



What Images Do

Jan Bäcklund
Henrik Oxvig
Michael Renner
Martin Søberg
(eds.)



Aarhus University Press

Iridescence of Perception: A-Signification Through Preemptive Desecration of the Visual *Urzustand*

Marc Boumeester

»There is no Life or Death
Only activity
And in the absolute
Is no declivity.
There is no Love or Lust
Only propensity
Who would possess
Is a nonentity.
There is no First or Last
Only equality
And who would rule
Joins the majority.
There is no Space or Time
Only intensity,
And tame things
Have no immensity.«¹
Mina Loy

1 Mina Loy, »There is no Life or Death,« in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, ed. Roger L. Conover (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), 3.

Images are often perceived as stationary entities, which derive most of their persuasive powers from some system of representation. This can be taken literally, when an image attempts to represent something, or it can be figurative, when the meaning of the work lies not in representation, but in the mere perception of it. So far no surprises. Yet there is a third system operational that may be overshadowing the others. This system rests on the interchange between perception and being perceived, in which the role of will or desire has a pivotal function. Unlike the dominant view on the workings of will as a function of the developed mind, I am ready to accept the possibility that the systems of desire are far more complex and find their stratifications in the realms of all types of (non-)organic matter. This paper will militate against the mono-directional view on the image

as a fixed identity that could be perceived outside its own territory, that is, the territory it creates itself and that is created by the spectator, whether or not this is seen as a function – in a mathematical sense – of the work of art. The ambition is to cast a degree of reasonable doubt over the anthropocentric hegemony on desire, and to start unpeeling the many systems of representation that cloak the discussion on the consequences of the image. We need to come to a sign that is significant, yet does not signify anything: the a-signifying sign.

Double Articulation

The interplay between the observer and the image is a double bind. Both the observed and the observer operate on several layers. According to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, each layer becomes a stratum which has another layer as its substratum, and vice versa. In between lies the assemblage, the interstratum; as an overarching system, it becomes the metastratum, the plane of consistency that holds everything together. Each stratum has a double articulation, the first going from form to substance, and the second from substance to form. But this is not to be seen as a simple difference between substance and form. As Deleuze and Guattari explain:

»The first articulation chooses or deducts, from unstable particle-flows, metastable molecular or quasi-molecular units (*substances*) upon which it imposes a statistical order of connections and successions (*forms*). The second articulation establishes functional, compact, stable structures (*forms*), and constructs the molar compounds in which these structures are simultaneously actualized (*substances*).«²

2 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 40–41.

Art works operate because of this double bind. In itself the work forms the interstratum, the assemblage of creator, substance, form, spectator, meaning,³ value etc. Yet it is complicated if not impossible to prevent the interstratum from becoming a metastratum, meaning that this assemblage is encapsulated and detached from its original coordinates, to become part of a ritual. If the work of art is a pure ritual (meaning a formal transition from substance to form, the second articulation), then its becoming a metastratum is a »traditional« ritual (meaning a ceremonial transition from this form into a substance of a different order, a false first articulation). The »traditional« ritual substantiates form in another dominion. Most systems of commodification rest on the »traditional« ritual: meaning and value are generated in a completely different field from where this process originated. These codifications cause false articulations of the first order. Deleuze and Guattari add:

3 I have objections to meaning seen as the »significator« of an event; an event does not have to contain a narrative or sense making to be significant.

»Forms imply a code, modes of coding and decoding. Substances as formed matters refer to territorialities and degrees of territorialization and deterritorialization. But each articulation has a code and a territoriality; therefore each possesses both form and substance.«⁴

4 Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 41.

The task is therefore simple: we need to find or create a recursive bond between observer and observed that is resistant to codification, an interplay that does not draw on or cause semiotic chains and sense making. This confrontation should be free of any property-led values and gain its momentum purely from the experience itself. This is a rather difficult task, since signification, codification and semiotics are not only part of how we are trained to perceive, but this mode of training is also the basis of learning itself. In other words: the way we perceive is not only learned, but also part of the way we learn.

In order to circumvent some of these problems, it could be useful to abandon an anthropocentric point of departure and shift the center of the negotiations of the spectator with the image towards the aspirations and drives of the image. The question should be: What does the image do? rather than: What does the spectator do? Donna Haraway already proposed a system of »Naturecultures,«⁵ a significant conceptual instrument with which to revise structural oppositions such as body-mind and nature-culture, and ultimately the systematic of this type of dualistic thinking. This calls for a shift in perspective on a single *modus operandi* to a multitude of *modi communicationem*, the shift from an extensive hierarchy to an ontological flat intensive thinking. Or, as Brian Massumi would have it: »Relations of exteriority guarantee that assemblages may be taken apart while at the same time allowing that the interactions between parts may result in a true synthesis.«⁶

5 Naturecultures is a term coined by Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People and Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003).

