

Imaging Imagery

On the Visuality of Iconic Criticism and the Early Media of Visual Studies in Their Current Meaning

Die Frage nach dem Status des Bildes verweist auf grundlegende Spannungsfelder, in denen ein neuer Streit um das Bild zu entstehen scheint. So herrscht Dissens zwischen denjenigen oftmals kunsthistorischen Positionen, die in einem Plädoyer für „ikonische Differenz“ und „Aus-Rahmung“ bzw. „Rahmenwechsel“ konvergieren, und denjenigen Stellungnahmen, die den „iconic turn“ als radikalen Paradigmenwechsel deuten und diesen zu einem grundlegenden Bruch mit dem Vorherigen stilisieren. Zur Vermittlung wird ein Rückblick auf die Begründung der Kunstgeschichte als Wissenschaft vom Bild im 19. Jahrhundert vorgeschlagen: damals war die Auseinandersetzung mit neuen Medien ebenso konstitutiv wie die intensive Erforschung des vergleichenden Sehens. Hervorzuheben ist insbesondere, dass von Anfang an der Vergleich zwischen Kunstwerken ebenso eine vergleichende Bildkritik wie Medienkritik ihrer Reproduktionen implizierte, infolgedessen aufschlussreiche Auslotungen im Spannungsfeld von Medialität und Bildlichkeit erfolgten. Vor diesem Hintergrund erweist und beweist sich das vergleichende Sehen als Idealinstrument (kunst)kritischer Bildreflexion. Es fördert und fordert (anschauliches) Denken produktiver Differenzen und bestätigt damit das bildwissenschaftliche Credo von heute: es ist besser historisch im Bild zu bleiben als zeitgeistbedingt aus allen Rahmen zu fallen!

1. Iconic Worlds and current models

The image has become a *cultural paradigm*. In the mid-1990s, this diagnosis introduced the 'pictorial' (Mitchell 1992, 89–94) or 'iconic turn' (Boehm 1994, esp. 13ff), and it has since become the credo of visual studies [*Bildwissenschaft*]. Seen from an art historical perspective, the thesis of an 'age of the image' (Boehm 1994, 35) is a call to focus on the *question of the image* with more sharpened premises. This points to an intensifying effect of images, both in real and ideal terms, that since the nineteenth century, and even more so today, has resulted in a shift from the text to the image. The spread of computer-generated images especially has led to an all-embracing *imagining of the world*, with enormous consequences for the generation and consumption of and reflection on images. Three aspects implicit in the thesis of the 'image as model' (Bredekamp 1997) are significant for the following examples: an increasing dissemination of visual media and media images in scholarship, daily life and culture; their constitutive influence on the formation of opinion and meaning worldwide today; and their multilateral effect on the models and ideals of (post-)modern cultural criticism.

Under the title *Exit_Stepping Out Of The Picture* (fig. 1) the Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe opened an exhibition in January 2005 that followed up on an earlier show, *Iconoclash*,¹ which placed greater emphasis on cultural history, and demonstrated the iconoclastic stepping out of the picture on the basis of works of art since 1960.² This program is symptomatic of a series of eschatological visions against whose backdrop influential portrayals of modern art proclaim diverse ruptures – from the *end of art* and the *end of the image* to the *end of art history*. *Immaterial images*, *non-images*, *Techno Aesthetics* and *Media Art* are characteristic neologisms in this context that (hope to) imply in their supposed opposition to the past a breakthrough of a new manifestation of the visual.

Another topos has become part of our daily vocabulary in the phrase 'flood of images', as the managing editor of the journal *View*, founded in 2005, declared in the first issue (fig. 2): 'We all think, fantasise and remember in images. . . . Since the bipeds emerged in the darkness of the prehistoric dawn, images have been the basis of their communication. The earliest ones were carved into the walls of caves in the stone age.' In another section the writer emphasised the special circumstances today: 'In the digital age there is a flood of images like never before. Every day four to five thousand images from all over the world cross the monitors of our editorial staff.'³ The theory of 'trans-aesthetics' should also be mentioned in this context: against the backdrop of a broad flood of images and in the spirit of a symptomatic ten-

1 <http://www.iconoclash.de/> (accessed 19 September 2006).

2 [http://on1.zkm.de/zkm/stories/storyReader\\$4473](http://on1.zkm.de/zkm/stories/storyReader$4473) (accessed 19 September 2006).

