walk along together, but only side by side in parallel. They share with each other the beginning: our, and by our I mean both men's and women's drive for emulation and decoration and the pathway lined up by their different manifestations and discourses. They are siblings, yet siblings from a different father. At moments they are in close proximity, but only in the proximity reckoned by an infinitesimal calculus.

Their touch always slips. It slips away in womanly tact and then it slides back in unadulterated manly retribution. They settle their accounts of their kind by defining and accumulating endless details to guard their genus, to exclude the other. The one claims to be purposeless, while the other's rise seems to serve the sole purpose of beautification of everything it touches, with or without purpose. Once a symbol for art, then a pariah in the figure of the Woman, the Savage, the Oriental, the Degenerate, the Criminal. They share a *Zeitgenossenschaft*, a contemporaneity, because from the beginning, they run side by side, concomitantly. Curiously enough, their contemporary presence seemed to authorize only one to be really *contemporary*, while throwing the other far away in the exotic and ancient times of no man's land. Their path shows how contemporary contemporaneity and non-contemporaneity (*Unzeitgemäßheit*) can be.



At this pace, I won't be able to write anything, especially not the thing I should write. The twists and turns of my thoughts are going down the stream and find no gentle finalities in gates of conclusions. I keep slipping in the traps laid down by a just finished sentence. Thoughts sieve through slow fingers. And the white collar of my original contribution to knowledge weighs heavy on my neck and bows my head to the ground — as does the counting.

To appear and appearance. Truth and exactitude. These thoughts on truth are not mine, I encountered them in a lecture by Alain Badiou. I LIKED THEM. Truth understood as the adequation between the subject's understanding and the thing perceived by it implies that truth takes the form of a proposition and that it is a form of judgment. This definition of truth has been criticized

by modern philosophy, who oriented its thinking towards the difference between truth's becoming and the transmission of truth, between truth and knowledge.

Art presents singular absolutely finite truth. The work-of-art's-workings are the preservation and inscription of the possibility of infinity of truth. This infinite creation of truth, the possibility of its infinity is an ornamental nod, a metabolic force, that can be isolated and specified but not named. It is the point in the present, which we can neither believe in nor know, but which we can experience and sense in all its effectivity as a passage (of thought) in the now and in the present. It is the point in infinity through which thought passes. This singular, absolutely finite nod of truth is the passage of thought to being and of being to thought.

Truth is always its becoming, an event, a new event. For Heidegger truth was *aletheia*, the event of veiling-unveiling, and the understanding of truth was *techné*, or science. Truth is always something new and only its understanding can be continued, repeated and applied via a *techné*. While knowledge relies on the repetition of what is already, the event of truth relies on *chance*. It is by chance, purely accidentally, that one makes the decision to be faithful to some thing that just happened but that cannot be explained, demonstrated or named. To be faithful here is an interruption in the habitual, passive citation of the set of principles that normally controls and drives the cognitive activity in our daily life. In this interstice, truth appears in its newness. And what I mean by a set of principles refers directly to what renders possible a debriefing as the adequate ground for the intellectual horizon from which we understand and perceive the world. What truth perforates are the links in the triad of the 'I', its horizon and a phenomenon. Truth riddles our *phantasms*. *Phantasms* are for Aristotle perceptions instantaneously produced by the psyche, of what has been accessed in the world, only on the basis of which, a debriefing of the world can happen, which opens the possibility for cognition of the world in the first place. An eventful anonymous supplement of such *phantasms* disrupts the habitual repetition of the Kantian schematism.

Truth's problems start to appear as the power or potency of truth, as the desire to reach total knowledge and universality, to turn whatever singularities into individualities and to exponentially expand them to the power of the general. The construction of truth is the formation of a finite, subjective and accidental singularity. The anticipation of a singularity as universality is forcing truth into false and empty omnipotence.



What is décor? (Nancy 2007: 50). Décor is what arranges a space in such a way that it attracts a gaze (*den Blick*). Décor brings something into a view, orients, directs and attracts the look. It organizes something for reception, for becoming reception, for acceptance. For the GIFT. Décor is a space for welcoming — *Be-sinn-ung*, that is consciousness, a consciousness within which a subject itself comes at home, at home in the world and thus into being-with. It is an encounter of

a consciousness with another one, or with itself. *Décor* is the desire to be desired and accepted, the desire for community.

In English, *décor*, or *decor*, refers normally to the furnishing and decoration of a room, to the scenery of a stage; but in French, it can refer also to forms of embellishment and visual pleasure. *Décor*, *decorum* and *decoration*, imply a doctrine of taste and appropriateness, but the meaning in which Nancy is interested, is, I believe, that of an ontological advent. *Décor* is the staging mechanism that makes it possible for a self to emerge for itself in itself. This nascent appropriateness is necessary for the self, for the image, because it enables self-consciousness and self-recognition. The subject is thus able to recognize itself and to perceive the common sense upon which not only the actual, social, political or cultural *decorum* grounds, but also the subject itself. In the artistic image, the subject comes to itself, to being its own subject (Nancy 2007).

But consciousness is not only of something, but also within something.²⁹ The image shows the sameness between its “self outside self” and its “self at itself”. It is a subject that makes itself distinct, that gathers itself into itself, in an instance, or in-stance, and comes to take the stance of itself, for itself and for the others. Its own cessation allows and presents its coming into presence.

In image, a sub-stance (matter) and self ad-here, co-here and unite, because the sub-stance takes the stance of *WHATEVER* (Agamben 2009:1-2) on a sur-face; the sub-stance welcomes the *WHATEVER*-form, the “exemplary singularity”, it receives the *GIFT* of the *Blick*, of the look, and becomes *An-blick*, sight, aspect, perspective, look, face.

The face of the image puts us face-to face with our own face, the face of our own self confronted with itself. The image presents, exposes this confrontation.

Something comes into presence without knowing that it gives an agreement and without knowing the *GIFT* it gives. That which has no identity, what is not yet distinct, accepts the look, becomes gaze, in other words it accepts and intimates the exterior in its most intimate interior – this is how being comes into being that is being-with.

This *GIFT* I am mentioning here is specific. It is Marion’s *GIFT* (Marion 2008: 80-100). Phenomena, in their traditional understanding, as that which shows itself on the basis of itself,

²⁹ This is one of Noica’s key thoughts in his ontology. Intentionality for him has a triple implication: ‘of something’, ‘from something’ and ‘within something’ and he claims, that life is always “oriented” referring to the Greeks (Plato) for whom any form of life is a form of intentionality; the Greeks called this intentionality ‘*eros*’; everything aspires to something, no matter if this something is determined or not, every creature has its ‘*daimon*’ (supernatural being, good or evil, a personification of men’s destiny). Noica claims that reason needs to be understood as life, ‘as a way of tending towards something, not of registering and filtering something.’ Hence consciousness is for Noica a processuality and mediation, it is oriented towards being and its meaning, and this orientation of consciousness is a reflexive act – knowing the knowledge, love’s for love’s sake, art for art’s sake, imaging the image. Reflexivity is ‘the function of a function’, an operation of an operation or an operation based on an operation.

are defined and definite, twice: by the constituting 'I' and by the delimiting horizon of intuition (everything that appears appears in intuition). With Husserl, this intuition becomes attested through itself, and doesn't have to be founded in reason. Therefore, all phenomena seem to have a right to appear and there is no need for further reasons for their appearance. However, at a closer look, intuition remains determined in various ways. Intuition only gives 'to us' what appears, it only gives to an 'I' what appears, which means that the 'I' constitutes all phenomena. What can be given as a phenomenon is always judged, decided by an 'I'. Moreover, the realm of non-experience is circumscribed beforehand by what is already experience, as Husserl says, all given and experienced phenomena have their own horizon of "non-observed lived-experience" (Marion 2008: 18-48). Thus, phenomena might seem to be unconditioned, in their right to appear, but in reality they remain limited by intuition itself, by its horizon and by the 'I'.

Marion's interest is in "saturated phenomena", in those phenomena that exceed intuition. Whereas common-law phenomena, which are visible and permit objective knowledge, production and predication, are poor in intuition and limited in meaning, "saturated phenomena" are not visible, but revealed. They give themselves in revelation and through the GIFT of revelation. Artworks are, for Marion, saturated phenomena, which reveal themselves as gifts. Marion also refers here to Derrida's analysis of the GIFT in *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money* (Derrida 1991), so as to develop a different position. Derrida's analysis of the GIFT focused on the common sense of the GIFT in view of the triadic context of the GIVER, the GIVEN-GIFT and the GIFT-RECIPIENT, and Marion thinks that the very concept of the GIFT is buried under a system of exchange. The GIFT interpreted from the horizon of givenness itself, is the "GIFT that gives itself by giving its giving", the "gift that gives itself by giving its reception", that "gives itself here without limit, without return, outside of commerce (Marion 2008: 92-99)." The very mode of appearing of the GIFT is precisely a decision and the character of givenness of the gift that decides itself as a gift and thus emerges and reveals itself from itself. Its appearance is exhausted in its givenness, as the gift gives itself, in abandoning itself. Saturated phenomena reveal themselves, give themselves in abandoning themselves, they emerge from their own self and loose themselves in their revealing.

Una Joc: 'It is in this sense, that I am speaking of the "revelatory force of the arabesque" and of "painting as gaze", that is painting as look, as GIFT, the GIFT of a look. What is carried through in the idea of the arabesque, is an avoidance of immediate interpretation and immediate and collective apperception of interpretable phenomena, which is intensified by the excessive sensuousness of the interiorization of aesthetic experience. The fascination with the subtleties of details and the elaboration of endless details are best explored and experienced in private. With arabesques, one has the feeling as though the creative impulse was driven by a desire to compel the viewer or user to withdraw within her/himself, to meditate on her/his own, to discover a work for her/himself for her/his own life. To allow oneself to get immersed in the myriad of details, to wander deep within intricate detours of visual entanglement, to

wonder and wander with disbelief in a lengthy process of visual entanglement; to forget oneself in this SATURATED state; to lose sight of the horizon, of the I and of intuition.

What you see is not what you see, nor is it something else: in this impossibly ambiguous labyrinth, Ariadne's thread is what you wish to put into what you see and what you know can be put there (Grabar, 2006:213-251; 2006:13-29).'

This excess of intuition implies that there isn't an already lived, objectified experience to open the horizon of this particular non-observed experience. We may encounter this excess of intuition in an image, in its ex-position of a novelty, of an invention, of the formation of a new world, of a coming into being, into presence, of a self exposing itself as self. The revelation of the GIFT, which is the GIFT of the look, that is the look as the outlook in the view of an instant, is an ontological ornamental intermediary, a *daimon*.

In image, a space is opened, traced, marked within which something positions, gives, receives and loses itself.

Decorum is something in which we need to fit in – this is its main function: it communicates the commune. *Décor/decorum* ornamentalizes the space between being and non-being, between the individual and the general, the personal and the public. *Décor* and *decorum* are both equally individualizing and generalizing; both are the delimitation of the community and the mark of private property and territory, and of particularity. They mark the boundary of co-belonging, of identification, of Eros and desire, and also of isolation and exclusion. They are the view on a (sur)face of the ABOVE-ALL face (in the end, this is what surface means) – the undisclosed embodied face of a figure that configures itself from the amalgam of a (back)ground and that disfigures itself instantly in facing its own ground.

LIMIT WITHIN IMAGE, IMAGE WITHIN LIMIT

Imagining imagination, imagining the image and imagining painting. Painting and philosophy structure themselves as traditions and as the image of their own change. In philosophy, two main strings proved extremely influential for thinking the image: the transcendental (e. g. Heidegger, Hegel, Descartes, Plato) and the immanent (e. g. Deleuze, Hegel, Spinoza). In-between these two a bottomless gap empties itself out extending into unbridgeable depths, only to self-inflate and contract the two into one and the same tact. In painting the image is stretched out between representation and presentation, between perspectival Euclidian and planar ornamental space. In between the two, painting multiplies itself as historical time.

