

Refreshed Tabula Rasa in the Age of Dematerialized Expansion of Trans-aesthetics

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Abstract: This research paper explores the intricate connections between dematerialization, the expanded field, and expanded cinema, drawing insights from cybernetics and trans-aesthetics. Its objective is to investigate the thematic and aesthetic concerns embedded within these concepts and their manifestation in Michelangelo Antonioni's trilogy: Blow-Up (1966), Zabriskie Point (1970), and The Passengers (1975). The study examines Antonioni's inquisition of reality, perception, and play-with images within the expanded field and his politics of dematerialization. The investigation delves into the profligacy and fragmentation of traditional material forms into abstract, conceptual realms, known as dematerialization, which aligns with the expanded field's expansion of artistic expressions and media. Drawing upon cybernetics and maneuvering within queer computational history, the research establishes a theoretical framework for understanding the interconnectedness of these concepts and, furthermore, explores the configuration of autopoiesis and its interplay between systems and environment. The paper attempts to illustrate the impact of universal brain inception, Total AI, and expanded cinema. Moving forward, this study strives to emphasize the structure of the trans-individual, who transcends the consternation of obliteration. So essentially, there's an expansion of consciousness in the realm of expanded reality. The paper is divided into 4 sections that move from one part to another through a comprehensive analysis of Antonioni's Post-World War II films via their obstreperous electronic and abstraction aesthetics, identifying underlying motifs, aesthetic choices, and narrative techniques encrypted in these motion pictures that lie more and more beyond their surface reality. It explores how Antonioni's images embody the dematerialization of history- signs- counterculture- computational networks. Additionally, the murdering of space and expansion rhetoric is methodically disseminated through visual and subtextual symbolism. The research paper takes on a network-driven approach in its investigation, connecting these concepts to unravel their significance in cinema and their metamorphosis since the reverberated effect of the mushroom cloud, its maleficent dematerialization of humanity in Hiroshima. It sheds light on the transformative impact of technology on cinematic expression, the enfolding of temporal structures, the evolution of artistic possibilities, and the blurring of boundaries between art forms. The basal hypothesis of entropy, the second law of thermodynamics predicting energy dissipation and organizational dissolution, serves as a connecting thread. It underscores the transient and ephemeral nature of artistic expressions within the expanded field, expanded cinema, and dematerialization, all moving towards surging entropy.

The dilatory recovery of Japan's landscape after the war is the rebirth of Japan from within the earth, from underneath the oceanic bed, which displaces the solidity of the landscape and shatters forms through

displacements. The reverberations of the A-bomb are still felt and exist in dematerialized forms. After the 2nd World War, there was a psychological shift away from primitive aesthetics, navigating a sea of diverse forms in search of catharsis from the trauma endured by subsequent generations. The 1960s saw the pulverization of the symbolic order into computational networks, conceptual art, countercultural movements, space races, decolonizations, and egregious assassinations in the name of democracy. Essentially, there was an affect denoting the distrust of all elements which, when combined with Einsteinium mass energy through nuclear fission, becomes the sui generis of existence in the form of the A-bomb. Consecutively, emerging multiplicities ask the artists and the spectators to move in sync with the energy blocks resonant with Kazuo Shiraga's *Challenging Mud* (1955) and Saburi Murakami's *One Moment Opening At Six Holes* (1955). These actions were embodied in the advent of new media to accommodate the cinematic and VR movements, making the spectator wear Atsuko Tanaka's *Electric dress* (1956), but more like Iron Man's costume. To optically dematerialize the contours of each form (with a cleave on visuality) that finally gets projected to the spectator became the sole motive of further movements.

