PhotographyDigitalPainting

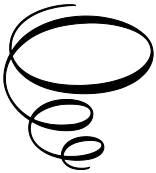
PhotographyDigitalPainting:

Expanding Medium Interconnectivity in Contemporary Visual Art Practices

Edited by

Carl Robinson

Cambridge Scholars Publishing



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PREFACE

PhotographyDigitalPainting is the second in a series of anthologies exploring the connections between photography, the digital, and painting in contemporary art practices. As with the first book–*PaintingDigitalPhotography* (2018)[1]–these essays stem from a symposium that brought together artists and theorists investigating the borders, interconnectivity, and even uncertainties of the visual mediums they work with in the digital age.[2] A biennial rhythm has now developed between symposium and publication which, given the ongoing evolution of the subject, seems set to continue for the foreseeable future.

As I mentioned in the *Introduction* to the first book, there is much research being undertaken through practice, events, and the literature into the mediums under discussion as *separate* concerns. There has been a plethora of recent conferences, exhibitions, books, and papers written on painting in a digital world, the meaning of photography today, and new avenues of exploration in the digital sphere. In my seven years' study of the subject, however, I have been unable to find any research into the three mediums together. As photography, the digital, and painting are the significant modes of contemporary visual image-making, the dearth of investigation into this relationship is surprising. The *PDP* symposiums and anthologies address this lack; the books expand upon the thinking outlined in the presentations, which add to the literature of the evolving discourse around medium-fluidity in contemporary visual art practices.

The *PhotographyDigitalPainting* symposium grouped the talks into cohesive, interlinking themes, which helped the audience absorb the large amount of information presented throughout the day. The morning session focussed on painting-digital, and practices conjoining painting, the digital, and photography. The afternoon was devoted to photography-digital, and practices involving video. At the centre of the symposium Mario Klingemann's digital practice, which at times references both painting and

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[1] Carl Robinson, *Paintingdigitalphotography: Synthesis and Difference in the Age of Media Equivalence* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018).

[2] *PhotographyDigitalPainting* symposium, QUAD, Derby, UK, October 2019. https://www.derbyquad.co.uk/whats-on/art-get-creative/photographydigitalpainting-symposium.

photography, created a bridge between the two sections. This format underlined the premise that the mediums form a continuum as they seamlessly flow from one into the other. In contrast, I have arranged the essays in the book as a mixture of the mediums to encourage understanding of the links between them forming a non-hierarchical network of interlaced strands; a rhizome that allows for connections between any of the writings. Consideration has also been given to the variety of writing styles, ranging as they do from the purely academic to the more conversational. I have been happy to let the authors speak in their own voice, to amplify the differences as well as address the relationships between mediums and practices. In allowing this, I placed essays with different tones next to one another as a means of giving texture to the reading.

The order of the essays in this publication bring to the fore certain relationships between them. For example, Mario Klingemann's conversational text demonstrates how some of his A.I. imagery is built up from classical painting, with Andrew Bracey's essay describing his practice of employing digital software to break down imagery taken from the same painting tradition following this. Paul Kilsby then writes how Joan Fontcuberta took paintings from the western European canon to create some of his digital landscapes. Jacqueline Butler's essay at the beginning of the book, and Michael Evans's at the end both centre on their individual practices as a means of exploring the interrelationship of mediums. A connection can also be found between Emily Sparkes's, and James Frew's analyses of aspects of the painted gesture in the digital age. But these are by no means the only relationships between these particular essays, or between these and others as all the texts intertwine with each other across the anthology. The reader is therefore encouraged to find associations for themselves by looking across the themes, and exploring a variety of essays rather than feeling obliged to read the book in chronological order. A way to do this is to consult "The Essays" section of Eleanor Letham's *Introduction.* These brief synopses will enable an overview of the whole, and reveal how texts lie in relation to one another. From this, choices of essays to read–those that hold interest, coupled to others which might be "new territory"–can be made.