There are several imaginary concerns touched upon over and over again that remained inert in a timeless blossom stage and blocked in inescapable antithetical dichotomies between *They* and *Us*: representation - presentation, subject - object, signification - sense, being - becoming, ontological - ontic, presence - absence, offering - withdrawal, one - multiple, exposition of presence - display of appearance, isolation - merger, trace - form. The metaphysical perpetuation of such abstract ideas, within the fundamental precariousness of Being, welcomed already many intruders who tried to reorient, transpose, and displace the immortalization, immutability and the nexus of such relations.

Nancy developed across several texts (e.g. 1996; 2005; 2006), his specific understanding of the image. (The image was the focal point of attention for many thinkers, such as Blanchot, Barthes, Rancière, Lyotard, E. Alloa, D. Mersch and many others.) In my reading of Nancy, I am influenced also by Noica's thinking: I believe that the image, understood ontologically as a mode of being, can be blocked in ontological and ontic creative maladies.

The image, the presentation of a subject, may resist our reification, objectification or mechanical attitude towards images. It may provoke through its resistance a contact, a reciprocal touching relation between images and us, artworks and the world, between *They* and *Us*, which is not based on representational frontality and metaphysical dualism: we are obsessed with individuation, the prerequisite of full understanding and the complete assimilation of the frontal other, that for this very purpose is systematically sliced and dissected in the sum of disparate parts, in a machined whole, with effective outcomes. The exposition that the image is makes *They* and *Us* alike. It makes us acknowledging distinctness, differentness, separateness, and accept the threat of semiotic collapse and of the incomprehensible kernel —“the hidden art of the human soul” (Kant 1998: 173).

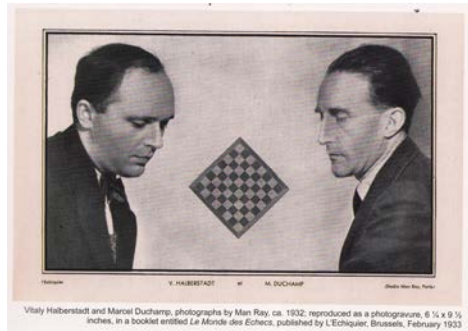


FIGURE 62: (NAUMANN AND BAILEY 2009: 21). VITALY HALBERSTADT AND MARCEL DUCHAMP, PHOTOGRAPH BY MAN RAY (CA. 1932) PUBLISHED IN A BOOKLET ENTITLED *LE MONDE DES ECHECS*, PUBLISHED BY L'ECHQUIER, BRUSSELS, FEBRUARY 1933.

The Kantian *Darstellung* (*exposition*) and the image imply distance and frontality —*exposition*, which is philosophical presentation, *Darstellung* and *Dichtung*, clear and distinct presentation of concepts, forms and categories and *invention*. A facing between a subject or self and something that is like a self, but other. They both mobilize desire and a facing between two faces simultaneously at di-stance and in (con-)tact with each other. The image is not in front of us, but before us. Its distance is the spacing of an ontological difference. The image brings the same to account without destroying the breadth between the two faces, one of the same and one of the other, and brings them into con-tact.

Without me, she wouldn't exist, so of course she was grateful.
 I gave her a soul. I bloomed out of her as a rose
 Blooms out of a vase of not very valuable porcelain.
 And it was I who attracted everybody's attention,
 Not her whiteness and beauty, as I had at first supposed.
 I patronized her a little, and she lapped it up --
 You could tell almost at once she had a slave mentality.

(from: *In Plaster*, Sylvia Plath)

FIGURE 63: IN PLASTER (PLATH, THE COLLECTED POEMS, 1961).

While pointing out that images are not only visual, but, also musical, olfactory, or gustative, Nancy writes that the image is different from other things in the world, from “mere representations” or “cheap decorations”, from the being-there of things that are available, grasped, fully assimilated or understood, functional and useful —the image is the distinct and it is from the sky.

But this ontological and ontic distinctness is something, which, I believe, cannot be taken for granted. Something that may or may not realise itself, it may or may not find its proper Determinations (in Noica's sense). Being has a tendency for dislocation. The ontico-ontological difference between image and things, between being and beings circulate constantly in and out of

one another. The image, as being, is not static and it is not monolithic, but “singular plural” (Nancy 2000). The image, like being, is maybe nothing more than its own changeability. It exists in multiple, consequent or concurrent determinations, sometimes even contradictory ones simultaneously. As presence, it is always in excess of itself while remaining all the way the same, manifesting the plasticity of being, the concurrent liability and permanence of form. The difference between image (in Nancy’s understanding) and image (in its common use) are ontologically given, as Nancy points out, but this difference manifests itself in and through ontic determinations given by cultural, social, historical or political constructions. There is a tensed friction between artistic images, on the one hand, as event and becoming (when presence includes the presencing of absence, of the void, of the two types of negativity, the dialectical and the differential one) and, on the other hand, images as an essentialist visual perception and representation, constructed by a subject and by an understanding of presence as essence and immutability.

The process of imagination, the “hidden art in the depths of the human soul” (Kant 1998: 173), the schematism of the pure image determines the existence of any image and makes subjectivity and the subject possible. Each image exposes and presents a view/look (Bild) and re-presents (Vor-stellung, Ab-bild-ung) something that is given as one already (Ein-bild-ung). The first pure image before all images was already concomitantly one image (Ein-bild(-ung)), a before-image (Vor-bild), an after-image (Nach-bild) and a copy (Ab-bild) (Heidegger 1991: 92-97). Every image is ALSO a pure image, putting the manifold into the ONE of an image.

My thought is then: if the image is an ontological mode of becoming an almost infinite number of possible Determinations (Noica), some of which are sensed as more truthful and some falsier, some as art and some as mere decoration, some more valuable, some less, then we could think about the image in terms of a divided self, whose existential sense of identity and autonomy are severely ruptured. If we think how important and how dependent images and artworks are nowadays of how and if they are CURATED, this clinical perspective is not at all far-fetched (especially in our world, of the worldwide web of electronic information, where cleaning out is a form of taking care not to go under).

‘To curate’ comes from the Latin *curatus*, meaning “to be responsible of the care (of souls)” and “to take care, to be concerned and to heal” (Online Etymological Dictionary). While still remaining one and the same (permanence of form), in spite of all irruptions, explosions, dislocations, re-formulations, reconstructions and re-design (liability of form), curated images gather themselves into a (new) meaning with each show anew (donation/annihilation of form) in an act of positive plasticity. The more labile or flexible they are, the more sense-capacity and fuller range of movement they have, the more trans-formations they provoke with more stamina in time. The more things they engage with and participate in, the more they are praised and their value (monetary or symbolic) as artworks increases. Such plastic malleability and instability

require an extreme internal force and drive for change and equally, an unimaginable force for self-identity, that is able to sustain and resist such outmost number of transformations, metamorphoses or gaps.

The image, in analogy to an existentially insecure person without a stable sense of identity and autonomy, would protect and construct its SELF in different ways in order to feel real and whole. (The analogy is to a psychotic person in the standard clinical sense of psychosis: a subject displaying a derangement of personality and a loss of contact with reality — having and finding no sense; exposing abnormal or deteriorated social functioning, irrational thinking processes and inappropriateness in its appearance and acts; a person that shows an outside the norm condition of the mind, of embodiment and behaviour, and an excessive and extreme state of consciousness.)

A type of schizoid organization and self-preservation mechanism are EXPERIENCED in the production of images by image-makers (artists, curators, viewers, critics, users — the image IS in our participation in it) and by the image within itself. (EXPERIENCE: “To undergo an experience with something, [...] be it a person, a thing, or a god, means that this experience befalls us, strike us, comes over us, overwhelms us and transforms us (Heidegger in Malabou 2011: 28).”)

This self, this image, is troubled by an extreme state, a combination of despair, angst, alienation, boredom, and absurdity. Such existential states are normal, often experienced for longer or shorter periods by everyone, but they are kept in balance through the potentiality of distance and FICTION, of WHAT IS and WHAT IS NOT. Distance makes the projection of meaning possible and opens up hope for change, preventing existential feelings from reaching such an ultimate intensity. Our existence is a balancing act between the belief in the meaningfulness of the world and the possibility that everything meaningful breaks down.

The existence of the image is a similar high-wire act and often it is unable to take its identity, autonomy and realness, its presence, for granted. In order to resist and fight such radical existential states, the image, like any other divided self, develops a complex self-control-mechanism to safeguard its self in its relation to the world. The image is divided between presentation and representation, between giving, receiving, and annihilating form, between passivity and activity. This ontological and existential insecurity is a productive and creative force to which we should expose ourselves, rather than trying to fix it, to ‘cure’ it, accordingly to rational, aesthetical, economic or political principles and purposes. All too often images are ‘curated’, cleaned out. Luckily, sometimes, in spite all calculated intentions, some slippages and leakages remain unbridgeable exposing accidental surprises of this “hidden art in the depth of the human soul.” Even though ‘curated’, images remain ‘un-healed’ resisting the healing process in their own passive way.

Nancy's understanding of the image as the presentation of presentation works against the normal way we talk about images: as signifying representations, as imitations or mimetic reproductions, as reflections or mirrors of a determinate and determinable pre-existing reality. In Nancy's view, the image traces or figures a force, which has no pre-existing reality. The first line of the image, the line that draws the figure, that figures something, is both a line of separation and withdrawal. The instant (por)trait is not only a line of separation, but also one of mediation between the image and us, between the image and its ground, the image and the world, being and beings, between images.

The image is both the ex-position of a new presence and the display of appearance. It exposes self-co-incident and self-fittingness of some thing with itself in itself. The image shows the thing in itself and its appearance, their co-incident and the gap inscribed in the 'co'. The image is not entirely a being. Its (sur-) face is the above-all-face, its ex-position is the positioning of an intimacy to its exteriority, its ex-pression is the pressure and touch against its sur-face, through it, without trespassing it. The image is a site of concentration in co-incident that displays and is the transformative rupture in any presence, a force. It is not the display of forms and it is not formal (in the normal understanding of form), but the making visible and the taking hold of the force that forms, of the forming force itself. It displays the giving of form as the receiving of form. How something resembles itself as such is laid out and presented as difference in sameness through mechanisms of resemblance and formation. What gives form, receives it at same time, and presents itself in image, as a presence, only inasmuch as it says mutely, in image, that it is this thing. Being and non-being alike.

The sense of the image is touching, unmediated by any order of representation or signification – this is its distinction. And there has to be something that keeps this distinction going, that holds it at distance, that keeps the difference moving, differing itself from itself. That closes down, while something else is opening. There is a contingent gap between the ontological and the ontic difference and a sort of necessary, anti-dualistic mediation between them, a distance and an ornamentalization of an excess of ground, of force, that keeps this concatenation going and unresolved. The line of the image is a force, which touches us without creating an emotion that implies continuity or empathy. What touches and makes contact is the force of sense in being-with, the trace or line that both presents something and withdraws it at the same time. Through this ontological separation, its radical otherness and insurmountable assimilation, the image can expose a sense³⁰ of the world in an unmediated way. Its sense is scattered, dissimilar,

³⁰ Nancy uses the entire semantic field of the word sense, referring at sense in all its five senses: meaning, direction, five senses, reason, and intuition. When Nancy speaks of sense he refers to something that takes place before the separation between the sensible and the intelligible. Sense takes place; *it is* in our sharing of simultaneous time-space and in being with one another.

heterogeneous and non-signifying, but it is still sense. The image images “a singular variation on the totality of distinct sense” (Nancy 2005:12).

A PAUSE ON THE IDEA OF FORM AS LIMIT

My intention is to recover in the meaning of form the idea of *peras* that is of a limit that doesn't limit. The Husserlian phenomenological perspective of something from something, that is of a limit that limits from another limit, that also orders and systemizes, induces a seeing that is a decoding of signs, ideas and symbols, a reading out of failures or non-failures. Such is a faculty of registering and filtering. But there has to be an alternative intentionality produced by a limit that doesn't limit, a demonic/*daimonic* (Plato, *daimon*, of the nature of great spirit, half-god and half-man, of an intermediary nature) looking within something, a speculative and meditative vision of *what is for what it is within what it is and could be in its nature* (Noica). Distinctness and difference, fragmentation or individuality recognized for what they are within their *potentiality*, rather than distinctness as mal-position that one has to digest and assimilate conceptually, or that needs to be adjusted to fit the system or norm. An individuality that is within its own measure. A vision with responsibility for the politics of positioning.