The concept of dematerialization as discussed by Lucy Lippard in her essay *The Dematerialization of Art*, signifies a shift away from visual elements, marking a continual momentum towards immateriality. This conceptual shift expounds the immaterial aspects of art in the form of conceptual art, performance art, installation art, and time-based art, to name a few. It leaves the potpourri of materiality to focus on the affective and ratiocinative modalities. The questioning stance they adopt with respect to the commercialization and commodification of art is a transformative process wherein art sheds its physical shackles and emerges as a dynamic force, engaging with the depths of human cognition, emotion, and perception. This substantially moves towards making the traditional art object obsolete; indeed, they also presage an immediate sense of future without the presence of objects in it, to which they referred as ultra conceptual, which necessarily doesn't need to have a space as a site (i.e., a studio) of material production.^[1] There have been multiple truculent dialogues that focus on the integral meaning of the word dematerialization, wherein *de* is derived from Latin meaning down, indicating negation or reversal, and material, which comes from the Latin word *materia* that means substance or matter, i.e., anything that occupies space and has physicality. Pretty much everyone was contemplating the idea that dematerialization may not always result in the complete eradication of physicality. But Lucy Lippard focuses on "de-emphasis in material aspects (uniqueness, permanence, decorative attractiveness)."^[2] This in turn propelled the world towards intangibility, while in the 1960s it permeated into the cultural imagination of the world through Star Trek's iconic phrase "*Beam me up, Scottie!*", the complexities of particle physics, and heavy resonance in the works of John Cage being materialized in *Rozart Mix* (1965) and *Musicircus*, mixed-media event (1967).^[3] But, if we bring in here the advancements and writings of technological pundits about a notion of singularity driven by a cybernetic system of synaptic networks wherein the general AI learns advanced automation, pattern recognition, and generating forms of knowledge and becomes total AI, we hit a cornerstone, making us encounter the uncanny. Additionally, this transformation reflects an ad nauseam dematerialization wherein, undoubtedly, dematerialization possesses a material reality, albeit one reminiscent of dreams: elusive, transient, and unattainable, yet simultaneously shedding light on our deepest longings. They challenge and simultaneously expand the permutations and combinations of artistic expressions. This can extend into a lemniscate configuration beyond earth, right into the universe, while we stay at this very same beat. Lippard discusses the phenomenon of dematerialization

with regard to conceptual art, wherein artists like Dan Flavin in his installations amalgamate physical objects with ethereal light, Robert Barry's conceptual breathing room with words written in an empty gallery space somewhere in the mind, Robert Ryman's subversion of the constructivism of object-ness, and so on and so forth.^[4] The transforming medium of cinema with augmenting digitality embraces the aesthetics of expansion derived from Rosalind Krauss's seminal article *Sculpture in the Expanded Field* (1979) to explore and attempt to integrate this dematerialization. The reception of axiomatic structures, which are a blend of architecture and non-architecture (exponentiated by Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* and his *Mirror Displacements in the Yucatan*(1969) as proposed by Krauss, is refracted onto the landscape, wherein, by subtracting objects of symbolic consideration from architecture and landscape, modernist sculpture gets defined in terms of "pure negativity".^[5] A space of sitelessness and an absolute loss of place arise, and the characteristics that render modernist sculpture nomadic, which could be associated with nomadic enfolding in speed (Deleuze and Guattari), would be an intrinsically magical world of imagination, which would keep the factors of speed constant. The compositional framework of this quaternary expansion of the simple binary modality allows for a new inherent duality that folds this dimension into the arts.

A) the cognition of logical interlinkages between multiple practices and a certain possibility of moving from one position to another within a given artist's practice.^[6]

B) the rendered clarity, wherein it depicts the repositioning of focus from the principles intrinsic to a medium's specificity—sculpture being hemmed in by material conditions into a 3D object—to the social milieu, surpassing the medium's boundaries, that is now seen as fortifying it. The artistic endeavors associated with site-specificity sought to interact intimately with the cultural conditions in question; in a more scrupulous manner, they sought to exert an unmediated effect within the realm of art. The concept of the expanded field serves as a means of delineating and comprehending the boundaries of this artistic framework.

The simultaneous substantiation of Cybernetics as explained by Norbert Wiener in his book *The Science of Control and Communications in the Animal and Machine* suggests that all sagacious prowess is through the feedback mechanisms, which are sequentially synthesized by machines. Wiener's project with cybernetics, which is informational probabilities accumulating and rearranging basic decisions through structured communication systems, was to transcend physical forms to eliminate the glitch of mediation and focus on transmission.^[7] He consolidated biological and electromechanical systems through his theorized frameworks of feedback, communication, and control. The feedback concept embodies an essential principle in the realm of electronics, signifying the process whereby an evaluation of an output signal originating from a given system is subsequently reintroduced into the input of that very system. This principle enables the proficient regulation of diverse systems, effectively responding to unfavorable settings or signals, thereby bolstering the stability of the overall system. The dematerialization of data and the potential of AI are also bracketed to generate a comprehensible and holistic understanding of the world. It suggests that through computational compression and the utilization of electronic brains, humanity can transcend conventional thinking patterns and engage with the environment in a more nuanced and profound manner. Cinema post-World War II interlaces these concepts and frames the expanded world into a conceptual framework, sustaining the simulacrum via a concurrent dematerialization of its previous history, especially the dematerialization of spatial