6 Brian Massumi, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (London: Continuum, 2002), 11.

To be able to lift this to an operational level, we need to de-territorialize the domains of substance and form altogether and retreat to the middle ground. The complexity of the world cannot be reduced to macro- or microsystems, or models; therefore we need to think in terms of a-signification and non-representation. In a complex world, there is no relevant linearity; learning can therefore only be useful in a nonlinear process of trial and error. In pedagogical terms this can be made operational through the use of heuristics and non-linear progress. In nonlinear processes, there cannot be a single relevant outcome: the outcome can only be established in hindsight, never as a result of a predefined procedure. This is also known as the principle of multiple optima; not many roads lead to Rome, but one road leads to many Romes. As is evident, all of these principles are leading to a non-petrifying perspective on perception, meaning that the mere assumption of a fixed existence of an external entity – without taking into account the perception of it – is flawed and leads to misperception. Or, as Deleuze and Guattari would have it: »The action of decoded flows is not enough, however, to cause the new break to traverse and transform the socius – not enough, that is, to induce the birth of capitalism.«⁷

7 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (New York: Viking Press, 1977), 222.

What to do? Can we impose an act to prevent all other acts occurring? Following its own logic, such an approach would probably fail miserably. Instead we need to come to the pure ritual, as it is purely a ritual. That which can become a ritual, because it is only a ritual, meaning that there

is not more than the act itself; there is no significance or transcendental negotiation expected.

Demoralization

Perhaps if it is not possible to circumvent these problems, we should instead »fly right through them.« This would entail that we don't attack the system of codification itself – which would only lead to the formation of similar system – but instead feed the system with other (or »wrong«) information. We could thus hope that the system will ultimately destroy itself. As it is evident that the main goal of energy is to find ways to destroy itself, we can make use of that. This is explicitly not an attempt to »psychologize« the problem; any terms and systems stemming from psychology used here are treated as concepts, not as methods. In fact, by »flying right through the problem,« this problem is being de-psychologized.

My suggestion would be to use »demoralization« as an apparatus. Within this context I use »demoralization« to express a notion of *non-sense making*, an apparatus to distract and destroy our habits of signifying through signification. It is a very crude instrument, as it addresses the metastrata by means of intervening in the interstrata. Yet it would be very effective and justifiable, if not necessary in times of oppression, as the dominating view on perception rests on the modus of representation and petrification of images. This demoralization could manifest itself as a *forced willingness* to perceive without any social, moral or psychological coding. There are two instruments that could serve this process of demoralization: *Oscillating assemblages* and *Urzustand*, which will be introduced in the next paragraphs.

To start with the opposite of demoralization, we could look at a mode of preemptive loving that would prevent any actual desecration of the image on the basis of the actual exposure to that image, because of a much stronger bond between the observer and the actuality of its virtual *pre-presentative*. For example, the first encounter with Rembrandt's painting *The Night Watch* can never be an empty one, as the image readily exists in the minds of those who are about to see it. The reality of the exposure will never be less than the anticipation suggests, as the reality of the image of the reality – and the participation in the process of imaging this image – will only add to the experience. It will never subtract, because of the magnitude of the event. In other words, the image of *The Night Watch* before seeing it in real life (its *pre-presentative*) is only completed, not lessened, by the actual experience, as we are all part of the image making of that particular painting. In an extrapolation of this process, we could claim that no image has no *pre-presentative*, because it is already embedded in many systems of codification.

In order to circumvent this process, we need to find modes of de-holification and pre-debunking in order to free the image from its »place« in the networks of coding. This is not the same thing as trying to convert layers of connotation or alter associations. I classify these systems that operate on sense making as useless in this task, as I will only succeed if I remain on the plane of direct perception. As argued, any system that

acknowledges representation as elementary for the significance of an image is part of the problem itself. What I will be looking for is a preemptive desecration of sense making or signification. I drew inspiration from Mina Loy's *Feminist Manifesto* of 1914, in which she proposed overcoming the problem of engendered subjection by the willing and collective removal of what she regarded as the main instrument of »social commodification« of women. She writes:

»The fictitious value of woman as identified with her physical purity—is too easy to stand by—rendering her lethargic in the acquisition of intrinsic merits of character by which she could obtain a concrete value—therefore, the first self-enforced law for the female sex, as a protection against the man made bogey of virtue—which is the principal instrument of her subjection, would be the unconditional surgical destruction of virginity throughout the female population at puberty—.«⁸

8 Mina Loy, »Feminist Manifesto 1914,« in *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, ed. Roger L. Conover (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), 154–55.