An event that is able to make thinking-structures porous relies on the potency to play with limits that limit (*truth* as exactitude and adequation and judgement-proposition), that are accidental and necessary limitations (e. g. formal, material outlines, concepts, categories, styles...) and a limit that doesn't limit (*truth* as an accidental chance event, as becoming). A thinking figure at its limit is thinking its 'visible, knowable' limits and its invisible ones, within which it is oriented as being.

Peras is the Ancient Greek word for limit. Its meaning was a direct expression of a way of life of peregrination and traversing the sea. It reflects the symbolic, magical and mythological meaning and force of the sea's other shore. The word was initially used by Homer in the *Iliad* in relation to entities whose limits were outside human perception, the earth, the sea, the sky, or Gods, and referred to a limit that had to be imagined, presupposed and inferred (not deduced, as it was not the result of a causal logical deduction). *Peras* became a poetic index for distance and displacement, and non-conceptual sense given in and by the projection and plunge into the unknown of dis-place and di-stance (Liiceanu 2007).

Starting in one point with one point in vision, extending and projecting it to a sensed, but unknown extremity. Such a movement is a passionate projection and participation, potentially traced in the process of imagination and in an image. For Aristotle, *peras* was not a hollow exterior surface dressing up an entity, and Nancy reflects this idea in his understanding of bodies as '*partes extra partes*' (Nancy 2008: 29). This limit is the projection of the point's most intimate interiority, the inflection of its intimate identity into its outside, into its infinite exterior. *Peras* is also not about overtaking a known border (the Greek word for border and outline was *horos*),

but about reaching the one limit within which one is moving as being. It is about the process and path of reaching an unknown but sensed limit (in Nancy's understanding of sense). Such a limit is an ontological, orientational, directional sense-function (Liiceanu 2007)



With this in mind, we can imagine how images are simultaneously bordering on complete isolation and complete merging of identity with what exists in the world, with objects, things, entities and beings.

I am-with images, daily, constantly in contact with representations and pictures in all sorts of media and hybrid forms. Being is exposed in images, shared in images shared in real and virtual realities. In an incessant, conscious and unconscious being-with images, in private and public practice, in life, I am actively engaged in making more images, representations and decorations, some more, some less vulnerable, redundant, existentially insecure, visual occurrences effaced maybe by inauthenticity, meaninglessness and absurdity - even though and precisely because, as Heidegger put it, we live (lived) in "a world as picture/Bild" (Heidegger 2003: 69-113).

Being is incessantly imagined and shared, produced, desired, taken, copied, multiplied, calculated, created, remembered, forgotten, appropriated, collaged, transformed, re-configured, trans-figured, displayed, projected, printed, animated, corrected, collected, photoshop-ed, sold, exchanged, falsified, stolen ... in and as image. Our existence exposes divided psychotic images. Images precipitate and participate in a lack of temporal and spatial continuity. The same image can be seen simultaneously in different cultural and socio-political contexts, proving to be nothing but the same. Rarely can we take hold on an over-riding sense of consistency and cohesiveness. Even glossy pictures in magazines display the desired ultra-perfect appearance, as they 'should' and are expected in such marketing mechanisms, while being *also images* exposing the obviousness of emptiness and redundancy, fragmentation and insubstantiality. While something is displayed, something else remains hidden. Between them, worlds spin out. Nowadays, the mode of existence of images has to constantly shift form, ground, and sense. An artistic image is not only an artistic image, it is also a commodity, a decorative picture; a copy is not only a copy and an original has lost its *aura* as an original. But this devalued, non-auratic original regains its value from the number of copies it produces, as this sheer reproductivity of copies promotes new originals. The image is not one and the image is not whole. The image is not a *representation* or *mere decoration*, yet it is, at the same time, precisely this. The image is the distinct as much as it is distinct within itself, thus the very being from which it was distinct in the first place. (And this is precisely what is being exposed and what is the aesthetic drive behind bodybuilding practices, where the image is literally embodying the subject that it itself reveals.)

Images have both a disjunctive and a conjunctive relation to the world. Their identity and autonomy seem to be lived in and as a constant creative split experience within themselves, as a

formative failure of adjustment, as a fictional loss of contact with the world, with objects, or as an acute depersonalization and engulfment in the consumerist reification and thingness of the world; as a worthless, empty and scattered (ir)reality. This existential split that slices back and forth through an equal feeling of impotence and potency, through spot on clarity and ambiguous equivocation, is something that characterizes the image and that differentiates human existence.

Schizoid (with a real chance to change into schizophrenic) experiences are inherently located, I believe, within the creative process of image-making and in the endless act of condensation and gathering in itself that the image is. Embellished with our own ground and intentions, with our own being-with-in-the-world, with our own world, when encountering an image, we may receive its form or not and we may 'give it' a just created form. Our operative point of view may be quite literally from which one is in con-tact with an image, or the place, the curing spot, created for us, in order to view it in its healthy blossom. The image gives itself over to a choice of possible, but incompatible ways of focusing, while at the same time, lending itself to highly sophisticated control mechanisms. Caught between such existential insecurities and ontological anxieties, the image develops for itself a fictional self-system as a guardant, as a way to secure the totality of its experiences. The more it grows, the more dangerous and suspect this system becomes. This fictional, artificial relation to the world is a pseudo-interpersonal relation based on fantastical omnipotence and relative freedom. Every move is meaningful and necessary, and, at the same time, purely in vain. If anything goes, nothing really matters. Freedom tends towards submission and submission towards freedom, the image towards the concept and the concept towards the image, the eidos towards the ídea and the ídea towards the eidos.



Besides somatic maladies, identified for centuries, and the psychical maladies, identified for barely a century, there must also be maladies of a higher order, of the spirit let us suppose. No neurosis can explain the despair of Ecclesiastes, the sentiment of exile on earth or of alienation, metaphysical ennui, the sentiment of the void or of the absurd, the hypertrophy of the I, rejections of everything, and empty controversy; no psychosis can explain economic and political tumult, abstract art, the demonism of technology, and the extreme cultural formalism that nowadays leads to the primacy of empty exactitude.

There can be no doubt that some of these orientations have resulted in major creations. Nevertheless they still represent a great maladjustment of the spirit. But whereas the somatic diseases have an accidental character [...] and the psychical diseases are somehow contingent-necessary, because they arise from man's individual and social conditioning, both of which are accidental, the maladies of the spirit seem to be constitutive.

[...] The maladies of the spirit are in fact maladies of Being, ontic maladies, and for this reason, in contrast to other maladies, they may well be constitutive of man, since, although the body and the soul also participate in Being, it is the spirit alone that fully reflects it in both its power and precariousness. Diseased Being also *is*, in one of the variations of 'is'. Living and dead things can be left blocked in one of the maladies of Being, which they then conceal with their apparent certitude, but which man, with his higher incertitude, reveals. However, Being may not only be diseased but also false. [...] Beyond the chronic malady of human being, that of being mensurate in time (if indeed this is a malady), the true maladies of man would come to light, as a Being in time which is incapable of finding its measure in time (Noica, 2009: 29).

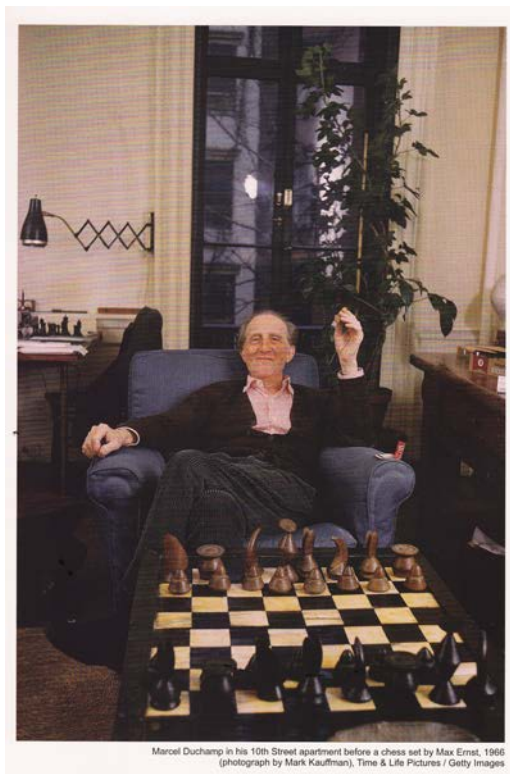


FIGURE 64: MARCEL DUCHAMP IN HIS 10TH STREET APARTMENT BEFORE A CHESS SET BY MAX ERNST, 1966 (PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK KAUFFMAN), (NAUMANN AND BAILEY 2009: 136).

FROM A DISTANCE

It's been a few months now, since we have submitted our project, since, as other say, we have finished it. And it occurred to us just now, that among the many things that would change, if we continued to work on it (which will most likely happen in one form or another) would be to change the title. From a distance, both temporal and spatial, we realized that 'painting as gaze', besides the fact that it throws us into a relation with psychoanalysis, which we didn't ignore but didn't refer to either, is also not specific enough for this project. Yes, 'painting as gaze' announces a specific understanding of the image and painting, but what is more at stake here, is PAINTING and WRITING and a specific understanding of the IMAGE in relation to both. So, we would like to ask You, dear reader, at such a late hour, to re-read these fragments and re-view the project under its new title: *Painting and Writing: On the Revelatory Force of the Arabesque*.

It is always necessary to posit a paradigm in order to produce meaning, but it is never too late to divert it, to alter it, for new meaning to emerge.

What was at first, and what at last remains.
And what the middle bringeth, but contains
End and beginning evermore the same;
Thy song is changeful as yon starry frame,
And that thou ne'er beginnest, is thy fate.
That thou canst never end, doth make thee great.

Una Joc and Cristina Cojanu (Vienna, April 2014)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: ALOIS RIEGL

Alois Riegl (1858 – 1905) was an Austrian art historian, a major figure in the establishment of art history as a self-sufficient academic discipline and one of the most influential practitioners of formalism. There is a dynamic art historical trace that marked its own path up to the present from Riegl to Worringer, von Schlosser, Wölfflin, Wollheim, Warburg, Panofsky and Gombrich, and a philosophical path from Hegel to Riegl to Kojève, Foucault and Benjamin. It is along these paths that Riegl's concepts and ideas have been rediscovered in their relevance for the present.

Riegl's work belongs to those art historical practices that sustained modernism and that had been disregarded in the course of the development of interdisciplinary visual and cultural studies as being trapped in the concerns of a “deterministic narrative of masterpieces, genius, and taste built upon an evolutionary schema (Ostrow 2001: {1}).”

Riegl worked as director and curator of the Textile Department in the Austrian Museum for Art and Industry, presently the Museum for Applied Arts (MAK) and as a professor at Vienna University. As an art historian he thought against the grain of an art history grounded in classic aesthetics, values and criteria. His work was led by the internal logic of artworks and by the belief that certain abstract, iconic, or structural qualities are embodied in a work of art that have to be analysed on their own, in separation from aesthetic, categorical or social judgements and historical taste manifestations. He was not interested in a totalizing history or methodology. His research took the form of an “open-ended series of exegeses on patterns of variation, change, and development of art (Ostrow 2001: {2}).”

One of his main ideas was that form, style and content are inseparable from each other, and that through comparison, interpretation, speculation, theoretical and morphological analysis one could understand changes and developments in art in certain periods of time. Against the traditional compartmentalization of art, he aimed at discerning principles empirically that delimit the parameters of certain disciplines, motifs or genres over a period of time. He tested “observations against the record of their objectifications.” He also advocated for a non-hierarchical view on art claiming equal significance and no qualitative distinction between high and low, mass, or popular artistic manifestations.