dimensions. Lippard's emphasis on destruction and incongruity of dematerialized art sources (i.e. Dadaists and surrealists) when read through the destruction of the A-bomb in Hiroshima renders a vast magnitude of dematerializing wherein bodies were vaporized and only shadows were left as imprints. Hence, the commodification of fertility through nuclearization will be tantamount to the dematerialization of humanity, leaving Deleuze's body without organs. Herein, the brain will explode sotto voce into the multiplicity within the realm of AI, following the paradigm-shifting path of negentropy. It's essential to bring in here the trans-aesthetics explicated by Baudliard in his book *The Transparency of Evil*, as it's only the trans individual, signified as a monad or a solitary deluge of destruction, who can transcend the anxiety of extinction. A pertinent question arises: who assumes control of this space—will it be the hacker, the redefined Tiqqun's Young Girl, or the emergent software paradigm?

Baudrillard writes that art has disappeared as a symbolic pact, and there's merely a copy and paste of past and present forms generating an illusion (simulacrum) of culture.^[8] Furthermore, there's a general aestheticization that extends to spectacularization in and subsequent transformation into mere images. There is a sign-based composition; the museumification of all forms of art is a preordained condition; whereas the dematerialization of art, generated through minimalist artworks, anti-art prices, and conceptual frameworks, also generates a whole aesthetic of "transparency, disappearance, and disembodiment."^[9] This disappearance, simulacrum, duplication, and materialization of aesthetics nudge towards the "immense museum of artificial art" engineered by cybernetics and its accouterments in the form of immersive VR and cognitive general AI.^[10] Furthermore, the occurrence of dematerialization in trans-aesthetics can be seen as a form of expansion of spectatorial perception and experience. In the 1960s, expanded cinema (encompassing electronic and digital forms that transcend traditional screen-based experience) liberated the cinematic form from the weight of standardization and ventured into its subsequent exploration of new intermedia forms via synesthesia, proliferating moving images (pixels), electronic media, dis-equilibrium of temporality, shades of effulgence, and so on. The movement broke the conventions of spectatorship and the building blocks of cinema through its simultaneous propulsion towards compression. The process of dematerializing real earth to generate its own simulacrum is analogous to the AI earth of the Anthropocene, as represented by Google Earth. Connecting all these above-mentioned phenomena of Trans-aesthetics, rhetoric of expansion, dematerialization, and digitality is the phenomenon of expanded cinema, wherein a totalizing of all media, art, and human experience happens in one frame. Like this format, this research paper attempts to analyze the totality of Antonioni's trilogy, which further complicates and intersects these above-mentioned conceptualizations and aesthetics. Within the ongoing proliferation of expanded cinema modalities via software such as Unreal Engine and rendered through mechanisms of Digital Production powered by generative AI and other cybernetic enmeshment, it becomes essential to locate such transformations within the cinematic imagination of the past, present and the future.

A. Thomas Rock belting Rolling Stones' (*I Can't Get No*) *Satisfaction* on London streets

Blowup, directed by Michelangelo Antonioni, is based on Julio Cortázar's story *Las babas del diablo* (*The Devil's Drool*) which traces the cryptic adventures of a London photographer named Thomas, filled with

pervasive erotomania, who serendipitously films a potential crime in one of his photographs, ushering him into a sphinxlike realm of riddles and unknowns.