3 Tom Jacobi, 2005, editorial in *View: Die Bilder des Monats* 10: 5; see also <http://view.stern.de/> (accessed 19 September 2006).

4 See especially Baudrillard 1989 and the critical analysis Dobbe 1994.

5 On this, see an interview with Baudrillard by Aude Lancelin in *Le nouvel observateur*, 19–25 June 2003, in which Baudrillard accuses Matrix of having confused simulation and ('classical') illusion.

6 On this, see also Kittler 2002, 34.

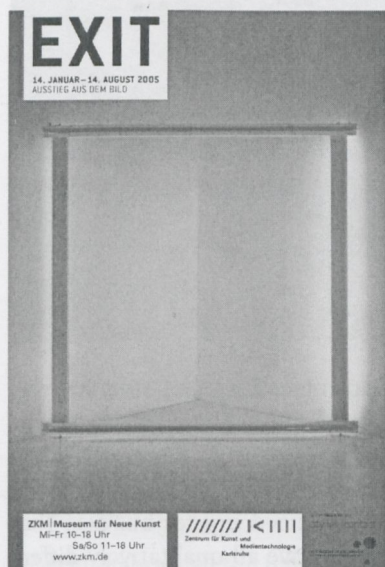


fig. 1 EXIT_Ausstieg aus dem Bild
Exhibition poster, Center for Art
And Media Karlsruhe
(c) 2006, ProLitteris, Zürich



fig. 2 View: Die Bilder des Monats
Cover, no. 10/2005

dency for things to break down, it postulates the disappearance of aesthetic boundaries that mark differences.⁴ Both these topoi call for taking seriously the *question of the image* even outside the sphere of art, with a view to the pictorial forms of everyday culture.

Another motif has spread in the way of Baudrillard's theory of simulation: the thesis of an implosion of appearance and reality (Baudrillard 1987, 27). Famously, the *Matrix* trilogy of films plays with this and cites at the very beginning the book 'Simulacra and Simulation' – in which, significantly, the hacker Neo has hidden his source code (fig. 3). The real is destroyed; the illusion of the real dominates under the direction of artificial intelligence, according to the technicistically determined scenario of the 'ontological horror film',⁵ in analogy to Baudrillard but also to Vilém Flusser, Florian Rötzer and Norbert Bolz. What these authors have in common is that they respond to an increasing visualisation with a (radically) constructivist theory of media that hypostatizes both an 'end of fiction' (Rötzer 1991a, 40) and the special status of digital images.⁶ In radical form this rupture asserts that the digital image is 'no longer an image of perception but an alphanumeric file, an unspecified code' (Reck 2001, 31).

These three examples present widespread views of the current status of the image. They all postulate an imagery that has no *Vorbild* ['model' or 'precursor' but literally 'pre-image'—*Trans.*] and the paradoxical construction of a flood of images with no images that decouples the 'new' images from



fig. 3 *Matrix, Part 1. Screenshots*

reality and history at the same time. They postulate, first, that older art was purely reproductive and, second, that the flood of reality by new artefacts, if not its complete substitution by them, no longer recognises a dialectical relationship between the image and the thing depicted. They assert not only a separation of artistically and technically produced images but also that digital images are quantitatively but also and above all qualitatively different. The supposed end of traditional concepts of the image proves to be an indicator of a repeatedly hypostatized 'confusion of perception' (Weibel 1993, 77) in the sense of an 'uncertainty about the relationships of perception caused by artificial worlds' (Rötzer 1991a, 40) and of an uncertainty about the 'perception of reality' (Franke 1991, 291). These premise should be questioned and examined if not called into question altogether.

2. The Reality and Illusion of the Image in the Context of Media Art

Who are you? – The artist Kirsten Geisler chose this question as the title of a mixed-media installation from 1996 (fig. 4).⁷ The work of art is part of a series of 'virtual beauties' and shows two large portraits of a woman against a blue background. The images measure 1.2 x 1.6 metres and are framed in light-brown wood frames and are hung in parallel at the same height. Other than the two portraits, none of the other elements of the installation are visible; they are presented as rear projections.

