RETHINKING PICTURES:
A TRANSATLANTIC DIALOGUE

German Center for Art History, Paris
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Abstracts

Maxime Boidy (Université Paris 8 Vincennes – Saint-Denis)
Striking Images: Body Politics on the Streets

Despite their epistemological and historical differences, German-speaking Bildwissenschaften and English-speaking Visual Studies have explored extensively the roots and limits of political representation during the last twenty-five years. Works like the Bild-Atlas Handbuch der Politischen Ikonographie edited by Uwe Fleckner, Martin Warnke and Hendrik Ziegler in 2011 have launched new perspectives in studying the meanings and agencies of political pictures. On the other hand, Visual Studies have explored one step further the political frameworks of representation inaugurated by the so-called “New Art History” during the 1980s. The public revelation of the Abu Ghraib archive in 2004 or the Occupy Wall Street movement in 2011-2012 have disseminated the visual understanding of politics outside the realm of art without cutting the links with the art world.

In both intellectual areas, the notion of the “body politics” has been a central feature of inquiry for a long time. Horst Bredekamp’s famous study of the front-page of Thomas Hobbes’s Leviathan remains not only a classical insight of what pictures can mean or do, but also a foundational analysis of the notion of “head of state” in Western thinking and culture at least since the origins of European modernity. For his part, W.J.T. Mitchell has questioned extensively the “body politics” in the age of cloning, i.e. the visual renderings and shifting meanings of the body as it is shattered now by the opportunity to reproduce any organism endlessly, like pictures after the advent of photography and cinema.

This presentation will reconsider these inquiries on the body politics in order to point out convergences and differences between Bildwissenschaften and Visual Studies, and to define new research directions in the iconography and iconology of political entities. Without overlooking the French-speaking insights on the topic (from Louis Marin to Dario Gamboni), it would be focused on two neglected body politics in order to put these ideas at work. The “black bloc” on the one hand, or the “monôme étudiant” on the other hand, are both historical urban collectives which put into pictures the very idea of the body politics while questioning it. As far as they have been rarely studied by scholarly works on a transnational scale, these practices are perfect materials to explore the usefulness and lacks of German and Anglo-American visual theories.

Maxime Boidy has co-translated and edited several books of W.J.T. Mitchell, including Iconologie : image, texte, idéologie (Les Prairies ordinaires, 2009) and Que veulent les images ? Une critique de la culture visuelle (Les Presses du réel, 2014). His current research focuses on the intellectual history of visual knowledge, as well as the aesthetics of political representation, and aims specifically to clarify the origins and controversial issues occurred around the development of the paradigm of Visual Culture in the 1990s in the field of art history. He holds a doctorate in sociology from the University of Strasbourg.

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Jakub Steskal (Freie Universität Berlin)
Belting and Summers on Substitution

One of the characteristic traits of both the German Bildwissenschaft and the anglophone visual culture studies is what one might call the ‘anthropologization’ of art history: both traditions have strived to bring down the arbitrary historical and geographical limitations on what passes as a suitable subject-matter of research into visual art in the name of all the other uses images can serve apart from the expression of content by aesthetic means.

One such function that has typically escaped the interest of art history is substitution. That images can take on the role of a substitute for their prototype has been traditionally regarded as a case of idolatry and fetish worship alien to the aesthetic experience proper to engagement with art. Since the turn of the millennium, the role of images as substitutive icons has been investigated, however, in several important strands of research into visual culture (e.g., Alfred Gell’s art nexus theory, Horst Bredekamp’s ‘substitutives Bildakt’). In my paper I focus on two accounts of substitution that appeared around the same time, Hans Belting’s and David Summers’s. I wish to show that despite differences in their intellectual outlooks, there exist deep similarities in their accounts of the substitutive role of images.
In his *Bild-Anthropologie* (2001), Hans Belting identified the substitutive function of images to be as old as the making of images itself and connected it to the desire to provide the deceased with an ersatz-body; according to David Summers (Real Spaces, 2003), in most of the world cultures images have played the role of ‘real metaphor’, fixing by means of substitution what is desired. An integral part of both these claims has been the contention that the substitutive role of images has become obscure to contemporary eyes. Summers claims that Western metaphysical tradition, dating back at least to Aristotle, has mistaken images functioning as real metaphors (icons) for underdeveloped efforts at representation, instead of seeing them as successful agents of substitution.