He rejected the idea of cycles of innovation and decay and removed the stigma of decline through identifying ‘decadent’ periods as markers of change impregnated with new intentionalities and different criteria. Forms and styles do not pass through stages of decay, as

the naturalistic outlook on art believed, but transform and metamorphose into new forms. He found beauty and a certain kind of truth in this force of forms to re-form. Forms and contents of works of art, because the two are inseparable, are not static structures, but ones that structure and generate other structures. For Riegl, it was the task of the art historian to describe the existence of such transformational changes a “record of self-consciousness and self-reflection within a self-determined causal chain (Ostrow 2001: {5}).” In this sense, for Riegl, art’s development and effect within a certain social group and time is not arbitrary, art is not a superior knowledge, nor a negativity towards reason and it is not materialistically or metaphysically determined. However, art has the ability to subvert instrumental reason and in this lies its sovereignty.

‘Kunstwollen’ (translated as: e. g. what art wants, art drive, will to make art, will of art, artistic intention, art’s volition) is the concept that Riegl introduces and elaborates to name the force that drives and structures the metabolic changes in forms, styles and contents over a certain time period. When Riegl speaks about style he refers to an idea and not to a class, to something that can be grasped only intuitively, that only communicates itself in concrete terms – style cannot communicate itself through other concepts. The external character of a particular form can communicate a style. What drives changes in style is what he calls ‘Kunstwollen’, a drive, impulse, tendency or need. Not a conscious will. A force. The medium or vehicle through which such a drive or force is carried is given for Riegl by a specific group of people of variable size (by a system). This specific group of people of a variable size at a certain period, this system, has a super-individual, collective “objective will” that individuals belonging to this group encounter as a “normative force” and that is borne by this group of people — this is what Riegl means by ‘Kunstwollen’ (Sedlmayer 2001: {16}, in Ostrow 2001).

A change in forms or styles in a group over a period of time makes manifest a change in the ‘Kunstwollen’ of the same group, in their spirit (‘Kunstwollen’ behaves in a way like a spirit). However, what exactly is or drives this change, is according to Sedlmayer on Riegl, given by the inherent structural principles of the work itself. Works of art are sensuous formations. The parts of these formations are determined at any particular place in the whole, by structural principles that govern the whole. Riegl claims that in works of art, which are sensuous formations, there is a non-causal, non-deterministic relation between the stylistic appearance, that is the formal external character of a work, and its internal laws of composition or structuring principles, and an inner necessity between the work as a whole and in its parts. In other words, surface appearance and inner structure are interdependent from each other, the two faces of one aspect.

If Riegl defines ornament as ‘pattern against background’ this refers not to two distinct parts placed one on top of the other, but two interdependent parts that cannot exist on their own. Morphological changes in an ornament refer equally to formal changes and to necessary internal relations between parts. In this sense, ornaments cannot be simply add-ons. Their exclusion from

a particular work will severely transform the work itself. Equally, the gesture of rendering a work in simple, minimal forms is a style and morphological change that is a manifestation of the change in spirit in a particular group at a certain period, and not a sign of decay of a particular style or form.

The experience he gathered as a curator of textiles led him to write his first major work, *Antique Oriental Carpets* (1891). In 1893, he published his second book, *Grundlegungen zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik* (*Problems of Style: Foundations for a History of Ornament*), which will gain him his reputation as an art historian. Riegl's aim was to establish *Grundlegungen zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik* (*The Fundamentals for a History of Ornaments*) that would refute "die materialistische Auffassung von dem Ursprunge alles Kunstschaffens" (the materialist account of the origin of all art-making). He believed that this was only a transfer of Darwinist principle in the field of *Geisteslebens* (the life of the spirit). A history of ornaments cannot be founded on a unilateral emphasis on materials and techniques, or on symbolic meanings. In the introduction to *Problems of Style*, he writes that a search for uniformity will deliberately becloud the look/sense for differences. He identifies the drive to adorn one's body as a primary drive to decorate and one that is older than any other drive to protect or cover one's body with textile materials. Thus he opposes arguments that stood for the identification of textile ornaments with surface decoration in general. Instead of classifying all surface decoration under a common denominator, textile ornaments, he positioned the drive for surface adornments as a primary drive and textile ornaments a result of this drive. His endeavour was to invent and recover the history of ornament as a continuous and autonomous endeavour. To this end, he traced back the development and formal transformation of plant-ornaments from ancient near eastern to classical and up into early medieval periods and the development of the arabesque in Islamic art in relation to the plant-ornament.

APPENDIX 2: C-TIN NOICA, TERMINOLOGY

Todetitis, catholitis, horetitis, atodetia, acatholia and *ahoretia* are neologisms coined by the Romanian philosopher Constantin Noica (1909–1987) from the terminology used by Aristotle. The translation process from Old Greek, to Latin, German, Romanian and English traverses several languages and cultural spaces, and is a process of complex exchanges both on etymological and philosophical level (Blyth 2009 in Noica 2009: 21-27).

In an attempt to think an ontological model that would exploit the ontology of the Romanian language, Noica coined six new words to translate the Aristotelian terms for the general, individual and determination, *kathalou, tode ti* and *horos*. Furthermore, Noica employs the meaning of the Greek concepts via German philosophical terms used by Hegel and Goethe, *Allgemeinheit, Einzelheit, and Besonderheit*.

The three forms of anxiety: engulfment, implosion, or petrification — and the three Aristotelian categories describing being: the general, the individual and Determinations can be related to each other. Noica analysed these categories, along with the ones describing non-being, as ontological knots that produce 6 contemporary “maladies” or inflammations, deficiencies or rejections of one or more than one of these categories. They have to be understood as productive and creative deficiencies that have the power, not only to make cultural structures porous, but also to provoke new cultural manifestations. These knots, these tumours, these excrescences are ontological forms generated by and produced out of forms, a proliferation of forms out of forms. They literally dis-place and de-place form – and presence.

Another key concept for Noica was the Romanian preposition *întru*, meaning ‘into’ or ‘within’, from the Latin *intro*. For Noica the preposition *întru* expressed directly the unfolding of being’s manifestations into the spirit.

Non-being was thought by Noica, in drawing on Kant³¹, as 3 different types of nothing: *neant* (nothingness), *golul* (void, emptiness), and *nimicul* (the nothing). Noica claims for nothingness an ontological fruitfulness, explaining that the various forms of nothing might be active within being and that they are directly related to three categories describing being: the general, the individual and determinations and to the ontological blockages of being.

With Noica’s ontology we can speak of the project of a tetradic-thematic dialectic and of a model of being as a continuous transformation of relations between three categories that describe being: the individual, the general, and determinations. Noica reformulates Hegel’s

³¹ In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant gives us ‘the table of this division of the concept of nothing’: *ens rationis* (empty concept without object), *nihil privativum* (empty object of a concept), *ens imaginarium* (empty intuition without an object), and *nihil negativum* (empty object without concept). (Kant, 1998: 383).

metaphysical triadic dialectic into an ontological, tetradic and thematic dialectic: being-becoming - becoming into being –becoming into becoming. His thinking evolves not only around the idea that being continually transforms the concatenation of the three relations between the general, the individual and determinations, but also around the thought that this (ex)change-condition of being may become blocked and provoke, while it manifests itself in the world (in individual humans, peoples, cultures, historical epochs, in the spirit...) ontological maladies, inflammations or deficiencies of one or another of these terms. These categories describing being and those describing non-being, through their interrelations and the ontological and ontic structures they configure and form, they describe and present modalities in which being and beings, and images, can become blocked in a malady which enables the spirit to explore new cultural possibilities. These inflammations or deficiencies may induce thus what Noica called THE CREATIVE MALADIES OF THE CONTEMPORARY SPIRIT. In his book, with the same title, he gives examples, of mostly literary or historical figures, for each malady and interprets them from an ontologico-cultural perspective, such as: Don Juan (Don Quixote), Dostoyevsky, Faust or Napoleon. (No female character is included as an example)

The General (The Universal/ *Kathalou* / *Allgemeinheit*)

Aristotle sometimes identified *kathalou*, meaning 'whole' with *genos*. And Noica, in following Aristotle, is using for *kathalou*—*generalul* (the general) and *generaluri* (generalia). *Generaluri* is Noica's own coinage. English translations of Aristotelian texts were influenced by Latin translations and thus *kathalou* was usually translated with 'universal' from the Latin *universalis-universum* meaning 'combined into one', from *vertere* (past participle *versus*), to turn, transform. The meaning of the adjective 'general' overlaps with that of 'universal' in both languages, in Romanian and in English, but the nouns 'the general' (people as a non-individuated whole) and 'generals' (universal principle) has fallen out of use.

The Individual (Tode ti/ *Einzelheit*)

The two terms used by Noica for the Greek *tode ti* are *individualul* (the individual) and *individualuri* (individualia). This neuter plural form inspired by the Latin *universalia* is translated and coined by Noica in using a specific neuter non-plural suffix in Romanian '-uri' in order to create an equivalent. Through analogy, we can translate *generaluri* and *individualuri* as 'generalia' and 'individualia' in English.

To the English word 'the individual' correspond three different terms in Noica's terminology: *individual*, *individ*, *îns*. The Romanian and English word *individual* derives from the Medieval Latin adjective *individualis*. The Romanian *individ* derives from the classical Latin noun *individuus* and has no equivalent in English. The third Romanian word *îns* is specifically Romanian and represents a key concept in Noica's ontological system. In Romanian the etymology of the word *îns* is traced back to the Latin *ipsus-ipse*, meaning 'self, in person'. However, Noica although

recognizing the validity of *ipsus*, followed certain Romanian 19th century philosophers, and claimed that it actually derives from the Late Latin particle *ens*, 'being'.

The difference in which Noica is interested lies in the fact that whereas the *individ* is always already divided and thus it has a negative boundary, the *îns* is not defined by division, but rather by a positive boundary. Thus *îns* cannot be translated adequately either by 'person' nor 'individual'. In the ontological dialectic, Noica situates *îns* between atom and person: the meaning of the Greek *atomos* is referring to that that admits no further division, thus the individual, *individ*, is a material unit that cannot be further divided. In the Christian tradition person is a moral unit; whereas *îns*, is for Noica an existential unit that bears within it Being.

Determination (Horos/ Besonderheit)

The literal meaning of the Greek word *horos* is that of 'boundary, limit'. In Aristotle's logic it is the term of a proposition, its definition, its species. (All variations attempt to become species). In Romanian, *horos* is translated as *definiție*, definition, however Noica prefers the term *determinație*, from the Latin *determinatio*, which is a rather rare word. In English, the Romanian *determinație* and the Greek *horos* can be translated as 'determination', a word derived from the same Latin and having the same meaning of 'delimitation, definition'.

Concept of Nothingness

Golul (emptiness, void) derives from the Romanian adjective *gol*, meaning 'naked, bare, uncovered, empty'. Noica also uses the idiomatic expression *in gol*, 'pointlessly, futilely, in vain, in a void'. *Neant* comes from the French word *néant*, which is a philosophical term used by the French Existentialists (to which Noica was very critical and referred to in various texts). *Neant* presupposes for Noica something positive that is then transformed into nothingness. *Nimicul* is a specifically Romanian term that can be traced back to the Latin *ne mica*, 'not a bit, not a crumb'. *Nimicul* is autonomous and represents a beginning, whereas *neantul* was a result of a transformation, of a process of annihilation and thus it represents an end. *Nimicnicie* is another term used by Noica, from the adjective *nimic* and meaning literally 'nothingness', but signifying 'futility, insignificance, worthlessness, pointlessness' in Noica's texts. *Nimicnicie* might be translated as 'vanity' in English.