It will be seen that three of the contributors mention Casper David Friedrich's (1774-1840) *Wanderer above a Sea of Fog* (c. 1818) in different contexts (the unintentional repetition of this reference created much surprise and delight for both audience and presenters when delivered at the symposium). What at first appears as an unusual coincidence, becomes understandable when we appreciate artists' attempts to comprehend the swirling fluidity of mediums they work with in the digital age. Researchers conceptually "stand back" from their practice to fathom the changes the digital

brings to their work, and how this sits within the contemporary art discourse. *Wanderer*, in its iconic symbolism of self-reflection on an uncertain future, is a fitting visual metaphor that artists subconsciously associate with.

I look forward to witnessing how research in this area will develop over the next two years, with future symposiums and books helping to unravel these explorations. Given how rapidly the digital is evolving, and how this challenges artists and theorists to explore the borders of the mediums they work with, it will be fascinating to see further connections made between photographydigitalpainting.

Carl Robinson, May 2020.

INTRODUCTION

ELEANOR LETHAM

Since the 1940s, discussions of medium have underpinned much of art theoretical discourse. The writings of Clement Greenberg (1909-1994) have been held largely responsible for centring art practice, first and foremost, on the problem of medium. In one of his most influential essays, *Modernist Painting* (1960-1),[1] Greenberg claimed art was in crisis as a result of logical positivism's influence on the collective consciousness.[2] In order for art to survive as a legitimate philosophical practice, Greenberg reasoned that it had to undergo some degree of epistemological soul-searching.[3] Citing Immanuel Kant's (1724-1804) use of logic to interrogate the limits of logic itself, Greenberg claimed that fine art needed to become self-critical, introspective—"art for art's sake."[4] It was Greenberg's belief that this self-criticism was necessary to preserve the integrity of fine art as a practice distinct from the decorative arts, or entertainment.[5] However, in order to interrogate the entire concept of art, it had to be disassociated from everything that *wasn't* art in order to justify itself as an independent practice. In his process of establishing a logical purity within the discipline, Greenberg collapsed fine art discourse almost entirely into categories of "medium." Each medium became characterised by the features that uniquely distinguished one

[1] Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," in *Modern Art and Modernism*, eds. Francis Frascina and Charles Harrison (New York: Harper and Row, 1982).

[2] Broadly, logical positivism refers to the epistemological position that knowledge can only come from that which is sensed and tangible, and that metaphysical and theological questions are largely irrelevant. See, for example, Richard Creath, "Logical Empiricism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Stanford: Stanford Metaphysics Research Lab,* 2017).

[3] Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," 5.

[4] See: Robert Clewis, "Greenberg, Kant, and Aesthetic Judgments of Modernist Art," *AE: Canadian Aesthetics Journal* 14 (Summer 2008): 3-4. Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 5.

[5] Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," 5.

from the others: for painting, this was flatness; sculpture, the manipulation of space; photography, the transparency of the medium.[6]

The impact of Greenberg's ideas (and of formalist criticism in general) on Western art practice over the last eighty years cannot be understated.[7] His writings influenced painters to divest themselves hastily of the pursuit of realism and illusion,[8] with artists coming to favour visually abstract experimentation with the materiality of paint and canvas to achieve superlative flatness.[9] Abstract gestural and colour-field painting dominated the canon of twentieth-century art practice in line with Greenberg's theories and criticism, with Greenberg himself championing artists such as Helen Frankenthaler (1928-2011) and Jackson Pollock (1912-1956).

In *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Postmedium Condition* Rosalind Krauss (b.1941) rebutted Greenbergian notions of medium specificity by giving voice to the underlying attitude of those who chose to transcend (or even disregard entirely) the categories of medium.[10] Vehemently rejecting the concept of medium for its ideological connotations,[11] and criticising medium specificity as an inhibitor of progress and self-criticism in art, Krauss declared that theories of medium specificity were teleological: art-historical *cul-de-sacs*.[12]

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[6] Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," 6; Clement Greenberg, "The New Sculpture," in *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 142; Clement Greenberg, "The Camera's Glass Eye: Review of an Exhibition of Edward Weston," in *The Collected Essays and Criticism: Vol 2 Arrogant Purpose 1945-1949*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 60.