In what I interpret as a similar step, Belting takes the ancient Greek identification of mimetic image with a medium of remembrance as a historical anomaly that has nevertheless deeply impacted our understanding of the motivation for making images; in most other cultures, Belting argues, the prime motivation behind image production is their ability to become a medium of embodiment, that is, of proper substitution that for this very reason can also be aniconic.

I spell out these similarities on the example of the Fayum mummy portraits. Originally attached to mummies and dating from the first three centuries CE, they are considered to be the oldest surviving examples of naturalistic portraiture. Significantly, it is on their example that Summers and Belting independently dramatize the contrast between substitution and representation. And it is this example that will serve me as a testing ground for their respective accounts of substitution.

*Jakub Stejskal* is a postdoctoral fellow at the Dahlem Humanities Center, Freie Universität Berlin. His research interests lie at the intersection of philosophical, art-historical, and anthropological theories of visual art. His most recent publications include ‘Art-Matrix Theory and Cognitive Distance: Farago, Preziosi, and Gel’s Art and Enchantment’ (*Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 13, 2015), and ‘Art and Bewilderment’ (*British Journal of Aesthetics*, forthcoming).

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**ROUNDTABLE with**

Rachael Z. DeLue (Princeton University)
Beate Fricke (University of California, Berkeley)
Antonio Somma (Université Paris 3 – Sorbonne Nouvelle)
Ralph Ubl (Universität Basel)

Most art historians have a contextual approach to the concepts of “image” or “picture.” Even in the fields of picture theory, “théorie de l’image,” or “Bildwissenschaft” the majority of publications are dedicated to historically defined problems. But it would be too simple to assume a clear disciplinary division between art historians who apply concepts to build new frameworks for historical interpretation and philosophers in charge of analyzing these concepts. “Rethinking of pictures” could also mean to de-familiarize our concepts by reconstructing their emergence, use, and context. In its genealogical perspective, art historical scholarship is both a contribution and a challenge to systematic inquiries into the nature of images and pictures. The panelists have explored this tension in their work on terms such as “picturing,” “medium,” “format,” “evidentia,” or “Bild.” In our discussion we will focus on three questions: we will examine what we expect from specific theories for our own research; we will look at their historical preconditions; and last but not least, we will consider whether it is desirable and/or viable to situate our pragmatic use and genealogical examination of theoretical concepts in the context of a general theory of images.

*Rachael Z. DeLue* is associate professor of art history at Princeton University. She specializes in the history of American art and visual culture, with particular focus on intersections among art, science, and the history and theory of knowledge. She is currently at work on a study of Charles Darwin’s diagram of evolution in *On the Origin of Species* as well as a book about impossible images. She serves as the editor-in-chief of the Terra Foundation Essays as well as the editor of *Picturing* (2016), the first volume in the series. Publications include *George Inness and the Science of Landscape* (2004), *Landscape Theory* (2008, co-edited with James Elkins), and *Arthur Dove: Always Connect* (2016).

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**Antonio Somai** is professor in Film, Media, and Visual Culture Theory at the Universität Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris 3. In 2013 he was Senior Fellow at the research center ZfL (Zentrum für Literatur- und Kulturwissenschaft) in Berlin, and in 2014-15 Senior Fellow at the IKKM (International Research Institute for Cultural Technologies and Media Philosophy) in Weimar. In 2017-18, he will be Senior Fellow of the research center BildEvidenz at the Freie Universität in Berlin. His current research deals with the film, media and montage theories of the 1920s and 1930s (Béla Balázs, Walter Benjamin, Sergei M. Eisenstein, Siegfried Kracauer, László Moholy-Nagy, Dziga Vertov), with different issues in contemporary visual culture, and with the history of the concept of “medium.” Recent publications include the book *Cultura visuale. Immagini, sguardi, media, dispositivi* (Visual Culture. Images, Gazes, Media, Dispositives) (with Andrea Pinotti, 2016), the English edition of Sergei Eisenstein's *Notes for a General History of Cinema* (2016), and an article on the concept of medium in Walter Benjamin's writings (“Walter Benjamin’s Media Theory: The Medium and the Apparat”, *Grey Room*, n.62).