The continuum of external and interior space is broken at which stage the interior world overtakes the exterior's real, converging the entire city of London into a simulated reality. Thomas carves out his personal domain of artistic expression for his fashion photography within this modeled metropolis. It's important to note that outside this artificially orchestrated world lies the boundless realm of primal shapes and roles, concealed but inclusive of the pre-individual state, characterized by a shared common reality that has not yet undergone individuation into separate entities. Thomas is a self-shaped individual with his DIY mode of learning, as he's not compelled by historical forms and captures images without concern for their origins. This simultaneously embodies the nucleus of pop culture, within which pop is a self-forming domain that fosters the attainment of magnificent feats by assimilating diverse elements or materializing the aesthetics of dematerialization and an expansion of formats. As a photographer, Thomas frames and clicks the razzmatazz of countercultures and alternate modernities, at which point Antonioni's camera attains the psychogeography of double consciousness through literary figures like the *adventurer, stranger, flaneur, derive, social scientist, superman, and man without qualities* all merged into one through chroma keying. Thomas's approach to photography is violent, almost as if he's killing his subjects with the camera, whereas his suburban, wild young models furred on drugs are somehow attracted to the brilliance of his work, dying to perform/get murdered by him. This evokes, at multiple points, the imagery of a serial killer who uses a camera tripod as a weapon. Furthermore, following this trail, London becomes a simulated reality, his artistic studio for manifestation and exploration of his carnal desires and actions, which additionally resembles the methodology of serial killers who intricately plan and conduct their acts. Thomas occupies the roles of both the iconic fashion photographer and the hyper-realist of post-modernity, questioning the archival project and the significance of the Anthropocene.

The film explores the idea of going beneath the surface through the disappearance and dematerialization of the self within the artificially painted green screens with automated matte refinement and color correction. Simultaneously, a vision of humans becoming objects and the use of surface and shiny objects such as the floor, Ripley's Op-Art, the body, and the camera catechize the aesthetics of digitalization to locate and frame the cinematic. *Blowup* also compresses the city of London to generate a street-level city fire similar to Google Earth, which is actually a shift to the digital realm and the replication of suburban landscapes. The digital world, with its endless proliferations and multitudinous brackets of eternity, also aligns with the formal repetition found in Smithson's and Duchamp's works. The idea that all art is finished suggests that the dominance of ready-mades will occupy all artistic space, something that Baudrillard's trans-aesthetics discusses further while positing the end of transcendence, an option that is no longer available to the subject. In *Blowup*, the film embodies a new form of larval creativity that is detached from its history and social alignments; this is represented by the following:

1. Thomas and his manic creativity are illustrated when he points his phallogocentric camera at Verushka's contorting, prone physique.
2. the murder of space and the death of an older order, symbolized by the dead body haunting Thomas.
3. the death of patriarchy, at which point the figure of the serial killer maintains the illusions of a pre-oedipal mothering.
4. Thomas's fight against the dematerialization of signs and verbal communication, following their

subsequent absorption into the sensations of pop objects. This also augments the pop-individual in the form of Thomas, ousting the social realm.

5. London as painted over the city—an icon, an index, and a symbol that materializes the simulacra of the urban while containing lived experiences. In the same vein, it also epitomizes the act of seeing between the partially ajar jealousies of counterculture and the rise of pop individuals.
6. dangers of potlatch in pop, such as implosion, catatonia, and the depiction of a depressed Anthropocene on Google Earth—an empty Body without Organs (BwO).
7. simulacra of mummers



Figure 1. Thomas's frame within violence with camera and bodies.



Figure 2. Sexual conquistador's composition: "This is for me, babe, for me. Love me, love me."



Figure 3. The object of dreams of expanded-dematerialised

The narrative of the film unfolds on an expanding scale of intonation as it explores the city and, drawing here from Lippard's arguments, the world is metamorphosed into a conceptual artwork that's enveloped within a simulacrum through a dematerialization of the previous past, augmenting its spatiality. Thomas composes his personal experiences over the space of the cosmopolitan city via his indulgent drug-infused parties. The multiple divergent frameworks employed by Antonioni foreshadow digitality before its inception. As discussed by Professor Kaushik Bhaumik, Thomas' photography actually "becomes tattoos that inscribe a tribal identity onto the urban canvas, which illustrates the inherent tattoo-like nature of the digital realm and its concurrent expansion." These holographic representations of reality are disseminated all over the narrative and, at multiple stages, the image begins to develop 3-D aestheticization, as observed in the final sequences of Thomas in the park and the green screen/grass (which also functions as his flesh). Freud's concept of *Thanatos*, the death instinct, which originates from Greek mythology, is regarded as one of the primal instincts towards death alongside *Eros*, the life force. Herein, the much more expansive *Thanatos* of surplus and entropy embedded within the universe renders a site of conversion for the phobia of finality into the reinvigorating experience of the pop potlatch.

Amidst his explorations, Thomas is pursued by

reality, the gun.