GLOSSARY

ALETHEIA: (ἀλήθεια) in its Greek meaning refers to the state of not being hidden; of being evident; it means unconcealedness, unhiddenness. Heidegger refers to a-letheia in relation to disclosure and truth and as the event of veiling-unveiling of truth; as the fundamental trait of beings themselves. “[W]e must acknowledge, the fact that ἀλήθεια, unconcealment in the sense of opening of presence, was originally only [sogleich und nur] experienced as *orthotes*, as the correctness of representations and statements. But then the assertion about the essential transformation of truth, that is from unconcealment to correctness, is untenable. Instead we must say: *Aletheia*, as opening of presence and presencing in thinking and saying, originally comes under the perspective of *homoiosis* and *adaequatio*, that is, the perspective of adequation in the sense of the correspondence of representing with what is present (Heidegger in Malabou 2011: 29).” “Only the essence of truth understood in the original Greek sense of ἀλήθεια — the unhiddenness that is related to the hidden (to something dissembled and disguised) — has an essential relation to this image of an underground cave. Wherever truth has another essence, wherever it is not unhiddenness or at least is not co-determined by unhiddenness, there an “allegory of the cave” has no basis as an illustration. And yet, even though ἀλήθεια is properly experienced in the “allegory of the cave” [...]” (Heidegger 1998: 172).”

ARABESQUE: ornamental form, Islamic idea and literary figure; the genus of vegetal ornament of the Saracen art, that is, of Islamic art in medieval and modern time; the ‘stylized form of the forked rinceaux’: an interference of twine elements with new ones in which no leaf or stem endings run down freely, each end beginning a new convolute of curls and fringes; musical piece, dancing figure in classical ballet.

ATHENAEUM: title of the literary and philosophical magazine published by August Wilhelm and Friedrich Schlegel. Between 1798 and 1800, the two brothers published 6 issues. Athenaeum is regarded as one of the main manifestation of Early Jena Romanticism. To the circle of friends that contributed to the journal belonged: Dorothea Schlegel, Caroline Schlegel, Novalis, August Ferdinand Bernhardi, Sophie Bernhardi, Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, August Ludwig Hülsen und Karl Gustav Brinckmann. Published articles were either authored, collaborations or anonymous (Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe 1988:23-25).

AURA: Benjamin: “We can say: what shrinks in an age where the work of art can be reproduced by technological means is its AURA. The process is symptomatic; its significance points beyond the realm of art. *Reproductive technology, we might say, in general terms, removes the thing reproduced from the realm of tradition. In making many copies of the reproduction, it substitutes for its unique incidence a multiplicity of incidences. And in allowing the reproduction to come closer to whatever situation the person apprehending it is in, it actualizes what is reproduced* (Benjamin 2009: 233; italics by the author; emphasis my own).”

The common understanding of the word in Benjamin's work rests mainly on a reductive reading of his essay, *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility* (1936): "(1) Aura understood as "a strange weave of space and time: the unique appearance [apparition, semblance] of a distance, however near it may be" (or, "however close the thing that calls it forth"); and (2) aura understood as a form of perception that "invests" or endows a phenomenon with the "ability to look back at us," to open its eyes or "lift its gaze" (Benjamin cited after Hansen 2008: 339).

An in-depth critical analysis that opens up the elaboration of the concept in Benjamin's work (and does not limit it to this essay) is proposed in the essay, *Benjamin's Aura*, by Miriam Bratu Hansen (2008).

AUTHENTICITY: Benjamin: "the here and now of the original constitute the abstract idea of genuineness [authenticity]" and "the whole province of genuineness [authenticity] is beyond technological (and of course not only technological) reproducibility. But whereas in relation to manual reproduction (the product of which was usually branded a forgery of the original) genuineness [authenticity] retains its full authority, in relation to reproduction by technological means that is not the case." Authenticity cannot be reproduced. "Even with the most perfect reproduction, one thing stands out: the here and now of the work of art — its unique existence in the place where it is now. But it is on that unique existence and on nothing else that the history has been played out to which during the course of its being it has been a subject." "The genuineness [authenticity] of a thing is the quintessence of everything about it since its creation that can be handed down, from its material duration to the historical witness that it bears. The latter (material duration and historical witness) being grounded in the former (the thing's genuineness), what happens in the reproduction, where the former has been removed from human perception, is that the latter also starts to wobble. Nothing else, what starts to wobble thus is the authority of the thing (Benjamin 2009: 231-233)."

AUTHOR: the author function is characteristic of the mode of existence, circulation, and functioning of certain discourses, which are objects of appropriation, within a society. Traditionally and ideologically the author functions as: a constant level of value, as a field of theoretical and conceptual coherence, as stylistic unity and as a historical figure at the crossroads of a certain number of events; the author function is linked to the juridical and institutional system that encompasses, determines, and articulates the universe of discourses; it does not affect all discourses in the same way at all times and in all types of civilization; it is defined by a series of complex operations; it does not refer purely and simply to a real individual, since it can give rise simultaneously to several selves, to several subject-positions that can be occupied by different classes of individuals. For Foucault, the author is the principle of thrift in the proliferation of meaning because it allows a limitation of the cancerous and dangerous proliferation of significations within a world where one is thrifty not only with one's resources

and riches but also with one's discourses and their significations; the author is thus a certain functional principle, by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses; in short, by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction (Foucault 1994: 205-222).

Copyright's existence, I believe, is based on the following assumptions or sentences: An author is the only person who has written her or his own work; an author owns her or his work.

Now in the first sentence — an author is the only person who has written his or her own work — the assumed definition of identity is questionable. For instance, I do not write out of nothing, or from nothing, for I must write with the help of other texts, be these texts written ones, oral ones, those of memory, those of dreams etc. In the second sentence, an author owns her or his work, the verb to own must be questioned.

In other words, as writers we depend economically on copyright, its existence, because we are living in a bourgeois-industrialist, in a capitalist society, a society based on ownership. One needs to own in order to survive, in fact, in order to be (Acker 1997: 100-101).

B O D Y: is defined most commonly in terms of the human body, the material frame of man, viewed as an organic entity. But it may also refer to a series of organized units, a collective whole, of things or persons. Within science it refers to any substance, simple or compound, solid, liquid or gaseous. Within Christian texts the body is understood as the sacrament, the metaphorical body of Christ. Traditionally, the body is understood as a signifying or symbolic entity and a way to express and articulate cultural identity and meaning, and not in terms of a material or corporeal being. In opposing these views, Nancy's thinking of the body turns towards its materiality, its matter in relation to a certain technicity or to a technical apparatus.

Nancy's figure of the 'body' is similar and related to Heidegger's *Dasein*. In both cases, 'body' and *Dasein* have no pre-existing signification, because they are always already in an excess of signification, and both are used for naming or referring also to 'sense' or 'being'. They 'make' sense and sense 'takes place' in both, in a singular way. However, Nancy sees *Dasein* as a corporeal materiality, so he uses 'body' with the aim to stress and to expose its bodily aspects, the embodied materiality of existence. The way Nancy looks at the body is in a manner of engaging with its immediate materiality, in a manner of touching or contact at the limit, in which sense and signification and the material are thought together. There are two key ideas that characterizes his understanding of the body: on the one hand he aims to overturn the traditional thinking of the body that resulted from the Christian tradition and from the concepts of the mind/body relation, and, on the other hand, Nancy's close link to the phenomenological thought. In his attempt to think the body, Nancy makes use of the figure of "touch", which has been analysed by Derrida in his book "On Touching, Jean-Luc Nancy" (2000).

Body is for Nancy the place, which is "the taking place of sense" – in and as matter, in the middle of matter — and bodies are those who articulate it in first place. The body is the limit, the

touching point, where sense and matter touch and come into contact. At this limit and touching point, occurs the opening of a world and of the event of being (*Ereignis*). The body discloses existence at the point of contact between discourse and matter, but Nancy insists, that they take place neither in discourse nor in matter (Nancy 2008: 17). Bodies take place at the limit, as the limit at the intersection of the unknown/unseen/untouchable to the continuity of sense within the continuity of matter. The body as the corporeal is thought as an event at the limit of sense and, at the same time, also as a rupture and discontinuity within the continuity of sense and within the continuity of matter. Body for Nancy is a finite corporeal existence that is and makes sense and discloses a world not through gathering of its own identity and self-identity, but through a movement of dispersal and dissemination, of passage.

Bodies touch each other and, at the same time, they touch the limit of signification and make sense in terms of and as a 'transgression': they cross each other, while keeping the distinction and by not establishing continuity; they leap into each other without being interlinked. As Nancy writes in relation to the image, bodies' touch is a "shock", a "confrontation", a "tête-a-tête" and a "rapport." Bodies are distinct and heterogeneous, the "unbindable just at the distance of touch." He writes: "The body is the extension of the soul to the extremities of the world and to the confines of the self, each intricated [intriqué] with the other and indistinctly distinct, extended, stretched [étendue tendue] to the point of rupture." Thus, Ian James explains: "The spatial temporal event of being, as the extension or exposure of sense to impenetrable matter, (that is the body) does not permit the world to be seen in terms of substances, or of the presence and self-presence of things, rather it must always be seen in terms of this separation and distancing of sense, which is also an event of touch, spacing, sharing, position, and disposition."

Bodies are "finite bodily sense" that 'make' sense. On the one hand, 'Being' is for Nancy in following Heidegger's thinking, not to be thought as a constant presence, but rather as "coming into presence" or "presentation". The "event of being" is always a "coming" and a "borne into presence". And, on the other hand, "Being" is for Nancy always a radicalisation of Heidegger's "Mitsein": it is always a "being-with", as the transcendental condition of "Being". Being is or makes sense only as "being-with", which is, that sense is or makes sense only as a "sharing of a simultaneous time-space." Sense may take place only "in" and "between" us and it takes place in bodies only "in" and "between" a community of bodies that are exposed to themselves, sharing and making this sense.

Nancy is interested in appearance, when it forges ahead and discloses a world, a moment of creation without ground and without purpose. In this context, body or bodies and sense space themselves in a total exposure to each other, by remaining in contact with each other, while at the same time keeping a distance from each other. There is no overall structure to support them into subjects or other identities. The relation between these parts outside parts is thus a relation of exteriority and 'effraction' — the elements of a material body exist always also outside of each

other and are never in the same place. Bodies are of impenetrable matter and they gain their meaning only from the outside – they are touched, seen, sensed from this exteriority with which they are in touch and, at the same time, at distance.

Nancy appropriates the notion of the *partes extra partes* from Merleau-Ponty, who invoked this phrase in the *Phenomenology of Perception*. Merleau-Ponty explains the structure of the *partes extra partes* as an object that takes up only an exterior and mechanical relation between his parts and in connection to other objects. This relation can either be transmitted or received, or it can be a variable relation or function. So, for Merleau-Ponty this relation is an exterior and mechanical one. However, Nancy will adopt the phrase, but at the same time, he will develop it in relation to the Greek term *techné*, which refers to a know-how and practical labour, to craft. For Nancy, the ‘original technicity’ of our world is the sharing of embodied existence that opens thus a world. The *partes extra partes* is the technical-mechanical relation of sense between material bodies, which expose material bodies, in their ‘contact-separation’ relation between matter and sense. Material bodies exist as *techné*, as the interconnection and ‘co- articulation’ of a technical apparatus. The structure of *partes extra partes* is not thought anymore as a pre-theoretical or pre-scientific dimension of experience (as was the case in other phenomenological attempts). It is not thought in relation to the opposition between an original disclosure of the world and the realm of the scientific and technical knowledge of the world. It is more an originary technicity that is an embodied ‘effraction’ that takes place as a touch in the distance of sense and matter (James 2006: 115-151; Cojanu 2009: 66-69).

BODYBUILDING PRACTICES: I am using this expression rather than simply ‘bodybuilding’ in order to acknowledge the heterogeneity and complexity of this phenomenon with respect to its history, development, to social and gendered aspects; to refer to all practices that are involved in bodybuilding: training, nutrition and diet, posing technics, competition and a specific visual vocabulary: such as self-tan application, ‘stage costume’, etc.; as well as a gendered specific visual vocabulary: one that connotes femininity — theatrical make-up, false nails, breast implants, wigs, high heels — and one that connotes masculinity — rough boots and the use of other male specific props.

I imagine starting a text ~~about~~ building a body with the following quote by Barthes:

Once I feel myself observed by the lens, everything changes: I constitute myself in the process of ‘posing,’ I instantaneously make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image. ... I feel that the Photograph creates my body and mortifies it, according to its caprice. ... The photograph is the advent of myself as other, a cunning dissociation of consciousness from identity. [By thus being transformed from a subject into an object, by becoming a specter of myself] I have become a Total-Image, which is to say, Death in person. [...] (Jay 1994: 452).