[7] Caroline A. Jones, *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg's Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 4.

[8] Historiographically, this is a bold claim; abstract and formalist approaches in art and art theory existed before Greenberg's writings with critics such as Roger Fry and Clive Bell writing on the matter nearly fifty years prior. However, in the interests of condensing the complex canon of Modernist theory and practice into a logical series of events for the purposes of this introduction, it suffices. See: Clive Bell, *Art*, (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1913).; Roger Fry, *An Essay in Aesthetics*, (London: Chatto and Windus Ltd, 1920). First published 1909 by J.M. Dent & Company (London).

[9] Jones, *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg's Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses*, 4.

[10] Rosalind Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Postmedium Condition*, (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999).

[11] Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Postmedium Condition*, 5.

[12] Rosalind Krauss, "The Real Thing: An Interview with Rosalind E. Krauss," interview by David Plante, August 30, 2013, https://artcritical.com/2013/08/30/rosalind-krauss-interview/.

Today, the concept of medium is still a site of tension in art theory and practice. For practitioners, in the current moment, to work within the confines of a medium, to engage in practices which seek to intersect boundaries of medium, or even to disregard the categories of medium altogether, is to commit a historically and discursively loaded act. In a broad sense, the current *PhotographyDigitalPainting* anthology and its predecessor, *PaintingDigitalPhotography* (2018), are situated in response to these debates, continuing the conversation in the form of a survey of the contemporary condition of medium.[13]

While the following essays are written from a wide range of theoretical and practical positions, there is implicit acknowledgement throughout of historical (particularly Modernist and Greenbergian) notions of medium; the idea that mediums have defining processes and exclusive characteristics which have shaped much of the discourse surrounding them permeates the writing in this anthology. However, instead of using these characteristics to distinguish mediums from one another, the contributors use this as provocation to locate areas of slippage and ambiguity between photography, the digital, and painting. As a result, many of the contributors in this book invert Greenberg's approach to medium specificity—focusing instead on a kind of "medium generality," by bringing the techniques, aesthetics, and effects which transcend the categories of medium to the fore.

The titular mediums have been selected for their particular entanglement in contemporary art practice. Historically, painting and photography have had to justify their existence by exaggerating their dissimilarity in the age of medium specificity. Conversely, in the age of medium generality and digital media, the digital medium has had to legitimise itself as an extension of painting and photographic practice by mimicking the techniques and visual effects associated with those more established mediums. Of the three, due to its relative recency and the instability of its techniques, aesthetics, and forms, many have struggled to define the digital as a category in its own right. W. J. T. Mitchell (b. 1942) states:

> In the field of art history, with its obsessive concern for the materiality and "specificity" of media, the supposedly "dematerialized" realm of virtual and digital media, as well as the whole sphere of mass media, are commonly

[13] Carl Robinson, *PaintingDigitalPhotography: Synthesis and difference in the age of media equivalence* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018).

> seen either as beyond the pale or as a threatening invader, gathering at the gates of the aesthetic and artistic citadel.[14]

Incorporating digitality into intermedium practice poses a threat to an art-historical canon that has heavily invested itself in medium and materiality. Krauss similarly recognised the threat that digital technology posed to rigid categories of medium but stopped short of seeing the digital as an independent strand of practice:

> …the onset of higher orders of technology—robot, computer—which allows us, by rendering older techniques outmoded, to grasp the inner complexity of the mediums those techniques supported.[15]

In his introduction to the first *PaintingDigitalPhotography* anthology, Carl Robinson quotes Krauss in order to articulate the logic of incorporating the digital in reflections on the interactions of medium in contemporary art.[16] I refer to this quote again in the context of this introduction with the intention of more precisely isolating the role that the digital assumes in intermedium practice. Krauss suggests that by rendering traditional methods of art-making obsolete, digital techniques allow for a serious, objective assessment of the fundamentals of other mediums.