However strange the analogy might seem, it is my view that Loy's attempt to address the desecration of the symbolic order of virginity as a pure ritual, the formal transition from substance to form, the second articulation, in order to prevent the ongoing embodiment of a »traditional« ritual, is a false first articulation. Her proposal would only work if there were not a single shred of signification attached to it, because then obviously it would become just another chapter in the same symbolic history. The act should be no more than the act itself, without any links to the »outside« world (symbolic, connotative, sense-making in general), and for that matter the act taking place would be irrelevant in its taking place. After all, the representative function of the act would only be effective if the act itself were destroyed in the process, otherwise it would not be able to escape its own representational order.

On Representation

»Representation no longer exists; there's only action—theoretical action and practical action which serve as relays and form networks.«⁹

Gilles Deleuze

9 Deleuze from transcript of a conversation in 1972 between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, »Intellectuals and Power,« in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 206–7.

I do not »believe« in representation, yet I have to deal with it. This causes three effects: a systemic collision, a layered distancing from the subject matter and a statement of protocol. I shall start with the last, which is the shortest and chronologically most convenient to address. We encounter an almost religious field of convictions when addressing matters of representation, in which the sometimes sharply defined semantic and semiotic constructs occupy vast stretches of conceptual terrain. Seemingly, the topic is only approachable in schematic terms of investigation, in which it is difficult to avoid becoming arrested in some type of structuralism. Moreover, some of these concepts are so anchored in the respective disciplines

that deal with representation that they survive changing conditions rather well; if the context does not fit the schema, then we would rather change the interpretation of the context than the schema itself. Allowing for temporal or geographical differentiation is after all nothing more than a post-structuralism. Especially in the arts, these temporal shifts and changing localities can have a significant impact, probably more than in any type of production. Therefore, the boundaries between figure and ground, between subject and context, are probably most translucent and should not be ignored, even when one denounces the principle existence of modes

10 Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968).

11 Jacques Rancière, *The Future of the Image* (London: Verso, 2007), 130–38.

of representation. Barthes' denotations and connotations¹⁰ and Rancière's speculative hyperbole of the un-representable¹¹ make us talk about fashion as modes of transformation, not as modes of transfiguration or deformation, and force us to discuss a painting in its *gestalt value* or lure us to pursue fundamental deep readings of its composition and constructions.

To put it very bluntly: for me a painting is no more than oil on canvas, and whatever anyone reads in that is not my concern. The only thing I am interested in is seeing what this painting does, how it provokes transfer of values or allows for affective relations. And this goes for all the media: my sole interest is in their affective capacities, rather than their inherent properties or their respective place in any taxonomy or ontological setting. Whether this position is sustainable is yet to be seen. The only position I can take is that of the embedded outsider, whose target is to steer the discourse as much as possible in the direction of capacities over properties, and away from the semiotic orders.

A second problem with representation is caused by a systemic collision, which is obviously closely related to the previous difficulty. How can one find a common language to discuss two so dramatically and fundamentally oppositional positions? It is certainly not a matter of gradual sliding of terms and positions, as this does not concern two ends in a dialectic; moreover both positions reside in a completely different realm. It is for this reason that I earlier drew the comparison with religion, as it is obvious that renouncing the existence of a deity instantly blocks all the options for discussing which concept of a god would be most accurate or what form of devotion is most appropriate. Slavoj Žižek claims that a state of