Figure 4. Is Thomas a blip?

pranksters and clowns, representing the political climate of the time and adorned with protest masks. The importance of a placard that someone picks up further adds to the symbolism and cultural context of the film. The placard becomes an iconic pop-object, representing the larger themes of protest, activism, and social commentary within the narrative. The flash and pop of immediacy captured by the works of Ed Ruscha, Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol, and James Rosenquist gets channeled by the film's auteur, all handling the "charge of banality" in their re-compositions.^[11] The inevitable extinction

engineered by entropy is almost like ruins in reverse, casting an entropic shadow over our lives. From images everywhere to the computational singularity, it's all entropic. Smithson explains in his essay *Entropy and the New Monuments* how entropy is never arbitrary and is a fixed postulation of time as decay, which substantially materializes in the film.

Now I'd like to analyze an important sequence from the film when Thomas and Jane meet at his studio. After being photographed by Thomas with her alleged lover in the park, Jane insists on getting the photographs. Initially, she gets attended professionally as a model, and then finally, she's invited by Thomas for a drink and a joint. Suddenly cognizant of the jazz melodies (performed by Herbie Hancock) emanating from the phonograph, he instructs her to cease her frenzied synchronization to the rhythm but rather calmly counteract it; ultimately, she willingly complies with his persistent plea of "*Slowly, slowly. Against the tempo.*"^[12] This subsequently turns into an ecdysiast performance of two bodies, at which point it signifies flickering visions and op-art glimmers. This "now apparent, now vanished from sight" accentuates the objectivity of desire, with error correction functioning as a cybernetic mechanism analogous to an AI glitch. Thomas embarks on a quest to fabricate an idealized realm, a transcendent domain steeped in historical context, amidst the emerging landscape of new media, achieved through the dematerialization of the past. This process involves the integration of perception, compression of time, and the global expansion facilitated by innovations like Google Earth, underscoring the notion of our corporeal essence becoming ethereal—bereft of substance, akin to weightless fizz—possibly leading to the eventual dissolution of somatic presence. The mind, tethered to artificial intelligence, assumes the role of a potential savior, safeguarding the core aspects of humanity. Merleau-Ponty's conceptualization of perception, particularly preobjectile perception, which delineates a form of abstract seeing and knowing, informs the film's editing by stripping away the phenomenological body from its aesthetically crafted corporeal representations.

The film is formally intricate, organizing numerous jump cuts that carry deep-seated symbolism. These jump cuts differ from the more famous Godardian style as they tap into the energy and semiotics of the cut itself. The impulses in the film are prompted by a fashion and consumerist culture, with advertisements and a distinctive *Made in USA* aesthetic permeating its narrative. *Blow-Up* can be summarized as a reflection on the

internalization of reality and the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), where the body becomes irrelevant in cultural experiences. Upon integration with suitable technological interfaces, the brain gains the capacity to lead an active existence through the simulation of experiences. This notion finds precedent in Pavlov's experiments, where sound alone could induce hunger sans the presence of actual food. Consequently, the brain transforms into an exteriorized entity, akin to a virtualized cloud, detached from its physical corporeal vessel. The presence of mummies adds to the ambiguity, as they engage in a virtual tennis game, miming and gibbering, liberating themselves from societal constraints. The tennis game serves as a metaphorical cage, representing the confined nature of society. Within the simulated game, the ball crosses the wire and falls towards Thomas, unaware of its significance. He instinctively throws the ball back, unknowingly participating in the game (the moment of expanded consciousness, symbolizing the irrevocable absence of a return). The group surrounding Thomas stays as the uncanny, appearing as aliens with diverse cultural interests. Antonioni explores the concept of wild difference, playing with the notions of belonging and identity. Unlike the cool scenes and subcultures of the time, Thomas doesn't fit into any group. As a fashion photographer, he feels detached and tired, yet he grabs his camera and wanders. The sound of the tennis ball catches his attention, an electronic and partially synthetic sound that piques his curiosity. The dynamism and kinetic force of the camera and Antonioni's shots make a framework of psychodynamic visual experience and, parallelly, Thomas's identity crisis, wherein he's navigating his way from being a fashion photographer in swinging London to an artist seeking to document post-war labor in London, similar to omphaloskepsis, with no resolution. The sequence with the electric guitar, which channels industrial energy and the disappearing working class, is cognizant of the formation of problems with children who've not known the fulminations of war and have percolated as carnivorous hothouse flowers. The neural cybernetic networks, when automation and psychosis interlace themselves with the aesthetics of postmodernity, is illustrated through the tennis ball sound, the presence of a gun, and the discovery of the dead body. As the narrative progresses, the disappearance of Thomas in the end provokes contemplation about his very being a proliferation of the intended meaning-making process.