The two figures depicted resemble each other and seem to point to the same model. The two heads are placed, bust-like, on the pedestal of her bare shoulders – in the image on the right, however, the forms and contours appear to be less distinct. The respective gazes, both frontal, aimed directly at the viewer, are penetrating and yet relatively indifferent, which seems to distract from differences in the colour of the eyes and skin, the shape of the

7 On this, see Geisler 2000 and Schwarz 1997, 114–115; for information on the programming, realisation, software and hardware of the work, see <http://on1.zkm.de/zkm/werke/Whoareyou> (accessed 19 September 2006).

8 The movement can be seen at the artist's Web site: <http://www.kirstengeisler.com/> (accessed 19 September 2006).

9 The two depictions were taken from a presentation by the artist, but the colours differ from those of the installation; see the CD-ROM in Geisler 2000.



fig. 4 Kirsten Geisler, *Who Are You?* (1996)

faces and above all the hair of these two 'beauties'. Nevertheless, it is impossible to overlook the differences as soon as the figures start moving and alternate between frontal and profile views in a slow rhythm (fig. 5).⁸ First facing each other and then the viewer, now and then they pose the question of the title: Who are you?

As striking as the differences become in the course of seeing them comparatively, they do not come out in favour of one depiction or the other. Rather, they encourage the viewer to gaze back and forth continuously like a pendulum, revealing deviations and commonalities. It creates an impression of similarity in difference, as if the two depictions were fusing into one image, only to become all the more sharply different and to solve the riddle of the two projections: on the left we see a real representation and on the right a computer-generated figure (fig. 6).⁹ Even if the artificiality of the latter, as in other works by Geisler, challenges overestimations and mystifications of

fig. 5 Kirsten Geisler, *Who Are You?* (1996)



fig. 6 Kirsten Geisler, *Who Are You?* (1996)

the technological simulation, both depictions are equally fascinating—when seen together. The ‘more successful’ depiction does not triumph over the ‘less realistic’ one; rather, the dialogue between the two triumphs. In this state of *distinguishing comparability*, terms like ‘real’ and ‘fictive’ or ‘model’ and ‘likeness’ become unstable. We see two *virtual realities* at once, whereby the confusion between the real and the virtual implicit in that term is sharpened by adding the viewer as a reality outside the image.

Geisler’s installation is paradigmatic of the question of the image today. The debate over the image outlined above – between ‘old’ and ‘new’, between ‘analogue’ and digital’ images – seems to be staged as an artistic dialogue in this double projection. The video image as a ‘real portrait of a woman’ is confronted with its ‘virtual’ counterpart (Lehmann 2006), and border zones in the field of tension between illusion and simulation emerge in the process. The referentiality between image and model drives the aesthetic oscillation. By refuting the possibility of an implosion of reality and fiction, the boundaries between being and illusion are not torn apart but made more pointed.

The dialogue between the two images confirms that even ‘digital media have to remain analogue *aesthetically* [sic] along their surfaces’ (Schröter 2004, 25). As an intertextual pictorial strategy, the juxtaposition that stimulates comparison accentuates the qualities of each depiction that are specific to its medium and presents them as elements constitutive of the image, frames them and hangs them on the wall. One cannot really speak of a loss.

Rather, the image in its doubling experiences a striking confirmation: the two projections escape the topos of a simple multiplication and demand its pictorial reality by making the fundamental difference between image and likeness visible. The oft-asserted theses that a 'bit [is] nothing visual' (Vief 1991, 119–120) and that 'the image is no longer an image but rather . . . a matrix of codes in a data space' (Reck 1992, 126) can both be countered with Martina Dobbe's question: 'And if I see an image?' (Dobbe 1994)

Geisler's installation refutes in many ways certain theoretical positions with regard to media and socially conditioned theses about the status of the image. Polyphony is symptomatic in this context, but it is alarming that the resulting controversies – at the expense of the (real) *question of the image* – intensify into a debate over the image and its interpretive authority. The iconic turn seems to take as its theme the plight in which the relevance and explosiveness of images do not entail a corresponding concision of analysis, as demonstrated by the gap between artistic image production and (social) theoretical reflection on the image. In addition there is dissent between, on the one hand, art historical positions that converge in advocacy of 'iconic difference' (Boehm 1994, 29ff; idem 1996, 162ff) and 'framing out' (Belting 1995, 8) or 'changing frames' (Bredekamp 1997a, 103) and, on the other, those that interpret the 'iconic turn' as a radical paradigm shift and stylise it as a fundamental break with the past.