For the reasons outlined prior, defining the characteristics of the digital as a distinct medium is something that art writers and theorists have thus far been somewhat reluctant to approach. Presented with the challenge of articulating a strand of art practice not anchored in any single process or material, commentators have taken to characterising the digital medium as a collection of specific textual qualities instead. Christiane Paul, in her introductory essay for *A Companion to Digital Art* (2016) notes that in order to unpack a strand of art practice, one must define it first.[17] In the case of digital art, this is not straightforward. Paul charts the fluctuations of digital art as a category, before cautioning us against using inflexible definitions of digital art based on a limited set of techniques or aesthetics, given the rapid acceleration of digital technology. She suggests that instead of defining the digital by its physicality, its processes, or lack thereof, we should instead

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[14] W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 205.
[15] Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Postmedium Condition*, 53.
[16] Robinson, *PaintingDigitalPhotography: Synthesis and difference in the age of media equivalence,* 5.
[17] Christiane Paul, "From Digital to Post-Digital—Evolutions of an Art Form," in *A Companion to Digital Art*, ed. Christiane Paul (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 3.

consider the intrinsic characteristics of the digital medium to be a constellation of textual qualities—for instance, a work's generative properties, its collective authorships, or its reproducibility to be indicative of the digital medium.[18]

Alan Kirby goes further and attempts to define, with clarity, the specific textual characteristics which are indicative of the digital as a medium. In *Digimodernism* (2016), Kirby acknowledges that digital technology has expanded our understanding of what a text can be, renegotiating textual qualities that have until now remained relatively static—the digital "text" is characterised by its haphazardness, its fluid boundaries, and its capacity for new configurations of authorship.[19] Notably, these characteristics are not necessarily tied to any particular materiality or process, but rather the particular ways in which traditional textual boundaries have been renegotiated. In other words, the digital medium is defined by the ways in which digital technology allows us to subvert or reconfigure textual norms.

This is significant, in that the renegotiation of the boundaries of text in the advent of digital technology echoes similar claims made about renegotiations of the boundaries of medium as photography became a more ubiquitous and widely-available technology in the early twentieth century. Krauss's *Voyage* offers an interpretation of Walter Benjamin's(1892-1940) seminal essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936);[20] through Benjamin's writing, she identifies photography as a medium that (paradoxically) has the capacity to erode the boundaries of medium itself, due to its function as a reproducible artform. As such, photography is for Krauss "a tool to attack specificity for all the arts."[21] In the current age of the artwork's digital reproducibility, it seems that digital technology goes one further and enables art to attack the very boundaries of text itself.

There are myriad ways in which the digital subverts traditional textual qualities in interdisciplinary practice, both overt and oblique. Throughout the contributors' essays in this anthology, however, the most prominent site of textual reimagination that emerges is the quality of authorship. In order

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[18] Paul, "From Digital to Post-Digital—Evolutions of an Art Form," 10.

[19] Alan Kirby, *Digimodernism: How New Technologies Dismantle the Postmodern and Reconfigure our Culture*, (New York: Continuum, 2009), 52.

[20] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Art in Theory: An Anthology of Changing Ideas 1900-1990*, eds. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 512-520. First published 1936 by Félix Alcan (Paris).

[21] Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Postmedium Condition*, 45.

to contextualise the following essays, it seems appropriate to use this space to write about the historical entanglement of medium, authorship, and its relevance in the digital era.