12 Slavoj Žižek, *The Perverts Guide to Ideology*, directed by Sophie Fiennes (New York: Zeitgeist Films, 2013). »[T]he only way really to be an atheist is through Christianity. Christianity is much more atheist than the usual atheism, which can claim there is no God and so on, but nonetheless it retains a certain trust into the ›Big Other‹. This ›Big Other‹ can be called natural necessity, evolution, or whatever. We humans are nonetheless reduced to a position within the harmonious whole of evolution, whatever, but the difficult thing to accept is again that there is no ›Big Other‹. No point of reference which guarantees meaning.«

true atheism can only be reached through stages of true religion, and probably the same goes for the belief in representation or representational thinking in general.¹² In that case I must investigate whether I have ever been a representation thinker and what the definition of that would entail. And in any case, it would be up to me to adapt the lingo of the »opposition« in order make the discussion reverse compatible. On the other hand, there is the issue of representation as a concept itself, the dilemma of the reversal of *belonging to*. A representation can be seen as »something that belongs to something else,« and this is not to be mistaken for »something that constitutes something else.« It is a one-sided synecdoche, the *pars pro toto* without the *totum pro parte*. This

aversion to representation is not just informed by the inclination to step away from anthropocentrism in the occupation of and dominance over desire in the relationship between human and matter. It also refers to a much deeper rooted belief that we have entered a new phase that describes future modes of existence much more adequately. This belief is based on the hope that we are able to re-adjust the narrowing effects of modernity and re-calibrate the over-widening effects of post-modernity. Philosopher John D. Caputo argues that it is the »overgrown faculty of categorization« that philosophy calls modernity.¹³

13 John D. Caputo, *Truth: Philosophy in Transit* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), 42.

Modernism thinks in terms of unified systems in which everything has its place and its purpose; postmodernism views the world as a web, an entanglement of forces in which there is no distinction between beginnings and endings, cause and effect and hierarchy of events. Jean-François Lyotard assigned to postmodernism an »incredulity toward meta-narratives.«¹⁴ It is essential to take the bold position of isolating representation as a closed discourse to be avoided, including its bifurcations such as Identity, Narrative and Culture (INC). In the next paragraphs there are two suggestions I would like to make to contribute to the understanding of the a-signifying sign: *Oscillating hylomorphism* and *Urzustand*, both instruments which can help us nearer to the *meaningful image without meaning*, the a-signifying sign.

14 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1984), 23–25.

Oscillating Hylomorphism

The predominant view on learning is based on linear progress, need for growth and the logic of causality. We could discard the notion of linear causality and begin with Deleuze's philosophy of *assemblage*, which rests on the idea that there is no fixed and steady ontology for the environment. Formations need to be seen as assemblages, which form part of different assemblages and so forth. For Deleuze and Guattari a body can be human, non-human, organic or inorganic, a social construction or a virtuality, and this body has no meaning or veracity before its existence through external networks, connections and affects. In other words, according to Deleuze: »The minimum real unit is not the word, the idea, the concept or the signifier, but the *assemblage*.«¹⁵

15 »The utterance is the product of an assemblage—which is always collective, which brings into play within us and outside us populations, multiplicities, territories, becomings, affects, events.« Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 51. »What is an assemblage? It is a multiplicity which is made up of heterogeneous terms and which establishes liaisons, relations between them, across ages, sexes and reigns—different natures. Thus the assemblage's only unity is that of a co-functioning: it is a symbiosis, a ›sympathy.‹ It is never filiations which are important, but alliances, alloys; these are not successions, lines of descent, but contagions, epidemics, the wind.« Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 69.

Following this argument, we could say that learning has to be caused by direct experience, allowing for a multitude of outcomes, and not work towards a predefined result. The search for the desire of the medium offers a conceptual framework for the discussion of new modes of learning human-nonhuman interactions and processes, including the workings of these very processes. Obviously this type of learning knows many practical obstacles, yet I have proven that under the right conditions it is possible to facilitate this type of learning within a traditional learning framework, such as a university or art school. This type of learning is called *pedagogy of the senses*. Inna Semetsky draws on Brian Massumi when she explains this concept:

16 Inna Semetsky, »Deleuze as a Philosopher of Education: Affective Knowledge/Effective Learning,« *The European Legacy* 14, no. 4 (2009): 443–56.

»For Deleuze, knowledge is irreducible to a static body of facts but constitutes a dynamic process of inquiry as an experimental and practical art embedded in experience. Thus experience is not confined to a personal Cogito of a Cartesian subject but represents an experiment with the environing world: we can, and should, learn from experience. Experience is that quasi-objective milieu which provides us with the capacity to affect and to be affected; it is a-subjective and pre-personal.«¹⁶

A perception of will is said to be a function only of the developed mind. Yet to accept a fundamental distinction between mankind and the complexity of the world is simply too abstract. This needs not be seen as something that can be expressed in a series of individual cases. Population thinking deals with tendencies that act over variable senses of temporality, meaning that it is simply wrong to isolate the human species as the center point of all negotiations with its milieu, as is the case in all human exceptionalism. This implies that even humanity's failure to create an environment which provides the necessary resources in a sustainable and non-disruptive way – as we have been witnessing ever since the industrial revolution – can be seen as a tendency which could typify humanity at best.