It would seem to make sense – in light of the fields of tension that currently condition the question of the image and with an eye to *Who Are You?* – to reformulate the crucial question once again, emphatically, but altering Dobbe's version: and if I see two images? The early stages of visual studies – for which comparative viewing was of constitutive meaning as an instrument of mediation, cognition and terminology – lead us to reflect on this. The fact that art history decidedly reached out to new (visual) media in the process and at the same time was confronted intensely with questions of pictoriality points to a possible cardinal point of reflection on the theory of images. As the following historical overview demonstrates, these experiences are relevant to current positions and correspond to today's questions.

3. The Media Praxis of Art History and Early Concepts of Iconic Criticism

‘The image, the illustration, has become a necessity in all spheres of life.’ – Josef Langl, *Kunst-Chronik* (3 February 1887)

Until now the question of the media of art history has been discussed primarily in terms of themes relating to the historical analysis of formal and stylistic aspects. In particular, Wölfflin’s concept of an art history without names and the ideal visual example of printed double projections found in his ‘Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe’ (translated as ‘Principles of Art History’) would seem to be evidence of a far-reaching interaction between reproduction technologies and scholarly method (fig. 7). But this loses sight of the question of the epistemic images in art history; the aspects of image theory and media critique are obscured or at best negated. Focusing on art research and art historiography thus favours the thesis that the introduction of photograph and slide projections was borrowed from the natural sciences, belatedly, under the premise of a postulation of objectivity: it succumbed to an ‘epiphany of images’ (Dilly 1995), and hence the discipline turned unreflectedly and uncritically to the new visual media. This contributed to the spread of the conviction that photographs, as ‘unaltered reproductions of original works’ (Ratzeburg 1998, 3) subsequently ousted all of the visual media that had been used to date.¹⁰

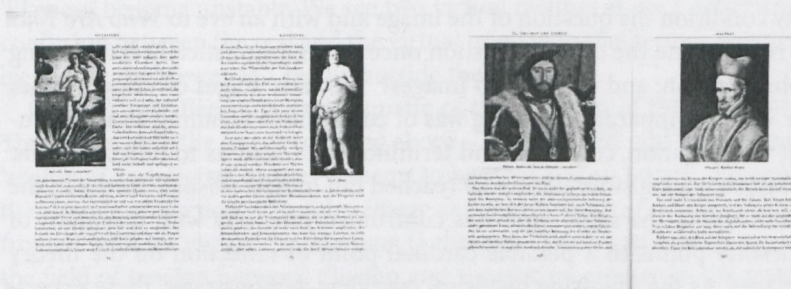


fig. 7 Heinrich Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (1915)

Yet, the primary sources of the nineteenth century seem to cry out for a revision of that view. The introduction of photography and slide projections in the second half of the nineteenth century did not initially produce a radical break in the history of the discipline. Neither did photography oust the ‘old’ visual media ad hoc nor did art history operate without images prior to that time. There had been earlier theoretical and practical considerations of the status of the image that went beyond purely economical, pragmatic or didactic questions and expressed early arguments in the critique of the

10 Some of the most striking examples include: Ratzeburg 1998, esp. pp. 20ff; idem 2002, 22–39; Tietenberg 1999, esp. pp. 68ff; Reichle 2002, 41–56, esp. 41–42; these theses were first formulated by Dilly 1975, esp. pp. 163ff.

11 Anton Springer, quoted in Congress Report 1875, 499.

image. The circumstances under which the technological innovations took place, however, differed from those of earlier times: the turn of art history toward new visual media occurred at the same time as its institutionalisation – in a phase of intense (self-)questioning of the discipline that took the concrete form of increasing illustration and permeation of its object. Around the turn of the century the discussion culminated in an appeal for an art history as *teaching by means of images* [*Anschauungsunterricht*], with the result that a focus on the image and view as genuine art historical aspects followed. As the two examples below will show, there was a complex interaction of institutionalisation, medialisation and reflection on iconic criticism that in many ways points to an early ‘iconic turn’ specific to the discipline.