**Ralph Uhl** is professor of modern art history at the Universität Basel and director of the Nationalen Forschungsschwerpunktes (NFS) ‘Bildkritik’. He has taught at the Academy of Arts in Berlin, the Academy of Fine Arts in Karlsruhe, and the University of Chicago, where he was a member of the Committee on Social Thought, as well as holding visiting professorships at the Humanities Center at Johns Hopkins University and in Hangzhou, China. He has published numerous contributions to the art of the 17th, 19th and 20th centuries, including *Prähistorische Zukunft. Max Ernst und die Ungleichzeitigkeits des Bildes* (2004) (Revised English Translation in *Prehistoric Future. Max Ernst and the Return of Painting between the Wars* 2013) and *Bildtheorie zur Einführung* Hamburg 2014 (with Wolfram Pichler). Edited volumes include *Was aus dem Bild fällt. Funktionen des Details* with Edith Futscher, Wolfram Pichler, and Stefan Neuner (Munich 2007).

**Kristopher W. Kersey** (University of Richmond)

**Built Images: The Mark of Japan and the Terms of the Picture**

The premodern Japanese visual and lexical archives manifest a typology of the picture (and the image) distinct from that found in Euro-American discourse. But as this paper argues, the image of Japan nevertheless figures in the genealogy of the shared, modern notion of the “picture.” One of the most contentious and formative episodes within this history was the encounter of Japanese and North Atlantic modernity in the nineteenth century, a collision that resulted in the denaturing of the epistemology of the picture in both the discursive and visual fields. It was a scene of mutual misreading, one that altered the Japanese episteme in ways that foreclosed the Orientalist myth of an “image of Japan” that we might return to in postmodernity. To complicate matters, as Satō Dōshin among others has demonstrated, “Japanese art” itself was an international invention of the nineteenth century. While this thesis is by no means surprising, it takes on renewed meaning in the context of contemporary inquiry into the picture. For it would seem to suggest that those who study premodern non-Western art have always already been practicing Bildwissenschaft, whether they were aware of it or not. Yet a chasm exists between the now-eclipsed “art” and the seemingly universal “picture.” This is, in part, the topic of this paper. What was the premodern typology of the visual in Japan, and how might it inform our present endeavor to rethink the parameters of the picture?

The theoretical and comparative concerns of this paper are grounded by a close analysis of a fourteenth-century feretory that contains an icon embedded into a polished mirror such that the icon appears as if enveloped by the flesh of the beholder. This is particularly significant in the context of Bildwissenschaft since the icon itself is an iconotext, a singular character written (then cast in bronze) in an esoteric script. Moreover, the text–image relay is complicated by a further picture–image relay, since the feretory seems to make reference to a documented contemplative practice whereby the practitioner was to imagine writing the same character inside the viscera of the body. Hence the feretory operates as a prosthesis, one that shortcircuits the need for “picturing” by making the object real and the body illusory.

Most broadly stated, the hypothesis here is that in order to rethink picturing, it may be useful to look beyond the varying ramifications and etymologies—operative and imagined—that stem from a select set of Indo-European terms, despite their undoubted centrality to the question at hand.
**Kristopher Kersey** is assistant professor of art history at the University of Richmond. His research focuses on the art and material culture of Japan’s “classical,” Heian period (794-1192 CE), as well as that of its various recursions, returns, and modern appropriations. In 2014-15 he was the Anne van Biema Postdoctoral Fellow at the Freer and Sackler Galleries, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC. His dissertation, “The Aesthetics of the Manuscript in Classical Japan,” (University of California, Berkeley, 2014) was completed as an Andrew W. Mellon Predoctoral Fellow in residence at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts (CASVA), National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