The search for the desire of the medium is not a quest with an expected outcome, as obviously it can't be proven that the medium has a will or a desire in the sense that one would recognize. Yet it is my goal to at least cast a degree of reasonable doubt over the anthropocentric hegemony over desire, as we simply cannot see beyond our own shadow. Central to my

17 Hylomorphism is a philosophic argument developed by Aristotle, in which he distinguishes between soul and body in the same way as between form and matter. Aristotle regards a soul as being that which makes a living thing alive, consequently assuming that there would be a distinction between body and soul (the dichotomy of mankind).

argument is the belief that the hylomorphic¹⁷ dominance over the discourse on the bond between the creator (artist or designer) and the created can only be overcome when the creator is willing to regard her- or himself as being on the same ontological plane as the matter/medium she or he is dealing with. This bond needs to be created and in order to give room to a new interpretation of how this is actually done, the question needs to be asked over and over again: What does the medium want?

Despite its tainted connotation, I use the word *hylomorphism* deliberately to indicate the supposed supremacy of the artist and spectator over the medium, the medium being portrayed as the primordial matter in which the artist seeks and frees a form, to »bring this matter to life.« As already indicated, this process can counter or support the desires and drives of the medium itself, so the actual outcome of this negotiation does not reflect the process at all. For this reason, I would like to propose a re-definition of hylomorphism that is much closer to its meaning in computer science, where it exists as a recursive function consisting of an anamorphism (unfolding outcomes without a concept) and a catamorphism (folding outcomes into a concept). If we were to cast the previous notions into this oscillating reaction, then we would equally »voice« the influence of systemic, intrinsic and artistic desires without distributing them according to some imaginary rule. The desire of the medium is best seen through

the lens of an oscillating reaction in which systemic and intrinsic needs are negotiating with the demands and drives of the artist; the outcome is a contingent state without a single optimum. The smallest affective relation is determined by the bandwidth that exists between the strongest and the weakest capacity of a medium to partake in any form of communication. The artist or designer generates a saturated field, a state of meta-medium, and it is the medium that enables these phases of virtuality to become actualized; the medium-specific smallest affective relation determines the availability and readiness of the medium to interact with the artist or designer. This is not limited to tangible media. Unstable media have become part of reality, despite or perhaps because of their volatile nature. Media theorist Anna Munster elaborates on Deleuze's concept of the *superfold* to unlock the potential of digital media as a valued part of reality, without the need to translate or signify their position in a different ontological constellation. In this process of *superfolding*, both the desires of the human as well as those of the medium have an equal part.¹⁸

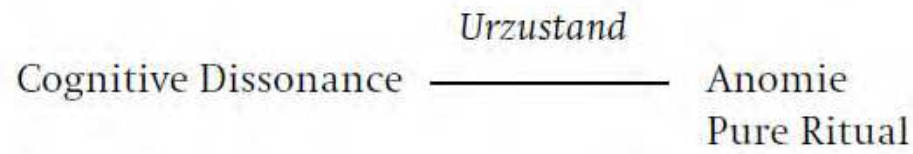
18 Munster explains why the material values of the digital media do not have to be measured against those of the non-digital: »By understanding digital code as part of this broader movement of *superfolding* we do not need to assign a position of ontological primacy to information nor do we need to draw the conclusion that life is now generated as mere simulations or that our relation to the real and all that this encompasses – bodies, others, politics – has imploded. Digital life and culture are as real as any other kind.« Anna Munster, *Materializing New Media: Embodiment in Information Aesthetics* (Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2005), 34.

Urzustand

In order to dislodge the dominating paradigm in the relation between the image and its observer further, we need to insert an obstruction. One option is the formation of a system of perceptual-cognitive axis. Following Leon Festinger in his concept of *cognitive dissonance* and putting it on one side of an axis, and taking Émile Durkheim's notion of *anomie* on the other end, we could start a fluid classification of the modes of perception that could govern our cognitive relation with the image. On the one hand, we would see the psychological inability to accept new information as being disruptive for our preexisting understanding of a given situation (which we could call the unwilling conservative operation). On the other hand, we would see the inability of an individual to comply with social codes, due to a social derangement or an »insatiable will« (which we could call the unwilling disruptive operation). This is not an attempt to psychologize the problem; obviously that would steer away from direct perception. Rather, it is an attempt to find an entrance in the »perceptual-cognitive contraption« in order to feed it with the »wrong« kind of information, leading to its own destruction.