(A) Comparative Media Criticism

Like many of his colleagues in the last third of the nineteenth century, Heinrich Alfred Schmid, Wölfflin’s successor in Basel, emphasised in 1911 that ‘only the sciopicon’ made it possible ‘to teach in a lecture hall successfully the history of art as the history of styles’. He added: ‘An apparatus that can show two objects next to each other so they can be compared will always be of particular use in this field’ (Schmid 1911, 91). It may only be a remarkable coincidence that Schmid speaks of *two objects* and thus expresses the double function that images have as instrument and content of analysis in art history. This double function is of constitutive significance to the history of the media in the discipline, as is demonstrated particularly well by works by five of the most committed and most critical advocates of media innovations in art history: Anton Springer, Bruno Meyer, Herman Grimm, Alfred Woltmann and August Schmarsow. They all have in common that they firmly advocated an *art history ad oculos* (Grimm 1897, 294), viewing different visual media together and assembled collections of illustrations accordingly – not despite the fact that but precisely because they championed the new medium. Their surviving writings leave no doubt why they chose to view comparatively prints, ‘engravings, direct photographs and studies and sketches’:¹¹ ‘in this way the eye learns to understand photographs correctly, which increasingly serves to prevent errors in other cases where no corrective exists’ (Meyer 1879, 198). Their advocacy of a repeated comparison of original and reproduction should also be understood in this sense.

Their efforts are evident in Schmid’s later essay. He too repeatedly called for ‘training’ in viewing photographic images and made use of comparisons of different media (fig. 8). He began by comparing a woodcut (right) and a photograph on a plate not sensitive to colour (left). The two depictions were



fig. 8 Heinrich Alfred Schmid, 1911. Comparison of a photograph on a plate not sensitive to colour and a woodcut. Two reproductions of Velázquez's *The Count-Duke of Olivares*

confronted in a kind of classical *paragone* of the arts and precisely compared: Schmid distinguished between their visual effect, inquired into the features specific to each medium and discussed the limits and possibilities of each based on scientific premises – in fourteen further examples he also considered other genres and compared photomechanical and purely photographic copying methods (fig. 9). Although in certain passages of the text Schmid speaks of the ‘absolute superiority of photography’ (Schmid 1911, 85) over other visual media, the images and descriptions in his essay clearly demonstrate the necessity of a comparative approach to media. As was the case with his colleagues earlier, comparative viewing proved to be a way of introducing photography and slide projection as *media of art history* and of subjecting them to (visually) critical observation in a confrontation with related methods of reproduction.

This reveals the contours of an early form of media criticism in art history that resulted in the emergence of new forms of recombination and revision of media. The very thing that the thesis of the ‘iconic turn’ claims is happening now on a global scale happened in the specific context of a discipline: the introduction of new media that generated images within the framework of a comprehensive visual reorientation that focused attention on questions of the image, problems of the visual and the cognitive power of illustration. The ‘intensity of seeing’ (Heidrich 1917, 70), one may conclude, encouraged and called for both the founding of art history as teaching by means of images and its anchoring in an art historical media criticism. As the second



Fig. 69, auf nicht farbenempfindlicher Platte.



Fig. 70, auf farbenempfindlicher Platte.

IV, Tafel 30

fig. 9 Heinrich Alfred Schmid, 1911. Comparison of a photograph on a plate not sensitive to colour with one on a plate sensitive to colour

example shows, the result was a mutual illumination of questions of media and iconic theory.

(B) Comparative Iconic Criticism

Early on, and with notable determination, Bruno Meyer, a pioneer of the media practice of art history who remains to be discovered, dedicated himself to 'photography in the service of scholarship on art' (Meyer 1879). He was one of the sharpest critics of publishers of photographs like the Alinari and Adolphe Braun, whose photographs he attacked for years as unscholarly and tried to correct based on art historical pictorial conventions. In many respects he anticipated Wölfflin's three essays 'Wie man Skulpturen aufnehmen soll' (*How to photograph sculpture*), which are occasionally recognised as (the earliest) examples of an 'art historical critique of photography' (Dobbe 2002, 42). A sense of this is given in an article that has largely gone unappreciated today, published by Meyer in 1871, twenty-five years before Wölfflin's first essay, 'Dr. Hermann Vogel's perspektivische Studien mit Hilfe der Photographie' (*Dr. Hermann Vogel's perspectival studies with the aid of photography*: Meyer 1871, 75–84).