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**Sebastian Zeidler** (Yale University)
**Matisse with Husserl: Rethinking the Picture in 1906**

I want to explore a historical dimension of the conference theme, and suggest that a seminal rethinking of the picture occurred around 1906: in Henri Matisse’s fauvist portraits and in Edmund Husserl’s lectures on the image. On one hand, I want to defamiliarize well-known paintings like Matisse’s *Young Sailor II*, and argue that their enigmatic fascination is based on the way in which Matisse exposed the brittle mediality of portraiture in a wholly new way. On the other hand, by accounting for that brittleness in terms of Husserl’s phenomenology, I want to introduce Husserl as a thinker who can help us bridge the transatlantic gap between formalism and Bildwissenschaft.

Anglophone visual studies have typically encountered Husserl at one remove: mediated through Merleau-Ponty, adapted by Lacan, dismissed by Derrida. One would never guess from reading these figures that a century ago Husserl came up with a theory of the image in which likeness and materiality are deeply imbricated with each other.

Briefly, in Husserl every image consists of three aspects: the *Bild Ding*, the *Bildsujet*, and the *Bildobjekt*. The *Bild Ding* is the image as material thing: it is paint that has been deposited on a canvas in a frame. The *sujet* is what art historians call its subject matter. The image object in turn is the appearance of the *sujet* in the specific materiality of a medium. Hence, in Matisse’s *Young Sailor II* the painting on the gallery wall is the material thing: the actual, living sailor is the *sujet* and the image object is his likeness, painted in oil on canvas in Matisse’s particular style.

That sounds straightforward enough, but a powerful paradox is folded into Husserl’s definition of the image. As he put it, “image consciousness” is “difference consciousness”: it is only when the image as material thing is significantly different perceptually from its sujet that an image object will actually make an appearance in it. And that is another way of saying that every image object—every likeness in a portrait—is perched on the razor-thin crest between opaque materiality and beckoning presence.

As I shall argue in a close reading of *Young Sailor II*, Matisse’s fauvist paintings from 1906 were riding that crest. When he evacuated pictorial light from his portraits, leaving only color behind on their surface, he exposed the full fragility of their image objects. That is the true significance of Matisse’s so-called “liberation of color”: that as narrative setting, pictorial space, and the sitter’s inner life were drained from the canvas, perceptual certainty gave way to a range of mere probabilities. The radiant color of Matisse’s portraits is the fold side of their temporal ephemeralness. Whether a century ago or today, it is the viewer’s task to sustain their being over time.

**Sebastian Zeidler** is Associate Professor in the Department of the History of Art at Yale University. His work on modern art and theory has appeared in *October*, *Res*, and the *Cahiers du MNAM*, among other venues. His monograph *Form as Revolt: Carl Einstein and the Ground of Modern Art* was published in 2015 by Cornell University Press.

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**Robin Schuldenfrei** (The Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London)
**Exigencies of Materializing Vision in Josef Albers’s Homage to a Square**

In the move from the Bauhaus to Black Mountain, and on to Yale, the diverse practice of Josef Albers can, at first glance, be seen to shift from the patently material to the purely visual. During the years in Germany, Albers had been intensely involved with making objects, not only furniture and domestic objects, but also his artworks had a deep materiality and objectness, for example in the jagged glass shards roughly held together by metal wire in his *Window Pictures*. In the US, a radical reduction in materiality and form seemingly took place, as evidenced in the planar visual surface of the flat boards of Albers’s *Homage to the Square* series. These works, painted under the controlled conditions of fluorescent light and using factory-mixed colors, the details of which Albers neatly charted on the paintings’ versos, are the flattened summation of an artistic praxis that had been marked by rich materiality. Similarly, in a period of the
ascendancy of Jackson Pollock, Albers’s teaching at Yale focused on the drawn line and the interaction of colored papers placed flatly against one another, away from the rich tactility that had constituted the classroom exercises of his German Bauhaus years. Beginning with an examination of the underlying move from the material to the visual in Albers’s art practice, from Germany to the US, this paper will theorize the varying strands of visuality in Albers’s work. In doing so, however, it will argue that the end result of this seemingly visual turn are ultimately evocations of the *materiality* of surface itself.