CHANGE (ontological): as elaborated by Malabou in *The Heidegger Change*, refers to the ontological metabolism of the triad *Wandel*, *Wandlung*, *Verwandlung*, to the intermediary space between change, exchange and substitution.

[...] Tracking Heidegger's thinking of change necessarily leads one to take account of an exchange. An exchange, first of all, of a centre of gravity. [...] An almost imperceptible but nonetheless vertiginous difference has begun to open up right on the ontological difference. This self-difference of difference is nothing but its ontological dimension. [...] Henceforth, you will no longer be able to keep in focus the difference between being and beings but only the difference between differing and changing. [...] You have, without realizing it, exchanged difference for exchange. [...] The difference between differing and changing directs your gaze to the difference between being and essence — for to behold essence is to witness change. [...] Difference, then, presupposes the exchangeability, and thus the nondifferentiation, of instances that differ. Ontological difference therefore remains unthinkable outside the very possibility of its occlusion; that is to say, outside the originary possibility of being and beings changing into each other. [...] The essence of a thing is effectively what in it does not change. This exchange of mutability for its opposite is exactly what originally gives change [donne le change] in philosophy, throwing it off the trail. [...] The problematic of change brings to light a differing that is not the alternative ontological difference, but which constitutes the site of Heidegger's thinking of change. [...] There are effectively two (ex-)changes. One where essence doubles being — is given for it — and another where essence is the coming and advent of being itself. Each of these (ex-)changes also shelters a metabolic regime that is proper to it [...]. The dividing line between the two (ex-)changes is nonetheless decisive —relentlessly imprinting and affacing itself, threatens to appear and disappear (Malabou 2011: 1-30).

CONJOINTURE —'BELLE CONJOINTURE': technical term in literary theory (Macrobius) describing the harmonious mélange of multiple traditions and text registers.

CONTEXTIO: technical term in literary theory (Macrobius), referring to the order of relations and designing the structure of content in a story.

DAIMON: δαίμων — From Proto-Indo-European deh-i (to divide, to cut), whence also δαίωμα (daíomai, to divide) (Wiktionary & Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon [online]). God –Godess: divine power, guardian spirit, fate destiny, fortune; departed soul; evil spirit; semi-divine being, inferior to Gods; good or evil genius of a person or family.

DARSTELLUNG: Kant: presentation — the pure presentation is only the mathematical presentation because in the formal-logical language of mathematics there is an exact adequation between the presentation of the respective concept or intuition and the concept or the intuition itself, thus a mathematical presentation demonstrates the existence or truth of something without the need of anything else as proof and through using its own language to ground itself as such; but the philosophical presentation is different from pure mathematical presentation; its relation to truth and foundation or ground is different and the correspondence between the presentation of concepts/intuition and the concept/intuition itself cannot unfold in the manner of a proof or equation, but only in discourse; Kant specifically chose to call this mode of presentation EXPOSITION(Nancy 2008: 32-33).

DECORATION: “anything applied to a structure or an object that is not necessary to the stability, use, or understanding of that structure or object (Grabar 1992: xxiv); “a generic descriptor of certain aspects of things mainly pertaining to pleasure (Brett 2005: 4).”

DÉCOR: Latin ‘decet-decorum’; means to comply, to become, to acquiesce.

DECORUM: Latin ‘decet-decorum’; suitability and appropriateness of a style for the subject; an appropriate measure; may refer to: a behaviour in keeping with good taste and propriety, etiquette, to the suitability, to the requirements of a person, rank, or occasion, or to particular requirements of good taste and propriety; the theory of decorum implies very often a doctrine of taste and represents in essence the platonic theory of beauty.

DIFFERENCE (ontological): see ‘change’.

DIFFÉRENCE – DIFFÉRANCE: “différence” as “différentiation” and “différenciation” in Deleuze and “différance” in Derrida: Not the difference between two (or more) distinct and completed termini, ideas or concepts, but the infinite game played out by the difference differing itself; the two ways of reading Hegel: understanding the passage as result, the “dialectical synthesis”, the representation of the unification of the opposites, or understanding the result as a passage that doesn’t pass, as a result without result (Nancy and Schérer 2008).

ENTWURF: German for project, scheme, concept, draft, design, or plan; technical term and theoretical concept in the discourse of architecture.

EXPERIENCE: “To undergo an experience with something, [...] be it a person, a thing, or a god, means that this experience befalls us, strike us, comes over us, overwhelms us and transforms us [daß es uns widerfährt, daß es uns trifft, über uns kommt, uns umwirft und verwandelt].” (Heidegger, Malabou 2011: 28)

FANTASTIC (philosophical): In *The Heidegger Change*, Malabou speaks of the fantastic as the point of access in the “ontological metabolism” and in “the triad of change” given by the three forms of change: *Wandel* (change), *Wandlung* (transformation), *Verwandlung* (metamorphosis) (*Malabou 2011:1*).

Both the mode of visibility of ontological metabolism and the intelligibility and evidence of the never seen, the fantastic ‘in philosophy’ designates at once a kind of approach to change and the very strangeness of what changes and is going to change. It also manifests, by consequence, the uncanniness of the fantastic to itself: its irreducibility to a genre or category of discourse, its resistance to every relegation of itself to a conventional domain, to what Roger Caillois calls ‘the fantastic of principle or obligation’. The philosophical fantastic is contemporary with the bringing to light, in the twentieth century, of the ontological difference and, by way of consequence, the possibility of thinking being without beings. It never designates ‘an element exterior to the human world’ (that of ‘composite monsters, infernal fawns, the irruption of

demonic, grotesque or sinister creatures’), but describes THE FOREIGNER ON THE INSIDE, the whole of the metabolic force that sleeps without sleeping in what is, THE VERY FACE OF BEING THAT CONCEPTS CANNOT SAY WITHOUT LOSING FACE.

To the extent that the mutability of being is not—not, that is, a being—its reality is necessarily imaginary, if by imaginary we understand, as Heidegger invites us to, a nonobjective modality of presence free of every reference and referent. [...] As an imaginary production without a referent and pure ontological creation, the fantastic characterizes the apprehension and the regime of existence of what cannot be presented, of, that is, what can only ever change (Malabou 2011:12-13; italics by the author, emphasis my own).

FICTION: What is not. “What is fiction is that which will become actual (Acker 1997: 3).”

First, in fiction, there is no “true” or “false” in social-realist terms. Fiction is “true” or real when it makes. Second, if there is a self, it isn’t Hegel’s subject or the centralized phallic “I/eye. If there is a self, it’s probably the world. All is real. When I placed “true” autobiography next to “false” autobiography, everything was real. Phallic identity is another scam that probably had to do with capitalistic ownership.

Fiction is magic because everything is magic: the world is always making itself. When you make fiction you deep into this process. [...] (Acker 1997: 10).

Fiction is our life. As we live, we are continually producing fictions. ... You are at present thinking of the longed-for moment when I shall finished speaking. ... It is a fiction! We live only by fictions, which are our projects, hopes, memories, regrets, thoughts etc., and we are no more than their perpetual invention. Note well (I insist!) — that all these fictions necessarily relate to *what is not*, and are no less necessarily opposed to *what is*; besides, which is curious, it is *what is* that gives birth to *what is not*, and *what is not* that constantly responds to *what is*. You are here, and later on you will no longer be here, and you know it. *What is not* corresponds in your mind to *what is*. That is because the power over you of *what is* produces the power in you of *what is not*; and the latter power changes into a feeling of impotence upon contact with *what is*. So we revolt against facts; we cannot admit a fact like death. Our hopes, our grudges, all this is a direct, instantaneous product of conflict between *what is* and *what is not* (Valéry 1989: 227).

The purpose of fiction: [...] Writing must break through the representational or fictional mirror and be equal in force to the horror experienced in daily life. [...] (Acker 1997: 68).

GAZE: is used in this text mainly as a translation of the German word ‘Blick’ or look; as a psychoanalytical term it was introduced by Jacques Lacan to describe the anxious state of the awareness that one can be viewed. Lacan argues that through the awareness that one is being looked at, the subject loses a degree of autonomy upon realizing that he or she is a visible object. This concept is bound with his theory of the mirror stage, in which a child encountering a mirror realises that he or she has an external appearance. Lacan suggests that any conceivable object such as a chair or a television screen can similarly produce this gaze effect. This is not to say that the object behaves optically as a mirror; instead it means that the awareness of any object can induce an awareness of also being an object.

But slits, holes, and zones do not present things to be seen, do not reveal anything: vision does not penetrate, but glides along swerves and follows along departures. It is a touching that does not absorb but moves along lines and recesses, inscribing and exscribing the body. A mobile, unstable caress, seeing the image in slow motion, fast-forwarded, or frozen, seeing as well with *touches* from other senses, smells, tastes, timbres, or even, with sounds, from the senses of words (the “sure” that yields “pleasure”) (Nancy 2008: 45-47).

See: the chapter *The Gaze and the Glance* in: *Vision and Painting*, Bryson (1983).

The logic of the Gaze is therefore subject to two great laws: the body (of the painter, of the viewer) is reduced to a single point, the *macula* of the retinal surface; and the moment of the Gaze (for the painter, for the viewer) is placed outside duration [as against the visual perception required and produced by the arabesque]. Spatially and temporally, the act of viewing is constructed as the removal of the dimensions of space in time, as the disappearance of the body: the construction of an *acies mentis*, the punctual viewing subject (Bryson 1982: 96).

[...] We must shift our perspective from the image, the imago, the spectre, to the painting, to the carved sheet of pigment, to the stroke of brush on canvas [in bodybuilding practices body and image coincide here!]: despite its obsession with the body’s endless variability, with the spectacular and protean transformations of a body under constant visibility and display (no tradition of the Nude, outside Europe [—and maybe that’s why bodybuilding practices are specific to Western culture first of all, and then especially to the American culture and the post-fordist and liberal society], the image finally knows the body only as a picture. To dissolve the Gaze that returns the body to itself in medusa form, we must willingly enter into the partial blindness of the Glance and dispense with the conception of form as con-sideration, as Arrest, and try to conceive form instead in dynamic terms, as matter in process, in the sense of the original pre-Socratic word for form: *rhuthmos*, rhythm, the impress on matter of the body’s internal energy, in the mobility and vibrancy of its somatic rhythm; the body of labour [that actually becomes obsolete and that gets lost once more through its replacement by the machine — in this sense bodybuilding practices are an enactment and an embodiment of this absent BODY OF LABOUR], of material practice (Bryson: 131).

See also Jay, M. (1994) *Downcast Eyes. The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*.

GIFT (J.-L. Marion): The gift interpreted from the horizon of givenness itself, is the ‘gift that gives itself by giving its giving’, the ‘gift that gives itself by giving its reception’, that ‘gives itself here without limit, without return, outside of commerce’ (Marion 2008: 92-99).

IMAGE: See Nancy (2005); the presentation of presentation; exists at the vanishing point of signification and systematic structures; the image images and presents into the one of the image (Ein-bild-ung) an unseen (by the eye and by the ‘I’) formation of possible presence, a new world, “a singular variation on the totality of distinct sense” (Nancy 2005:12).

IMAGINARY: “a non-objective modality of presence free of every reference and referent (Heidegger in Malabou 2011: 11).”

INFINITE RAPPORT: infinite pattern of non-geometric configuration (Riegl: ein decoratives Compositions-gesetz —“es beruht auf der Verwendung eines aus zwei symmetrischen Hälften componierten Ornamentmotives (oder mehrerer solcher) in reihenweiser Abwechslung als Streumuster in der Ebene, wobei längst der abschließenden Ränder der Gesamtcomposition immer jene Hälfte des Motives (in den Ecken je ein Viertel desselben) angebracht erscheint; der Beschauer wird dadurch veranlaßt, sich die fehlende Hälfte (oder ein Viertel) in Gedanken zu ergänzen und die Reihe in der Ebene ins Unendliche fortzusetzen (Riegl 1901: 42).”