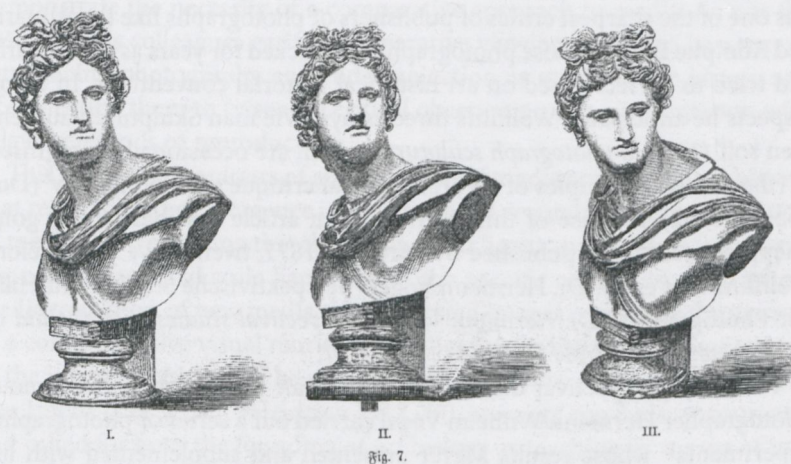
Vexed by perspectival distortions in portrait photographs, the famous photographer Hermann Wilhelm Vogel carried out a series of photographic experiments¹² whose results Meyer presented and supplemented with his own observations. As illustrations Meyer included woodcuts made on the

12 On this, see amongst others, Vogel 1870, esp. 'Die Kunst der Photographie', pp. 388–467.

basis of Vogel's photographs. Using the example of his seventh illustration (fig. 10), Meyer discussed the advantages and disadvantages of various lens orientations and concluded that the image in the middle came closest to the motif of the statue. Significantly, Meyer pointed to forms of photographic depiction and perception *and* explicitly emphasised the cognitive value of the new possibilities of montage (Meyer 1871, 81). He also addressed questions of distance and scale of the objects to be reproduced and – supplemented in later essays by details about the background, lighting and re-touching – assembled them into pictorial conventions.

This already suggests how over the course of his coming to terms with the visual materials of art history Meyer arrived at a parallelism of art historical photography as an instrument, on the one hand, and art photography as an subject of art history, on the other. In both cases he made his judgements according to the principle of *pictoriality* [*Bildmäßigkeit*] and repeatedly demonstrates that it was possible 'to produce a work that possesses properties and potential effectives that are barely recognisable directly in the photograph'. To justify this Meyer made a significant distinction between *image* [*Bild*] and *likeness* [*Abbild*]. 'Flaws' from the 'standpoint of the likeness' could thus be 'outstandingly beautiful features ... from the standpoint of the image' (Meyer 1905, 326). For Meyer, as well as for Wölfflin and Schmid, the focus is not on the self-evidence of photographic images but on the ability to form them and the cognitive value that results from the difference between original and reproduction. That is the core around which the discussions

fig. 10 Bruno Meyer based on Hermann Vogel, 1871. Comparison of photographs with different lens orientations, detail and side view



of art historical visual materials circle. The quintessence of their conviction can be summarised in the principle that guided Panofsky's position in the Facsimile Debate in Hamburg and also led him to call for 'comparative experience': the confident insight, the 'objective sense' of the reproduction, lay in being a 'good reproduction', whereby the emphasis was as much on 'good' as on 'reproduction' (Panofsky 1930, 1079–80).

4. Comparative Viewing as a Medium of (Art) Critical Reflection on the Image

These two examples make clear how significant comparative viewing was for the foundation of art history. There can be no doubt that comparison itself or the comparability of works of art produced new criteria for examining art, as is evident from the works of Wölfflin, but also of Riegl, Morelli and Warburg. But comparative viewing proved to be the ideal instrument of art historical research precisely because it went beyond an analysis of motifs and forms. As the texts of Schmid and Meyer show, two aspects in particular are noteworthy: the sensitising of the gaze to forms of encoding specific to the medium and the exploration of the genuinely iconic aspects of images in favour of their significance as objects of cognition. The institutionalisation of art history turns out to be an exemplary case study that is like a microcosm of many current questions. Research in images and research by means of images is the basis on which the discipline was constituted as if in a laboratory in the nineteenth century. By comparing that history to our image-oriented present, we can derive from it sustainable arguments for a critical approach to the 'iconic turn'.