The square paintings of *Homage to the Square*, a series Albers worked on from 1949 to 1976, were fixed format boards onto which circumscribed squares of color were painted. The works can be seen to represent the purely visual; emptied of content and impasto alike, hardly anything remains beyond meticulously painted, planes of color. Albers’s flat boards will be examined as whole artifacts, with their carefully controlled surfaces read as an essential, compellingly *material* component of that artifact. Albers draws our attention to the surface of things; in doing so, this paper will argue, he calls attention to both surface and thing.

Visual content was replaced by another experience offered up by Albers, a new kind of visuality embodied by the experience of seeing itself. By interacting with the subjective viewer’s eye, and distorting perceptions through color, these objects further projected their own agency and called into question the beholder’s ability to understand them in stable, objective and purely visual terms. Read this way, these precise and circumscribed art objects are contemplations on the material—and subjective—nature of vision itself.

Using Albers’s *Homage to the Square* as its central focus, this paper looks at conceptions of materiality and visuality as inter-related, and the role of subjectivity therein. While charting a move away from the material towards an emphasis on the visual surface, designed to be an “evocation of vision” in Albers’s terms, this paper will argue that the resulting flat visual surfaces of his work should be evaluated afresh to understand surface, even vision, in distinctly *material* terms.

Robin Schuldenfrei is permanent Lecturer in 20th Century Modernism at The Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London. She has written widely on modernism as it intersects with the theory of the object, architecture and interiors. She has published numerous articles and essays and has edited two books: *Atomic Dwelling: Anxiety, Domesticity, and Postwar Architecture* (2012) and the co-edited volume *Bauhaus Construct: Fashioning Identity, Discourse, and Modernism* (2009). Current projects include a full-length study of luxury and modernism in architecture and design in early twentieth-century Germany and, concurrently, a book focusing on objects in exile, World War II and the displacement of design.

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Lauren Kroiz (University of California at Berkeley)

Tactile: Ad Reinhardt and Black Paintings

Ad Reinhardt’s artistic practice combined abstract oil painting, cartooning, and slide lectures in ways that escape the boundaries of art history and call for an analysis in the Warburgian model of Bildwissenschaft. Often taken as a forerunner of 1960s Minimalism, Reinhardt famously removed visual reference from his Black Paintings. In this talk, I examine the tactile references that remain.

Each painting in the series of five-foot by five-foot canvases, which Reinhardt worked on from 1954 until his death in 1967, consists of a geometric cross in subtle modulations of black that the painter created by denaturing his pigments to create an ashen surface. This dull color famously forces viewers to adjust their eyes to the paintings through lengthy looking, but disoriented viewers also gaze depth haptically leaving oily residue from their skin on the absorptive matte artwork.

Although rarely discussed outside conservation laboratories, during his lifetime Reinhardt noted that his paintings elicited the touch of impatient viewers’ noses and fingers. He discouraged protective measures and regularly replaced damaged paintings. The paintings, sized on scale to Reinhardt’s own body, react to touch as the skin of another might, creating surrogate, fragile black forms for artist and viewer. Although Reinhardt publically denied that his paintings had to do with the color of skin (among a range of other topics he denied), his unpublished, undated notes on black as asymbol begin with period racial categories in arranged in shifting hierarchies. The association with race, rendered perhaps not in the color, but rather in the tactile feeling of skin, suggests a connection between Reinhardt’s painting and his anti-racist cartoons that exceeds or falls short of the visual.