Lisa Ede (b.1947) traces our first notions of "the author" as we know it in the West back to the printing press, when loose ideas around intellectual property and plagiarism were met with the sudden rapid production and dissemination of texts enabled by mass mechanical printing. Following this, from the fifteenth century onwards, the basic concept of an individual "author" emerged. As the proliferation and distribution of texts accelerated, the author's name acted both as a means of "claiming" a text and also as a means of providing context to the work. The author's name became shorthand for the work's place in history and in discourse, and as such became inseparable from the work itself. Stephen B. Dobranski (b.1966) suggests it was during the Renaissance that authorship came to be associated with authorial expression and authenticity, as author's names and signature styles became increasingly identifiable as a direct result of reproduction and dissemination.[22] Recognisable names were a hallmark of quality for the reader, and authors enjoyed a degree of celebrity, with their audiences developing an interest in their personal lives.[23] To meet popular demand, publishers included authorial biographies within books, the authorial figure becoming physically (and soon after, metaphorically) conspicuous within their published works. The associations between the authorial figure and a poetic persona or innate artistic genius are still so embedded in the collective consciousness that an art object's association with an established artist still grants the object an immutable air of authority or "visual rightness."[24]

Within art discourse, the tide began to turn with the second major shift in reproductive technology after the printing press: the photograph. Photography brought about a new wave of criticism which prompted Benjamin's writings on reproduction and art in the early twentieth century. The reproducible image was one which eroded the intrinsic and intangible quality of "aura" (a work's unique place in space and time).[25] Embracing degrees of reproducibility within its particular techniques, photography went some way to challenging the presence of the author in the medium itself, if not yet visual arts as a whole. It is in fact the ability of photography to accurately

[22] Stephen B. Dobranski, "Renaissance Authorship: Practice versus Attribution," in *A Companion to Renaissance Poetry*, ed. Catherine Bates (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 121.
[23] Dobranski, "Renaissance Authorship: Practice versus Attribution, 121.
[24] See: Stephanie H. Wolz and Claus-Christian Carbon, "What's wrong with an art fake?," *Leonardo* 47, 5 (2014): 467-473.
[25] Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 513.

and efficiently transcribe the world onto a flat surface which forced painters to re-evaluate the purpose and merit of painting. Arguments in painting's favour pitted the mechanical accuracy and clarity of photography against the more expressive and sympathetic qualities of painting.

Thanks to Modernist and formalist obsessions with personal expression and innate artistic identity, gesture was demonstrative of the expressive, physical presence of the artist in the artwork, particularly in the work of Abstract Expressionist painters. From Pollock's gestural drips, to Mark Rothko's (1903-1970) later (more melancholy) colour fields, or Frankenthaler's "soak-stain" technique, the painterly techniques which became emblematic of the medium were written about as though inseparable from authorship.[26] The gestural paint stroke became something of a symbolic manifestation of Modernist notions of authorship, resulting in the artist's physical trace in the work becoming a site of intense critical scrutiny in later art practices, as will now be examined.

In the wake of Postmodernist critique, characterised by its anti-authoritarian, sceptical approach, the supremacy of the concept of medium came under heavy scrutiny; along with any and all other "universal principles" or "truths" associated with Modernism.[27] The concept of authorship was no exception, notably explored in Roland Barthes's (1915-1980) *Death of the Author* (1965), which sought to separate the perceived intent of the author from the way the work is interpreted in literary criticism.[28] Michel Foucault's (1926-1984) reaction to Barthes came in lecture form, when he asked: *What is an Author?* (1969).[29] If Barthes is credited with killing the author, Foucault can be credited with her autopsy. This lecture (and later, essay) encouraged readers, critics, theorists, and practitioners to further examine the notion of "author" by identifying and interrogating the author-

[26] For analyses of myths surrounding these artists' working methods see, David Gervais, "Review: Jackson Pollock: The Painter and the Myth," *The Cambridge Quarterly* 30, no. 1 (2001): 77-81; "Mark Rothko's Dark Palette Illuminated," Hilarie M. Sheets, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/03/arts/design/mark-rothkos-dark-palette-illuminated.html, and "Jerry Saltz: On Helen Frankenthaler, 1928—2011," Jerry Saltz, https://www.vulture.com/2011/12/jerry-saltz-on-helen-frankenthaler-1928-2011.htm.