The glitch-infused sound track certainly accentuates the sense of ambiguity; the gun and dead body elicit voyeuristic affect and serve as a critical reflection on the boundaries of realism, emblematic of the excesses and exaggerated visual methods characteristic of the modern age. Now, from the primitive neglect of Thomas caged in his own simulacrum, let's move to Los Angeles's *Zabriskie Point*.

B. Sonic Expansion, dematerializing forms in Antonioni's *Zabriskie Point*.

Zabriskie Point, directed by the maverick Michelangelo Antonioni, dives into the countercultural zeitgeist and disillusionment of 1960s America. Amidst the sublime vastness of Death Valley's desert landscapes, the film entwines the plotlines of Mark and Daria (his plane and her car) as they navigate a world consumed by materialism, violence, and societal unrest. The film's entrancing visuals, innovative editing techniques, and provocative soundtrack, featuring legendary bands like Pink Floyd, immerse viewers in a kaleidoscopic and introspective odyssey. The film's non-linear narrative and captivating visuals mirror the discombobulation and existential angst experienced by its characters. As Mark and Daria's paths converge and diverge, their encounters with authority, consumerism, and each other propel them towards a climactic crescendo that transcends traditional storytelling. Mark, the protagonist, is a destiny-favored man, similar to a celebrity,

performing the arts of playing cards, having sex, etc. in a modern reality television show.

The film entails comprehensively the notion of simulcasted perception, which refers to the simultaneous perception modes of multiple sensory inputs or information streams, as well as the integration of new media history. It involves the coalescence and processing of sensory stimuli from different modalities in real time, allowing individuals to experience a cohesive and multidimensional perception of their environment. The film's opening intentionally prioritizes sound over visuals, evoking synesthesia and immersing the audience. Despite the amorphous imagery, the scene captivates and enthralls, inviting viewers to embrace its immersive qualities as a whole. In the radical assembly of students sequence the accompanying percussive score to the meeting reverberates with pulsating rhythms, accentuating the inner emotional cadences of the gathering that remain subtly concealed from direct observation. The visual track appears hazy and electronically distorted, bestowing a sedating and all-encompassing softening of the senses akin to the perceptual distortion induced by mind-altering substances. Consequently, the altered state of consciousness engenders a fluctuating focal point, oscillating between immersion and detachment from the scene. The student protagonists embody the countercultural ethos, and communication occurs within their internal realm, externalized through the syncopated symphony. The scene depicts a simulated confrontation influenced by mind-altering substances. A detached perspective, accompanies impassioned debates, allowing individual expression amidst political discourse.



Figure 5. The Billboard becomes the thought-bubble. Animation of boredom.



Figure 6. Disappearance of Mark's Face—His Faceless Death.

Antonioni's *Zabriskie Point* offers a view of the earth's lithosphere, the hard material shell of the earth. Furthermore, if we look through an AI bunker lens, the film can be visualized as a brain evoking subconscious feelings such as vagueness, subliminal sensations, and resonance. The film highlights the importance of small gestures and connects a thread between objects and space with globalization and the totalization of objects and space altogether. The hybridity in Los Angeles' landscape comprises the desolateness of the desert and rapid urbanization, which generates a phantasmagoric city teeming with apertures and spatial absence. There's a profound engagement by Antonioni, particularly in terms of the materiality of boredom. The desertification of the land encapsulates this essence of boredom.

Several kinds of sonic universes emerge - the pagan chants that Mark hears coursing through the streets of LA in the exterior- noise, avant-garde microsounds, sharp wires grating against one another setting our teeth on edge, birds chirping a la the Hitchcock film soundtrack consisting of a sharp electronic bird cacophony,



Figure 7. Amorous encounters in the desert-island/any-space-whatever. Bodies looking to crawl inside the bodies.



Figure 8. The explosion of dematerialisation foreshadows the coming end. Embodiment of Beatles Here Comes the Sun.

insects screaming vs. the deep silence of the interiors of the corporation- a dark, sinister hum- a dark ghost in the machine. Gnosis. The Holy Spirit gone Black Hole pitch. Given the description of the ideological fault lines of the film these electronic sonic registers would map on to oppositions in American society at the turn of the 1970s: youth vs. adults, Leftism vs. Capitalism, youth vs. police, tribe vs. civilization. It is ironic that such fault lines did not exist for the actual history of cybernetics.