Reinhardt’s drawings for pamphlets, including *The Races of Mankind* (1943), avoided stereotype by using imagery that pointed to the mutability of race and circulated widely to combat Nazi theories and anti-Semitism. Reinhardt also created performative three-hour-long slide shows for fellow painters that drew on the writings of French art theorist Andre
Lauren Kroiz is an assistant professor of twentieth-century American art at University California, Berkeley. Her first book, *Creative Composites: Modernism, Race, and the Stieglitz Circle*, brings together her interests in photography and new media, race and ethnic studies, and the relationships between abstraction and figuration. She is currently completing a book manuscript on 1930s Regionalists’ pedagogies of artistic citizenship and beginning an investigation of blackness and tactility in the early civil rights era.

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Elsje van Kessel works on the interaction between paintings and viewers in early modern Italy. Her research and teaching interests also include the histories and theories of portraiture, as well as the changing status and function of the artwork in the first modern public museums. Elsje is the author of articles in *Art History* and *Studioder*, and she recently edited (with Caroline van Eck and Joris van Gastel) the book *The Secret Lives of Artworks: Exploring the Boundaries between Art and Life* (2014).

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Michael Leja studies the visual arts in various media in the 19th and 20th centuries, primarily in the United States. His work is interdisciplinary and strives to understand visual artifacts in relation to contemporary cultural, social, political, and intellectual developments. He is especially interested in examining the interactions between works of art and particular audiences. His book *Looking Askance: Skepticism and American Art from Eakins to Duchamp* (2004) traces the interactions between the

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Temenuga Trifonova (York University, Toronto)
Still/Moving: The Photographic Image in the Post-Medium Condition

Recent scholarship on the photographic seeks to ‘play down’ the (alleged) break between analog and digital images by redefining the Peircean index and by emphasizing the social applications of digital images, which they share with analog ones.¹ There has been a notable shift (e.g. in the work of Mary Ann Doane, Tom Gunning and Thierry de Duve)² from a semiotic to a phenomenological and political analysis of the photographic index in terms of affect,³ a shift from questions of medium specificity to pragmatic concerns such as accountability and value: the photographic image today is redefined in terms of its ethics rather than its ontology. Thus, Jorge Ribalta⁴ describes the crisis of indexicality as a social and political crisis, rather than an ontological one. As he puts it, the question raised by the digital is not a question of medium specificity; rather, the question now is “whether photography without realism is culturally possible and politically desirable” (Ribalta 180).

Over the last couple of decades a great deal of scholarship has been devoted to rethinking medium specificity away from the idea of medium as a material or physical support. Eivind Rossaak defines the boundaries of what he sees as an emerging, cross-disciplinary field he calls “the still/moving field,” identifying three phases in its evolution so far: a turn to the in-between (the ontology of the photographic and film image in between stillness and motion), a turn to history (a re-examination of early cinema by the New Film Historians like Tom Gunning, Thomas Elsaesser, Noel Burch, Charles Musser), and a turn to algorithms (code, information, the digital).⁵ Scholars have drawn attention to the contemporaneous existence of increasingly hybrid forms challenging the traditional association of cinema with motion and time, and of photography with stillness and timelessness. While experimental cinema mimics photography, contemporary art photography mimics cinema by spatializing and narrativizing time in works of increasing temporal complexity, as seen, for instance, in the work of contemporary photographers like Barbara Probst, Gregory Crewdson, and Jeff Wall. The increasing popularity of large-format, staged photography—cinematic photography—along with the advent of the digital have renewed critical interest in medium specificity and thus in two concepts that have been constitutive of photographic discourse: indexicality and fictional (in)competence.

Cinematic photography belongs to a long tradition of staged photography often overlooked in histories of photography, which tend to emphasize its documentary roots. After situating cinematic photography within this tradition I will consider the work of the above named photographers to examine 1) the cinematic frame and the photographic frame [here I will consider their work in terms of one of the central terms in photography/film scholarship: the moment [the pregnant moment (Lessing), the decisive moment (Cartier-Bresson), and the any-moment-whatever (Deleuze)]; and 2) the applicability of Roger Scruton’s claim about “photography’s fictional incompetence” to cinematic photography. I will suggest that we can see contemporary art photography as a response to what Manovich and Rodowick have described as the transformation of digital cinema into a subgenre of painting. While the digital announces the return of the

⁵ Eivind Rossaak, ed. Between Stillness and Motion: Film, Photography, Algorithms (Amsterdam: Amsterdam UP, 2011).
artist but fails to capture duration inasmuch as it relies exclusively on patterns of recognition of spatial resemblance (perceptual realism), contemporary art photography seeks to reclaim the cinematic within the photographic from within the twilight of indexicality: rather than putting us in a deep historical relation with time, it self-consciously reflects on indexicality, automatism, and duration.