[27] For Krauss's vitriolic rejection of Greenbergian and Modernist ideas of medium see the preface for Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea*, 5. See, also, "Art Terms: Postmodernism," Tate, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/p/postmodernism.

[28] Laura Seymour, *An Analysis of Roland Barthes's The Death of the Author*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 4.

[29] Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?," in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 113.

function and the structures that necessitate her. Authorial intent, Foucault argues, is the very thing that defines a tract of text as "a work." How could an individual separate Friedrich Nietzsche's (1844-1900) laundry lists from his unpublished philosophical texts, if not for an understanding of Nietzsche's authorial intent and the context cues provided by the rest of Nietzche's corpus?[30] Furthermore, how are we to understand a text's place and position in relation to other discourses without the author's name to contextualise it? While Barthes' and Foucault's writings pertained mainly to literary theory and criticism, these debates were widely engaged with in art discourse at the time of translation into English,[31] and their popularity was symptomatic of a wider cultural dissatisfaction with essentialist Modern approaches to the concepts of authorship, expression and identity.

The gestural painted mark of Abstract Expressionism symbolised a specific intersection of medium specificity, physical authorial presence, and expression. As a result of a renewed sensitivity and reactionary aversion to Modernist ideas around authorship, the relationship between the artist's hand and the brushstroke underwent much interrogation in painterly discourse. For example, Roy Lichtenstein (1923-1997) parodied the relationship between authorial expression and gesture in his brushstroke paintings of 1965-6. Others, such as Jules Olitski (1922-2007) eliminated the brushstroke and the painterly performance altogether by employing water guns and spray bottles to create works such as *Instant Loveland* (1968). Similarly, Gerhard Richter (b.1932) would systematically dismantle the relationships between gesture, facture, and surface in his painting practice.[32]

Photography's history with authorship took a slightly different trajectory. Greenberg's review of Edward Weston's (1886-1958) photography "The Camera's Glass Eye" (1946), provides insight into his views on the characteristics of "good" modernist photography. Technical excellence, spontaneity, and clarity/transparency served to distinguish photography from painting. Most tellingly, however, Greenberg's states:

> …we are reluctant to forgive the photographer, because his medium is so much less immediately receptive to his feeling and as yet so much less an automatic category of art experience.[33]

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[30] Foucault, "What is an Author?," 118-119.
[31] Douglas Eklund, *The Pictures Generation, 1974-1984*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2009), 17.
[32] Best exemplified by the relationship between his works *Oil Sketch No. 432/11* (1977) and *Abstract Painting No. 439* (1978).
[33] Greenberg, "The Camera's Glass Eye: Review of an Exhibition of Edward Weston," 62.

The Modernist insistence for external expression of the internal self through the specifics of medium again emerges, this time in reference to photography. Greenberg proposed that a photographer must rely on an explicit subject and make great effort to express his feelings towards the subject to compensate for the mechanical nature of the medium. In photography, like painting, the author's presence needs to be felt within the work—albeit through the treatment of subject rather than through gesture.

Photographic practice was also later inflected by Postmodern scepticism toward the institutions and dictums associated with Modernism. Greenberg's writing on photography appeared to act as provocation for some of the *Pictures* generation: a collection of artists engaging with film, photography, video and performance.[34] Inspired by French philosophical writings, including Barthes's aforementioned *The Death of the Author,*[35] the *Pictures* artists systematically dismantled modernist notions of authorship using the camera. Sherrie Levine's (b.1947) series *After Walker Evans* (1981) for example, consists of photographs of some of Walker Evans's most famous works, reprinted as Levine's own. As Greenberg concludes "The Camera's Glass Eye" by citing Walker Evans's (1903-1975) work as a prime example of Modernist photography, Levine's choice to target Evans's work for this series is likely not a coincidence.[36] By embracing the reproductive capacity of photography, Levine's series stands in direct opposition with Greenbergian theories of authorial expression and originality in photography. Furthermore, Levine demonstrated how reproductive technologies, such as the camera, could be used to disrupt ideas of authorship in art practice, foreshadowing the impact of the digital upon textual qualities.