With the German word *Urzustand* I refer to a reference that is represented, the baseline of a semiotic chain. Many such chains exist because of the assumption of the existence of an *Urzustand*, but in many cases this state does not exist: it is an »empty« representation. To exemplify this, I would like to draw an analogy with the role of the air stewardess and her relation to professional mimicking. The stewardess mimics the perfect gentle human and she incorporates at least five stereotypical roles of women: the mother, the mistress, the wife, the saint and the daughter. A system of representation does not allow for the simultaneous existence of all these roles – it has to either choose or shift, but it cannot represent all of them

at the same time. There is no »*Urzustand* of stewardess,« so it is only by mimicking that she can be reached. This mimicking is the perfect pure ritual. Whenever there is an *Urzustand* then there cannot be a pure ritual and vice versa. This is not a gliding scale but a binary opposition. Now we can construct a scheme:



In this field, we—the spectators—are pushed by our drives, our desires, to slide towards either the unwilling conservative or the unwilling disruptive position when confronted by either a system that includes an *Urzustand* or a pure ritual. Desire as it is used here is a synonym for drive, force or even agency itself. Desire is itself a product of urgency, which demands an »unstop-ability« that is not connected to any ethical, moral or political system of evaluation or repression. Desire, in all its expressions, does provoke: its display of urgency without boundary is both alarming and exciting. Desire has no *Urzustand*; if it referred to something (which it doesn't), then it would be something non-existing. Its connotation of addressing even the most prosaic levels of unconscious urging provide an enticing struggle between restraint and indulgent submission that inspires works of art not only directly but also through the modes in which these creations operate. Deleuze and Guattari elaborate on the relation between assemblage and desire:

»There isn't a desire for power; it is power itself that is desire. Not a desire-lack, but desire as a plenitude, exercise, and functioning, even in the most subaltern of workers. Being an assemblage [*agencement*], desire is precisely one with the gears and the components of the machine, one with the power of the machine. And the desire that someone has for power is only his fascination with these gears, his desire to make certain of these gears go into operation, to be himself one of these gears—or, for want of anything better, to be the material treated by these gears, a material that is a gear in its own way.«¹⁹

In my reading, a desire of plenitude is produced continuously and therefore has no predetermined magnitude, as opposed to the Lacanian notion of a desire of lack in which the desire arrives as the surplus produced by the articulation of need in demand, suggesting that either or both terms are quantifiable.²⁰ Moreover, the definition of a desire of lack hinges on a type of correlational anthropocentrism that is unhelpful, as it centralizes a difference between conscious and unconscious drives. French philosopher Gilbert Simondon already suggested that we should not think in terms of information transfer, but rather in terms of »transduction.«

19 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1986), 56.

20 For Lacan, »desire is neither the appetite for satisfaction nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second.« Jacques Lacan, »The Signification of the Phallus,« in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), 580.

With every step of the process of communication both sender and receiver change because of the same transfer. The mere fact that communication has been started is perhaps even more important than the exact nature of the message. Communication needs to be seen as a result, not as a cause. What we can learn of this scheme is that the modes of perception – all driven by desire – can be either accepting or rejecting, regardless of the nature of the confrontation (*Urzustand* or pure ritual), yet very much depending on the bigger assemblage the spectator moves in. The nature of the work of art and its reception operate on entirely different planes, in which the medium itself operates independently.

Conclusion

The reign of a new hylomorphism – an oscillating system of anamorphisms and catamorphisms – enables the artist and spectator alternately to enter a flat ontology in which the drives of the medium are equal to its human contributor. If we could »sabotage« the system of representation by confronting the spectator with the absence of an *Urzustand*, it would be possible to disrupt the perceptive-cognitive system in such a way that a desire of plenitude would emerge. This pre-emptive desecration of the representational system (similar to what Mina Loy proposed) would open the way to the formation of the pure ritual. It is a modus of »unlearning,« recognizing that the absence of an *Urzustand* in many semiotic chains contributes to development of a pedagogy of the senses. In this case the pure ritual would be expressed in a non-hierarchical way – involving the desire of the medium on an equal footing, causing an »iridescence of perception.« After all, under these conditions, no one could claim ever to experience the same thing more than once, let alone get an identical experience from different perspectives. All images are *bistable* by nature, and this insight is vital for the understanding of the image that only addresses on the basis of what it does, not on what it is: the a-signifying sign.