Temenuga Trifonova is Associate Professor of Cinema and Media Studies at York University in Toronto. She has previously taught at the University of New Brunswick and the University of California, Santa Cruz. Trifonova is the author of Warped Minds: Cinema and Psychopathology (Amsterdam University Press, 2014), the edited volume European Film Theory (Routledge, 2008) and The Image in French Philosophy (Rodopi, 2007). She has published in The Routledge Encyclopaedia of Film Theory, Cinema: Journal of Philosophy and the Moving Image, SubStance, Film and Philosophy, Space and Culture, The European Journal of American Culture, Studies in European Cinema, Rivista di Estetica, CTheory: Theory beyond the Codes, Cineaste, Studies in Eastern European Cinema, CinéAction, Studies in Comics, Quarterly Journal of Film and Video, The Wallace Stevens Journal, Postmodern Culture, Scope, Kinema, Senses of Cinema, Interdisciplinary Literary Studies, and in several edited collections.

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The Silent Revolutions of Digital Images

André GUNThERT (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales)

André Gunthert is associate professor in visual history at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS). Author of many studies on history of photography, from daguerreotype to digital pictures, he is one of the leading French specialists of visual culture. His current research is devoted to visual telling within the industrial culture. In 1996, he founded the peer-reviewed journal Études photographiques. With Michel Poivert, he has edited L’Art de la photographie (Citadelles-Mazenod, 2007). His last book, L’image partagée. La photographie numérique (Textuel, 2015) sketches the first history of the reception of digital images. His most recent research is available on his blog L’image sociale.

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Unresolved Issues in the Conceptualization of the Image

James ELKINS (School of the Art Institute of Chicago)

James Elkins grew up in Ithaca, New York, separated from Cornell University by a quarter-mile of woods once owned by the naturalist Laurence Palmer. He stayed on in Ithaca long enough to get the BA degree (in English and Art History), with summer hitchhiking trips to Alaska, Mexico, Guatemala, the Caribbean, and Columbia. For the last twenty-five years he has lived in Chicago; he got a graduate degree in painting, and then switched to Art History, got another graduate degree, and went on to do the PhD in Art History, which he finished in 1989. (All from the University of Chicago.) Since then he has been teaching in the Department of Art History, Theory, and Criticism, at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Jim’s interests include microscopy (with a Zeiss Nomarski differential interference microscope and Anoptral phase contrast), stereo photography (with a Realist camera), playing piano (contemporary “classical” music), and (whenever possible) winter ocean diving. His writing focuses on the history and theory of images in art, science, and nature. Some of his books are exclusively on fine art (What Painting Is, Why Are Our Pictures Puzzles?), others include scientific and non-art images, writing systems, and archaeology (The Domain of Images, On Pictures and the Words That Fail Them), and some are about natural history (How to Use Your Eyes). Others include Pictures and Tears: A History of People Who Have Cried in Front of Paintings; Chinese Landscape Painting as Western Art History; The Poetics of Perspective; The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing; Visual Studies: A Skeptical Introduction, Why Art Cannot Be Taught: A Handbook For Art Students Six Stories From the End of Representation Our Beautiful, Dry, and Distant Texts: Art History as Writing and Master Narratives and Their Discontents. His most recent books include What Photography Is, written against Roland Barthes’s Camera Lucida, and which is experimental nonfiction. Beginning in 2011, impelled by the general lack of experimental writing in art history, Elkins rearranged his schedule to concentrate on writing a novel with images.