The emergence of digital authorship is more complex. As noted earlier in this introduction, Kirby and Paul characterise digital textuality by the ways in which it challenges traditional boundaries of text. Modes of authorship that Kirby and Paul mark as distinctive of the digital are the multiple-authored, the anonymously authored, and the generative; that is, artworks which are collaborative, participatory, or even randomly produced. This authorial interrogation in digital art has its roots in practices associated with the *Fluxus* movement, particularly in the 1960s, evidenced by their interventions with traditional modes of authorship, and their embrace of digital technology and elements of chance.

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[34] Key members included Cindy Sherman (b.1954), Sherrie Levine (b.1947), Richard Prince (b.1949) among others. See: Eklund, *The Pictures Generation, 1974-1984*, 17.

[35] Eklund, *The Pictures Generation, 1974-1984*.

[36] Greenberg, "The Camera's Glass Eye: Review of an Exhibition of Edward Weston," 63.

Examples of this include Sol Lewitt's (1928-2007) series of *wall drawings* earliest c.1969 and Joseph Kosuth's(b.1945) *One and Three Chairs* (1965).[37] Working around the same time as those interrogating the role of the author in painting and photography, LeWitt and Kosuth experimented with dematerialised forms to test the boundaries of authorship. Each removed himself from the physical execution of the work altogether by providing a series of instructions for unattributed gallery assistants in cooperating institutions to perform. Both LeWitt and Kosuth still claim authorship of these works, as authors of a concept rather than the physical art object itself. The lack of materiality in these artworks forced an expanded definition of the author's hand which could be present not only as a gesture, or even within the author's physical touch, but also as the editorial decisions made within a work. Kosuth, in particular, is useful in illustrating a wider point that the dematerialisation and reproducibility of forms in art has created an environment for new concepts of authorship to emerge in contemporary art discourse.

Coinciding with this conceptual interrogation of authorship, pioneer digital artist Nam June Paik (1932-2006) was among the first to fully embrace the live, collaborative, and haphazard nature of digital technology in his practice, with many works relying on audience interaction in order to be fully realised.[38] While this kind of unravelling, co-authored narrative in a work is not necessarily peculiar to the digital (such works emerged earlier in participatory practices such as Allan Kaprow's (1927-2006) *Happenings*),[39] this kind of narrative has become indicative of the digital. This is likely because digital technology lends itself to dialogue and interactivity, operating outside the boundaries of institutions on a global scale in a way that participatory arts practices could only aspire to. The critical engagement with authorship as a concept, and the way digital technology has enabled this in Paik's practice, provoked further interrogation of authorship through digital means.

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[37] Krauss also reflects on Kosuth's work—writing that Kosuth has forgone the "sensuous content of a given art" in order to better understand the fundamental qualities of art itself. See: Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea: Art in the Age of the Postmedium Condition*, 10.

[38] For example, *Random Access Music* (1963) or *Three Camera Participation/Participation TV* (1969).

[39] This series of ephemeral artworks took place in New York throughout the late 1950s and the early 1960s, usually consisting of "mad," improvised installations and performances in galleries and public spaces. See: Allan Kaprow, "The Real Experiment," *Artforum* 22, no. 4 (December 1983): 37-42.

For instance, more recently, early internet artworks (even pre-Web 2.0) have built upon existing traditions of participatory art while embracing the new capabilities of digital and internet technology.[40] Paik's peer and occasional collaborator, Douglas Davis (1933-2014), has more recently engaged with the potential of the internet to interrupt conventional notions of authorship[41] in *The World's Longest Collaborative Sentence* (1995), which is still preserved and functional on the Whitney Museum of American Art's online collection.[42] This work allows users to anonymously add anything they like (except for full stops) to the sentence on the online platform that Davis created. Notably, however, it remains an example of Davis's work, rather than that of the online contributors.