KUNSTWOLLEN: translated as: what art wants, art drive, will to make art, will of art, artistic intention, art's volition; it is the concept that Riegl introduces and elaborates to name the force that drives and structures the metabolic changes in forms, styles and contents over a certain time period. When Riegl speaks about style he refers to an idea and not to a class, to something that can be grasped only intuitively, that only communicates itself in concrete terms – style cannot communicate itself through other concepts. The external character of a particular form can communicate a style. What drives changes in style is what he calls 'Kunstwollen', a drive, impulse, tendency or need, a force and not a conscious will.

All human will is directed towards a satisfactory shaping of man's relationship to the world, within and beyond the individual. The plastic *Kunstwollen* regulates man's relationship to the sensibly perceptible appearance of things. Art expresses the way man wants to see things shaped or coloured, just as the poetic *Kunstwollen* expresses the way man wants to imagine them. Man is not only a passive, sensory recipient, but also a desiring, active being who wishes to interpret the world in such a way (varying from one people, region, or epoch to another) that it most clearly and obligingly meets his desires. The character of this will is contained in what we call the worldview (again in the broadest sense): in religion, philosophy, science, even statecraft and law (Wood 2000: 94-96).

LIMIT: see *peras*.

LITERARY ABSOLUTE: “theory itself as literature”; it is the concept the Jena group used to name the ‘something’ of the constant horizon of their project: “the production of something entirely new”; the literary absolute is also, and perhaps above all, this absolute “literary operation”. “For the literary Absolute aggravates and radicalizes the thinking of totality and the Subject. It infinitizes this thinking, and therein, precisely, rests its ambiguity. Not that romanticism itself did not begin to perturb the Absolute, or proceed, despite itself, to undermine its Work [Oeuvre]. But it is important to carefully distinguish the signs of this small and complex fissuring and consequently to know how to read these signs in first place—as signs of a romantic, not romanesque, reading of romanticism (Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe 1988: 15).”

MASS ORNAMENT: Kracauer: is formed by the masses of thousand of bodies, sexless bodies in bathing suits that move in regular patterns, of geometrical precision, in a packed stadium in

front of cheering masses, themselves arranged as another 'mass ornament' by the stands in tier upon ordered tier. This type of ornament is of the mass, and not the people and it is an end in itself. It per-forms figures, but the participating bodies are no longer, free autonomous, individuals, but parts of the mass and only as such, can they become fractions of the figure.

MEDIATION: Mersch (2009): mediation is a referential relation (and any relational structure such as scission, split, partition is implying or presupposing an heterogeneous other) whose possibility is already preceding and determining the mediation. If one has to break with any *as/qua/als*-relation, then one has to invert the constitutive direction implied in the relation: the relation is not towards the other/distinct and thus to difference and partition, but one has to start from the other/distinct, or through the other/distinct, so that the mediation is not making alterity possible, but ALTERITY ITSELF MAKES MEDIATION POSSIBLE. Thus, alterity and difference is already and passively given and only as such is it difference; if we think difference as difference than we remain in metaphysical presence. ... And aura is one such concept that rest at the limit between "praesentia in absentia" (presence of what is not visible, what is hidden) with "absentia in praesentia" (presentness of what withdraws itself from a apprehension of existence, from presence. 'What refuses to give evidence').

METHOD: from old Greek: 'meta' (after) and 'hodos' (way, a traveling), after-a-traveling, after-way, processual —how one goes about.

METHODOLOGY: a reproducible framework.

MOVEMENT (change): "All movement involves three factors, (1) that which originates the movement, (2) that by means of which it originates it and (3) that which is moved. The expression 'that which originates movement' is ambiguous: it may mean either something which itself is unmoved or that which at once moves and is moved. Here that which moves without itself being moved is the realizable good, that which at once moves and is moved is the faculty of appetite (for that which is moved is moved insofar as it desires, and appetite in the sense of actual appetite is a kind of movement), while that which is in motion is the animal. The instrument which appetite employs to produce movement is bodily: hence the examination of it falls within the province of the functions common to body and soul. [...] (Aristotle, 1995: 689, 433b1, 10-15)."

NOVEL OF MANNERS: is a literary term used to categorize traditional genre novels that emerged at the end of the 18th century in England, most of which appeared during the first half of the 19th century. A novel of manners is a work of prose fiction that represents a social world and deals with aspects of behaviour, the language, customs, and values characteristic for a particular class of people in a specific historical context. Plot and structure evolve around a conflict between individual aspirations, desires and accepted social codes of behaviours, and are dominated by how the characters uphold the standard level of social etiquette. A vital symbiosis

grows out of the relation between manners, social behaviour and character, which is usually the nucleus of the novel, while physical appearances are being less emphasized. Outcome is usually positive, a reinforcement of the morals. Because of changes taking place during that time in the English society, which were destabilizing class boundaries, this period showed almost an obsession with proper social behaviour, the standard markers determining an individual's position in society and indicating good morals. The idea of manners implied not only a social signification, but also a moral one that preceded the social one. Two distinct operative sets of codes defined gender differences in accepted behaviour between men and women. On the whole all manners were constructed on the idea of pleasing. These novels presented an opportunity to re-establish the class order through a naturalistic and realistic representation of how classes have to behave in different settings, public or private, in rural or urban, and, of course, in terms of gender differences. Codes of conduct were described, but also prescribed. Women dominated the genre as authors, subjects and intended audience, and the novels were considered for a long time trivial literature.

OBJECT: an entity perceptible or intelligible by the mind; from the Latin *objectus* (pp. of *obicere*) meaning to throw, or to put before or against, from *ob*-(pref.) and *jacere*, "to throw"; objects conform to the mind of the subject and, in turn, become products of human cognition (Kant's Copernican Turn).

ORNAMENT: ancient Greek '*orno-ornare*'; Latin '*ornere*' – to fit out or to complete; "any decoration that has no referent outside of the object on which it is found, except in technical manuals (Grabar: 1992, xxiv)"; what carries beauty in itself and is a form of mediation.

ORNAMENTAL: "the 'becoming essential of accident' and, at once, at the same time and in the same time, the 'becoming accidental of essence' (Malabou 2005: XII)"; daimonic force, an intermediary, movement.

ORNAMENTATION: *Ornamentik*, an art historical discipline of the theory of ornament; the state of being ornamented; something used to beautify; the act of ornamenting; something with which a thing is ornamented; ornaments collectively.

ORNATUS: In ancient Greece rhetoric was employed in public speech and political forums as civic art. *Ornatus* was part of the *elocutio* (speech art, elocution). Rhetoric is the art and skill to employ a number of stylistic mechanisms in order to achieve the desired persuasive effect and *Ornatus* was the set of such stylistic devices and linguistic forms that aimed to achieve a certain effect through a beautiful, but appropriate form.

PHANTASM: in its ancient Greek sense, "etwas überhaupt im Modus einer bewussten Vorstellung vor sich haben": "*oudépote* [irreducible feature, outline (Grundzug)] *noeîn* (acts) *aneu phantásmatos he psyche* [soul] (Böhler 2005: 16)" —"To the thinking soul images serve as if

they were contents of perception (and when it asserts or denies them to be good or bad it avoids or pursues them). That is why the soul never thinks without an image. [...] (Aristotle, 1995: 685, 431^a1, 16).”

Although I am using phantasm in its Greek sense — is this even possible? (I wonder) — the following quotation presents in a short, structured and clear way the complexity of its meaning and how it changed in time, and why is it relevant in the present.

Originally, in the philosophy following Plato, phantasms denote the CONCEPTS OF AN OBJECTIVE REALITY AS IT IS PERCEIVED AND, THUS, DISTORTED BY THE SENSES. And in *De Anima*, Aristotle states: “never does the soul think without phantasm” [quoted in Zizek (2008: 22) in reference to Castoriadis critique of Heidegger’s reading of the Kantian schematism (in *The Ticklish Subject*). From there it travels into European philosophy and reappears in Thomas Aquinas’s epistemological writings, above all in his commentaries on Aristotle. Due to the nature of 13th century scholastic style of writing in general, the chaotic situation of Aristotle editions (INDEED, THERE WERE VERY DIFFERENT ARISTOTLES UNTIL THE EMERGENCE OF THE PRINTING PRESS AND, WITH IT, THE EMERGENCE OF THE NOTION OF THE AUTHOR) it is not quite easy for non-specialists to discern which is Aquinas’s thought, which is Scholastic dogma, and which is comment on or depiction of Aristotle. Nonetheless, the notion of phantasm in one conceptual form or another was continued through Aquinas’s works, and it was an Aristotelian rather than Platonian notion.

Its use in the history of philosophy is less consequential until the rise of psychoanalysis (and its critique, in particular by Lacan). Respectively, when rising its head in the works of philosophers such as Gilles Deleuze or Jacques Derrida, it is often ascribed to be a remnant of the psychoanalytic discourse. However, it is difficult to distinguish the complexities of the process of concept formation that occurred in the minds of Deleuze or Derrida who were both deeply embedded in contemporary discourses, such as the critique of psychology and psycho-analysis, but who were extremely well-trained in the classics and made little secret of being intertwined with the conceptual worlds of those (not to mention that the same “training in the classics” was still somewhat mandatory for the 19th century founders of psycho-analysis). In short, it is hard to derive a clear and present definition of “what a phantasm is” that these different scholars would seem to share. There is little “essence” that they could all relate to, and that makes it decidedly difficult to place it, for example with Derrida in books such as *Dissemination*, *Glass* or *Specters of Marx*, where the concept is used rather in supposition of self-evidence with little introduction or definition. Freud is considerably a populariser of the notion of the phantasm, which has an illustrious career today: “A phantasm is a strong and very basic perceptual pattern, a sort of *idée fixe* that organizes our world view”, says Philipp Sarasin in *Anthrax* (page 9), whose cultural studies approach suggests the very provocation that, indeed, images and phantasies shape actual realities, which he illustrates on the Phantasm of “bioterror” and its fulfilment in the existence of anthrax. Once faced with such problem-complexes in the productive meaning of phantasm by authors such as Sarasin, of course, neither the Platonic nor the ghostly meaning of phantasm apply to them. At a first glance, Zizek and Deleuze might seem “too contemplative” to reach such a level of application and pragmatism, but this is merely a superficial judgment. After all, for phantasms to be efficacious, dynamic, and procedural social actants, it could be argued that they need to be more fundamentally materialistic (or, at least teleological in regard to practice) than, say, metaphors, yet have the same kind of constructive force as have the “metaphors we live by” (Lakoff/Johnson). After all, the phantasms I deal with in my research (or rather the “how” of their emergence and their subsequent career) are the control phantasm and the regionalization phantasm, referring to a process that we can identify in the 19th century leading up until today that have grave structurational power over our

individual and collective lives and institutions. In the course of my research, I realised I needed to look elsewhere for a more applicable concept of phantasm, and, via the study of the influence of the works of Freud's supposed rival (and predecessor in Charcot's grace) Pierre Janet on William James, the history of psychology and Harvard's Human Relations Movement, I rediscovered Ernst E. Boesch, a student of Jean Piaget and Oskar Pfister. Boesch created a very robust and very useful understanding of phantasm: At the centre of some of his work is the "myth of lurking chaos" that rules much of human civilization in general and the development of the individual child (sociogenesis and psychogenesis, phylogeny and ontogeny). A myth, he says, is a pre-structural guiding pattern and, therefore, not even a theory or precise idea; it is an "unspecified 'mould' of receptivity and evaluation" [quoting from Boesch in: Keller, Heidi el, eds. *Between Biology and Culture*, Cambridge UP, 2002]. There are different ways of dealing with myths (the myth of lurking chaos being one of the most primal and most influential), and phantasms comprise one of them. Though Boesch sees phantasms emerge in the individual development of children through selection and amalgamation, his general description works rather nicely to describe the kind of patterns that phantasms are, whether emerging individually or proceeding collectively. We can paraphrase as such: WHAT WE CALL PHANTASMS ARE THE PERCEIVING, TRANSFORMING AS WELL AS ANTICIPATING IMAGES, BOUND UP WITH THE ACTING PARTY (OR ACTOR).