Because nineteenth-century art history cleared the way for a new autonomous value of the image, it initiated the project of visual studies *ad oculos* that should be taken up again today. The most recent forms of art are a strong argument for this. As a look at *Who Are You?* and Heinrich Klotz's theory of the 'Second Modernity'¹³ would suggest, today the art of comparative viewing creates *Media Art* as a theory of the image in practice. Geisler's installation thus turns out to confirm in two ways the central argument that Klotz made against modernist thesis of an incomparable self-justification and against postmodern postulates of a deceptive 'total illusion' (Rötzer 1991, 48 and Klotz 1994, 190): the conviction that the work of art can only obtain 'its particular aesthetic character in a *comparability* that distinguishes it' – that is, 'in a difference from reality' (Klotz 1994, 18). Against this backdrop, the assumption of a form of imagery without *Vorbild* in the dual sense

13 On this, see Klotz 1994; idem 1996; idem 1997.

of precursor and pre-image can be convincingly disproved. The basic principle that images present an Other by producing their own reality and that they have to be simultaneously like and dislike the object they depict, this double visibility of the image is found both as the visibility [*Anschaulichkeit*] of a comparative iconic criticism in Geisler's work and in the art historical juxtaposition of *comparable* depictions: comparative viewing means focusing on the form of difference that constitutes the image and thus deriving a (visual) thinking of productive differences while resisting a postmodern affinity of undecidability and indeterminacy.

In that sense it is programmatic that Klotz too supports the idea of a productive competition between old and new media. Famously, the 'museum of all genres' (Klotz 1997, 7) in Karlsruhe, as a 'museum of the second modernity', is based on such competition. Klotz's orientation around the (visual of) visual arts thus reveals art historical continuities and contexts that are necessarily suppressed by a focus on the technological side – for example, when Vostell's (film) works are discussed in the context of video art.¹⁴ The very term *Media Art* is problematic in this respect: it postulates a relationship of opposites that divides the 'unity of images' into the poles of 'non-media art or artless media' (Belting 1995, 166–67).¹⁵

The alternative is not to oust the conditions of the apparatus, but rather to explore it deliberately within the framework of a criticism of media that argues on the basis of theory and history of the image. Such an approach is distinguished by the fact that its point of reference is always the iconic and hence it is never subsumed entirely by either materiality or mediality – as Mitchell has recently demonstrated in his reflections on *meta-pictures* and *images of media* within the context of 'addressing media'.¹⁶ The thesis of a radical difference of digital images thus finds its radical antipode when references between images are examined within the frame work of a comparative analysis using different media. They point to a system of pre- and after-images that incorporate not only the history of the media of images but also the theoretical preconditions of the visual. From this perspective the double (slide) projection proves to be the ideal instrument for understanding history and theory of images.

14 Wulf Herzogenrath has recently written about Vostell in this spirit: Herzogenrath 2006, esp. p. 20; for this, see also Schmidt 2006.

15 In this same spirit: Bredekamp 2003, esp. p. 355 and Wyss 1997.

16 See Mitchell 2005, esp. 'Addressing media', pp. 201–21.

17 On this see Stoichita 1986, 165–89. See in particular his interpretation of comparison and doubling as intertextual pictorial strategies that were constitutive for the rise of modern pictorial genres because they constitute aesthetic boundaries: Stoichita 1997, Chapter Two 'The Birth of Still-Life as an Intertextual Process', pp. 17–29.

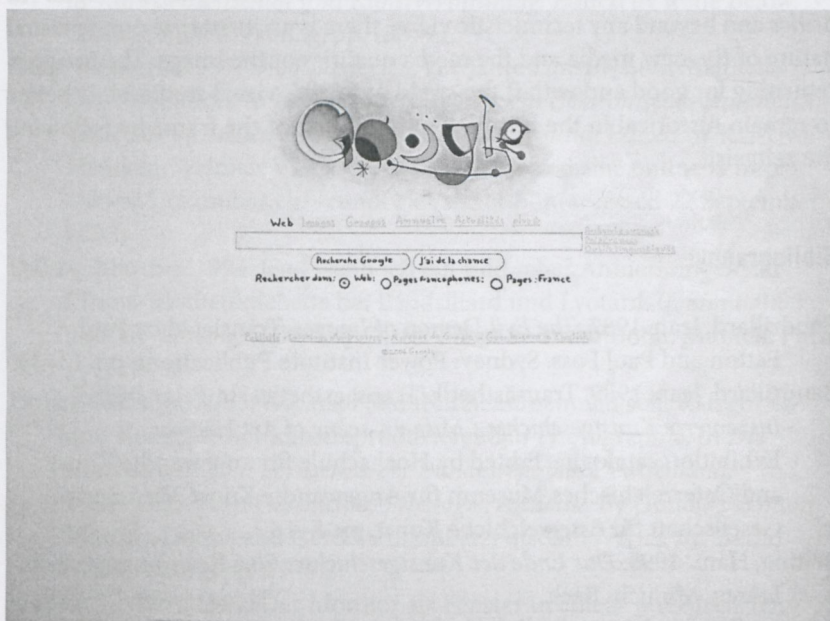
18 See Mitchell 2005, esp. 'The Surplus Value of Images', pp. 76–106.