It appears that, historically, digital modes of authorship have more in common with dematerialised artforms such as participatory and conceptual art than any other medium. For texts in the age of interdisciplinary practice and digital technology, in all their haphazardness, reproducibility, and fluidity, the author takes on a new role in subsuming a collection of eclectic, intertextual characteristics into a single, coherent artwork. It is perhaps this that is reigniting authorship as a common theme in contemporary cross-medium practice and theory. When working between mediums, particularly where one is defined by its unpredictability and evanescence, the author takes on a synthesising role in her ability to set boundaries to digitally-engaged practices which are no longer confined to traditional notions of textuality.

In interdisciplinary and intermedium practice, reconciling sites of authorship between painting, photography, and the digital is a complex task. In the coming essays, the contributors attempt to identify not only the synthesising influence of authorship across mediums, but the particular ways in which authorship emerges within interdisciplinary practice.

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[40] The (retroactively named) Web 1.0 refers to the period of internet history, wherein websites were static pages of text and sometimes image. The Web 2.0 refers to the point at which websites became markedly more dynamic and interactive. Through increased functionality, webpages became platforms for users to generate content, rather than platforms on which webmasters publish. A move to Web 3.0, will involve tagging and categorising web content in such a way that machines can "understand" the context in which a search term or item is being written about.

[41] Davis writes about his work and the interrogation of textual qualities such as authorship and authenticity. Interestingly, he positions his investigation in relation to the reproducibility of digital art. See: Douglas Davis, "The Work of Art in the Age of Digital Reproduction," *Leonardo* 28, no. 5 (1995): 381-386.

[42] See: https://artport.whitney.org/collection/DouglasDavis/live/.

The Essays

The anthology opens with Jacqueline Butler's essay, *The Success of Technological Failure,* which reflects upon how visual ambiguity of medium has historically been interpreted as a technical fault in photography, painting, and the digital. By revisiting these "faults," Butler demonstrates how they can be used to visually meld mediums by deliberately recreating technical aberrations in her own practice. Throughout the essay, Butler challenges the persistent associations of reproducibility, spontaneity, and mechanical precision often used to characterise photography by putting together a convincing canon of photographic practices that exist outside the neatly defined notions of the medium. By locating several key sites of ambiguity between photography, the digital, and painting, Butler suggests that one of the enduring characteristics which unites intermedium practices is the physical intervention of the artist in "failed" works.

In *A Matter of State: Visualising the Synthesis Between Collective Myth and Perceptions of Space and Time*, Dominic Chapman theoretically sites his multimedia work. By challenging notions of spontaneity and stasis through photography and digital media, Chapman's practice upends the conventions of medium, making the work ambiguous—the changeable, evolving surface of the work prompting associations with the wet surfaces of painting and analogue photography in progress. Chapman's essay enters a dialogue with Butler's, exemplifying some of the keys sites of ambiguity outlined in her text.

In his essay, *Digital Facture: Painting After New Media Art,* James Frew explores the landscape of post-digital painting; a strand of painting practice which has been shaped and influenced by digital aesthetics and processes. Frew notes that, while painting has undergone some radical textual shifts in its dialogue with the digital, the indexicality of the brushstroke has become galvanised due to its persistence throughout digital and painterly practice. Acting as a symbol for the historical discourses surrounding authorship, gesture, and medium, the paint stroke has been revived as a means to bridge mediums in the context of post-digital painting—the irony of which does not go unchecked. Frew's writing serves to identify sites of tension which emerge in later essays between painting and digital "painting," particularly the re-emergence of abstract painting practices and the renewed emphasis on the painted gesture.

The transcript of Mario Klingemann's keynote speech *Trapping the Accident*, delivered at the *PhotographyDigitalPainting* symposium in October 2019, provides a detailed insight into a complex practice. Klingemann outlines the processes involved in training a *Generative Adversarial Neural*