Boesch also declares, and we do well to follow him in this regard, that "phantasms are, of course, 'over-determined'": They provide a way in which

"culture certainly influences the way we [also us scientists and scholars; A.S.] think and evaluate, shapes our action interaction. However, it acts no less below the surface, in those mythical dispositions, which we now hardly notice. Culture, then, makes us form phantasmatic orientations of which we recognize the more 'rational' manifestations – our goals and fears, affections and antipathies – but which nonetheless act at a depth that we will hardly ever be able to reflect on." (ibid.)

[...] With control and regionalization as two guiding phantasms that lead to a predigital process of virtualization, a dynamic process of restructuring information orders into forms of knowledge that inherently fail to represent concrete cases that require decision-making. For example, running rampant in biomedical science and, above all, biomedical science administration and governance over the twentieth century, this type of virtualization has resulted in regimes of diagnostic and therapeutic knowledge that have created patient trajectories in bureaucratized systems that no longer correspond with individual patients' needs nor are their concrete bodies represented in the data these systems produce and process. [...] (Stingl (2011) [online]. Available from URL <http://alexstingl.wordpress.com/2011/09/21/what-is-a-phantasm-second-approach-towards-tackling-this-travelling-concept/>. [Accessed October 2013]).

PLASTICITY: As elaborated by Malabou in *The Future of Hegel. Plasticity, Temporality, Dialectic* (2005: 1-20). And:

Plasticity refers to the spontaneous organization of fragments. [...] As a concept, plasticity is also endowed with a "dithyrambic gift for synthesis, enabling me to perceive the form of fragmentation and find my spot in the movement (Malabou 2010: 7).

[...] To my mind, the second major advantage of the concept of plasticity — discovered for the first time in the preface to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* — derives from the fact that this concept can signify both the achievement of presence and its deflagration, its emergence and its explosion. It is therefore able to situate itself perfectly in the in-between of metaphysics and its other, playing to perfection the part of a concept that is some sort of mediator or smuggler.

As Hegel says, “ only a philosophical exposition that rigidly excludes [*streng ausschlösse*] the usual way of relating the parts of a proposition could achieve the goal of plasticity [*dasjenige philosophische Exposition würde es erreichen plastisch zu sein*].” In the light of these comments, plasticity appears as a reconquering of presence, starting from the separation and juxtaposition of the proposition’s *membra disjectæ* — subject-copula-predicate. The idea that subjectivity can only constitute itself by *returning* to itself, never by announcing itself in the naïve movement of a birth without history, the idea of a *reformed*, re-formed subject, seemed to me to be the fullest expression of presence. At the same time, according to a more current meaning, anticipated in many respects by Hegel, plasticity signifies the disruption and deflagration of presence, the “explosive side of subjectivity.” Furthermore, the speculative proposition also proceeds from a prior dissolution of all form. Plasticity thus appeared to me from the outset as a *structure of transformation and destruction of presence and the present* (Malabou 2010: 7).”

POIESIS: poiein, ‘to pro-duce’ in the sense of bringing into being; passing from non-being into being.

POTENTIATION: ‘*ridicare la putere*’, the potentiation of an element to the potency of a set, or whole (Noica 2007: 28, 251; 1987: 307-375).

PROJECT: is the subjective seed of a nascent (becoming) object. An accomplished project should be at the same time entirely subjective and entirely objective, an indivisible animated (living) individual. In its origin, the project is completely subjective, original, and just in this spirit possible; in its character purely objective, physical and a moral necessity. The meaning of projects which we may also call fragments from the future differs from the sense of fragments of the past only in its orientation arrow, which for the latter is regressive and the former progressive. What is important and what counts is the skill to simultaneously realise, idealise, complement and present things instantly. [...] (Schlegel 1988: 107).

PERAS: ancient Greek, a limit that doesn’t limit; its meaning was a direct expression of a way of life that often involved peregrination and traversing the sea and that reflected the symbolic, magical and mythological meaning and force of the sea’s other shore. The word was initially used by Homer in the *Iliad* in relation to entities whose limits were outside human perception, such as the earth, the sea, the sky, or Gods, and referred thus to a limit that had to be imagined, presupposed and inferred (not deduced, as it was not the result of a causal logical deduction). Peras became a poetic index for distance and displacement, and a-conceptual sense given in and by the projection and plunge into the unknown of dis-place and di-stance; such a limit is an ontological, orientational, directional sense-function.

READY-MADE: art-historical term; referring to an industrially manufactured everyday object that was removed in an act of artistic decision making from its context and proclaimed a work of art. Marcel Duchamp is considered its ‘inventor’.

ROMANTICISM: “Romanticism is one of those ‘classifications that are bad enough as classifications, but that have nonetheless dominated entire nations and epochs’. Its meaning can be that of an aesthetic category that evokes “a flowing sentimentality or foggy nostalgia for the past”, but it may refer also to a historical category in opposition to classicism, as much as it could be a ‘theoretical romanticism’ that points at the inaugural moment of a theoretical project and speculative thinking, also known as the early Jena romanticism, at the end of the 18th century. “Romantic —especially in its English provenance is the landscape before one feels the sentiment of nature, or the epic grandeur of the past, or a mixture of both: ruins in wilderness. But romantic, as well, is the sensibility capable of responding to this spectacle, and of imagining, or better, recreating — *phantasieren* — what it evokes (Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe 1988:1).”

REPRESENTATION: In conventional sense in relation to art: depiction; to look like or resemble; to stand in for something or someone, to present a second time; to re-present; "to bring to mind by description," or "to symbolize, to be the embodiment of." From O. Fr. *representer* (12c.), from L. *repraesentare*, from *re-*, intensive prefix, + *praesentare* "to present," lit. "to place before". Nancy:

The *re-* of the word *representation* is not repetitive but intensive (to be more precise, the initially iterative value of the prefix *re-* in Latinate languages is often transformed into an intensive or, as one says, “frequentative” value). The Latin *representatio* is an accentuated presentation (highlighted in the direction of its line and/or in its address: destined for a specific gaze). The word also takes on its first meaning from its use in the theatre (where it has nothing to do with the number of performances [*représentations*] and where it is clearly distinguished from “rehearsal” [*répétition*] and from its use in the ancient judiciary — the production of a paper or document — or, as well, from the sense of “to make observable, to expose with insistence.” The Latin word translates the Greek *hypotyposis*, which designates a sketch, a scheme, the presentation of the lines of a figure in the largest possible sense without any suggestion of repetition or rehearsal, (in rhetoric, the word designates the *mis-en-scène* of people or things as if they were alive before us: once again, it is almost a question of the theatre ...).

The psychological and philosophical usage of the term arises here as well. At the intersection of the image and the idea, mental or intellectual representation is not foremost a copy of the thing but is rather the presentation of the object to the subject (to say this otherwise: it involves the constitution of the object as such, recalling that some of the greatest debates of modern thought are crystallized around this nucleus, those of empiricism and idealisms, those of scientific knowledge and sensory consciousness, of political representation and artistic presentation, etc.). Representation is a presence that is presented, exposed, or exhibited. It is not, therefore, presence pure and simple: it is precisely *not* the immediacy of the being-posed-there but is rather that which draws presence out of its immediacy insofar as it puts a value on presence *as* some presence or another. Representation, in other words, does not present something without exposing its value or sense — at least, the minimal value or sense of being there before a subject (Nancy 2005: 35-36; italics by the author).

SIGN: that which denotes something and can usually be demonstrated to be correctly or falsely identified or understood (Grabar 1992: xxiv).

SENSE (J.-L. Nancy): Nancy uses the entire semantic field of the word sense, referring at sense in all its five senses: meaning, direction, five senses, reason, and intuition. When Nancy speaks of sense he refers to something that takes place before the separation between the sensible and the intelligible. Sense takes place, it is in our sharing of simultaneous time-space and in being with one another. Sense is pre-linguistic and does not belong to the symbolic order; as transimmanence, it is that which is or opens worldly existence per se—it is always an excess (James 2006: 218); it is being and the existence of the word; an immediate way of making sense; an embodied sensory materiality; it is a sensible, touchable, intelligible immediacy — that “exceeds the phenomenon in the phenomenon itself (Nancy 1997: 17).”

SUBJECT: “the unmoved which is also self-moving (Aristotle)”; an autonomous being who has a consciousness of itself, an identity and the will or power to act freely; in modern sense: a subject is constituted by “the process of reflectively mediating itself with itself (Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*); “self-restoring sameness” or else as “reflection in otherness within itself”, that is thus subjected to subjection.

The subject is a body: “I’d like to show that the body, if there is a bodily something, is not substantial but a subject (Nancy 2008: 122).”

SUBJECTIVITY: ‘*Sub-iectivität eines Subjekts*’, the determining ground of representation, is the underlining system of transcendental and historical rules that constitutes the subject.

SUB-IECTUM: Latin, *hypokeimenon* in Old Greek, Aristotle; what lies underneath, “*das zu Grunde Liegende, das, was, als Grund vorliegt, nämlich für die Aussage darüber* (Heidegger, *Der Satz vom Grund*, in Böhler 2005: 15);” it names that which precedes (from before) and grounds any imaginary act, any representation, and which determines, from before any representation in general.

But Nancy also writes in *On the Soul*, that the impenetrable mass is “the absolute ground, which is at the ground and only there, grounded on its ground completely.” This mass or absolute ground was thought in a philosophical tradition as substance: “[...] the name is *substance*, that which is *under* something and no longer belongs to anything else. This is the definition of *substantia*, itself a term that translates Aristotle’s *hypokaimenon*: what’s under something and what, underneath a certain number of attributes or accidents, no longer belongs to anything other than itself (Nancy 2008: 123).”

SYMBOL: a term that connotes meanings that are often tied to a time, a place, or a category of patronage, even possibly a single individual, and that are not necessarily acceptable to all (Grabar 1992: xxiv).

TEKHNE / TECHNICS / ECOTECHNICAL: Greek, art, craft, or technical labour; Nancy:

“Creation is the the *techné* of bodies. Our world creates the great number of bodies, creates itself as the world of bodies [...]. Our world is the world of the “technical”, a world whose cosmos, nature, gods, entire system is, in its inner joints, exposed as “technical”: the world of the *ecotechnical*. The ecotechnical functions with technical apparatuses, to which our every part is connected. But what it *makes* are our bodies, which it brings into the world and links to the system, thereby creating our bodies as more visible, more proliferating, more polymorphic, more compressed, more “amassed” and “zoned” than ever before. Through the creation of bodies the ecotechnical has the *sense* that we vainly seek in the remains of the sky or the spirit (Nancy 2008: 89).

TRUTH: A. Badiou: “I call it an event. A truth appears in its newness because an eventful supplement interrupts a repetition.” It is linked, as an event, to the notion of the undecidable. It refers to something that has taken place, but that I can neither demonstrate nor calculate, but to which I shall be faithful. Nothing regulates its choice; it happens by chance and is a choice without a concept. Truth is infinite and incomplete — a completed truth is a fiction, a strong fiction, and a hypothesis (Badiou 2002).

UNA JOC: *Una Joc* is an anagram of Cojanu. In Romanian language *una* is an indefinite pronoun of gender, feminine and singular. As a pro-noun, *una*, stands for a noun or a noun phrase to which it may but doesn’t have to refer back. It is a pro-form. Examples: the phrase *una zic, alta fac* (I am saying something, but am doing something else) or *una peste alta* (one above the other, in total, in sum, in conclusion). *Joc* is a noun, in singular form here, meaning game. *Una Joc* may mean ‘one/a game.

VELUM: technical term in literary theory referring to specific types of stories used to represent truth in the macrobian-platonic paradigm.

WEIMARER KLASSIK: literary period, from 1786-1805, in German literature referring to the works of Goethe, Schiller, Herder, Wieland, the four writers who were writing and living in Jena and Weimar at that time, but who were not part of the Early Jena Romanticism group (Fichte, Schelling, Schleiermacher, F. Schlegel, A. W. Schlegel, Tieck, Novalis).

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