19 On this, see Grancher 2004, 46 or http://www.onestarpublish.com/v2/pdf/grancher_150_double.pdf (accessed 19 September 2006).

5. Prospects

Meyer's efforts to distinguish between *pictoriality* [*'Bildmäßigkeit'*] and *reproducibility* [*'Abbildbarkeit'*] may be seen as an early example of art history's problematising of different forms of the visual. His distinctions find their pendant in recent efforts such as Stoichita's distinction between *imago*, *aequalitas* and *similitudo*¹⁷ or Mitchell's definitions of the terms *image*, *picture* and *media*¹⁸ – two approaches that also offer good reasons for being considered together with Geisler's installation. The media difference and at the same time irrevocable referentiality between image and reality or original and reproduction thus remains the central paradigm of an art historical consciousness of the image. Encouraged and reinforced by the dialogue with modern art, art history thus becomes a challenge to an atmosphere of last days and new days: it counters the present narrowing of the image in the form of a polarity between *modern easel painting* versus *moving media image* by accentuating the various manifestations of images, and responds to the talk of the *end of the image* with a new confirmation of imagery.

fig. 11 Valéry Grancher. *Google with Miró logo*
(20 April 2006)



That the future too holds not an end of the image but its expansion has recently been demonstrated by Valéry Grancher, who returned to brush and canvas after four years of *Net Art* (fig. 11).¹⁹ One of his so-called *webpaint-*

ings, which consult the World Wide Web as an imposing image machine about its 'cyber-phenomenology' or 'interface iconology' (Grancher 2004, 47–48), is titled *Google with Miró Logo* and dated 20 April 2006.²⁰ As a painted easel painting it shows the famous Website in full-screen view as it appeared on that day, with a so-called Google doodle alluding to Joan Miró.²¹ The painting should be seen against the backdrop of a series of inter-media *Net Art* projects to which Grancher explicitly refers in order to clarify his approach:²² 'to paint what computer technology has changed in our way of seeing' (Grancher 2004, 47). The basic principle that (visual) media influence certain ideas of the image, whereas ideas of the visual simultaneously influence the approach to media thus becomes part of the theme.

As an *art of images to be compared*, Grancher's webpaintings thus reveal informative parallels with comparisons of images and media within nineteenth-century art history and with Geisler's prospect on a (*media*) *art of comparative viewing*. Grancher's grappling with visual media does not cause him to exit the image but rather to reinforce the image even more emphatically. In the double focus on the visual arts and the visual, here too historicity of art and perception emerge in the form of a dialogue of images. *Ad oculos* and beyond any technicistic views, there is an insistence on the visual nature of the new media and the media qualities of the image. The image is returning for good and with it the credo of today's visual studies: it is better to remain historical in the image than to fall out of the frame by following the zeitgeist.

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20 *Google with Miró Logo*, oil on canvas, 92 x 73 cm, 20 April 2006, available online at <http://www.nomemory.org/webpaint/data/googlemiro.htm>; for a survey of the Google paintings, some of which are in private collections, see <http://www.nomemory.org/webpaint/data/googlepainting.htm> (accessed 19 September 2006).

21 The Google logo is redesigned for special occasions, as in this case for the anniversary of the birth of Miró (born 20 April 1893). The logo designed in imitation of his works 'decorated' the Web site for a brief time on 20 April 2006 until it was removed in response to protests. Other Google doodles, some of which offer brief visual narratives, can be seen in Google's online gallery: <http://www.google.com/holidaylogos.html> (accessed 19 September 2006).

22 He is referring to pioneering projects from the context of *Net Art* that deliberately cross boundaries of media and genres in a 'crossover' between the Internet, painting, photography, sculpture, installation and so on. See Grancher 2004a.

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