The employment of Pink Floyd's immersive sonic tapestries in the movie, meticulously selected by Antonioni for their environmentally conscious and neo-paganistic nature, signify a methodology of amalgamating and refining intricate auditory elements into a harmonious and unified auditory peregrination. This additionally expands the concept of entropy, and the subsequent procedure of condensation aligns with the broader concept of computational compression,

wherein the vast magnitude and intricacy of the world can be compacted into a cohesive and intelligible structure with the assistance of AI technologies. The three songs transpose sonic velocity through dematerialized musicality.

It's important to note that the space of the desert allows the film's characters to be in a trance, expanding their spatiality through their subsequent drug engagement and the aloofness of corporations in physical space. The vast emptiness of the space behaves as an archaic expanse, summoning a perception of primal vitality and celestial actuality. The desert materializes into a conduit through which inorganic elements gain animation, obscuring the delineations between the animate and inanimate. Another explanation is that the Exploratorium, curated for expansion, juxtaposes both inward and outward movements of the film: the commercialization of territories in the desert, the notion of retirees engaging in lunar golfing, and the concept of traversing forward and backward within the desert. In due course, these movements intersect as some individuals seek inward experiences while others venture into outward spaces. The movie evolves into a chiasmus, with a girl serving as a conduit linking these two movements. The thematic concerns that Antonioni frames and handles with panache are spatiality, boredom, automation, counterculture, and the intersection of drugs, electronics, and spirituality. At this point, I'd like to bring back the concept of entropy being discussed in the paper, which annexes itself to the sensation of boredom. Smithsonian land art reflects Smithson's fatigue caused by the repetitive suburban panorama, which induces a sensation of deceptive permanence or infinity. *The Spiral Jetty*, like the film, and the expanded space interacts with the land space but also coincide with it. This visual

panegyric of boredom further extends to the exploration of mirrored images and the banality of the earth's configuration. The sequence of Daria's dance in the film is accompanied by peculiar soundscapes and a hummingbird leitmotif, while Zabriskie's point is composed as a photograph, unable to completely render its essence. Essentially, the film functions as an embodiment of Smithson's investigation of vitality, temporality, and existential banality. The film also integrates several of McLuhan's theories (global village, medium is the message), Duchamp's artistic principles, and the deconstruction of violence and history. It delves more into the intricacies of advancement, exclusivity, and unapproachability while also highlighting the primordial essence of time and the transformative potency of art. Through explosive sequences and intricate cinematography, *Zabriskie Point* challenges conventional perceptions and encourages viewers to contemplate the underlying verities of the cosmos. Wiener's postulations, which have moved from AI to VR to Google Earth to Total AI, are symbolized in the film, where computational networks displace slave labor with mechanized labor. The film also formulates a universal brain through a mutual enfolding of the human body (rolling in the desert) and the earth. Antonioni presents LA as a bunker in the universe, manifesting as a flickering city wherein the landscapes encapsulate each other. The incipience of imaging the site of the moon as the extension of residential American suburbs is something that is articulated throughout the film. Rosalind Krauss's expanded field of sculpture on the moon signposts a utopia where art and creativity can move beyond the peripheries and bring forth a sense of stasis and parity. The amalgamation of dematerialization, trans-aesthetics, and expanded fields is further illustrated in an all-encompassing Expansive Cinema. Weiner's postulations are manifested with AI Horizon, wherein the task is to decipher the intricate tapestry of colors that permeate the universe, embracing the expansive potential of expanded cinema. Unlike *Blow up*, *Zabriskie Point* is predominantly about Daria because she marks an openness to multiplicity and being happy as an outsider, waving her flag of freedom through her naked body right at the epicenter of nature. While others perceive danger and risk in the rhizomatic multiplicity, she surrenders to it. She is the trans-individual. Her encounter with Zabriskie Point expands her perspective and generates a revelation of social constructs in the form of gaffes and fatuousness. This is analogous to the ethos of hippie culture, which sought to expand individual expressions in various forms such as sculpture, cinema, and consciousness, transcending societal boundaries to connect with cosmic dimensions. There is a fragile equilibrium between violence and formation. The segment in which a building detonates, captured through a succession of five cameras at varied intervals, frames the quintessential beat of temporality as a singular occurrence. This particular moment signifies the metamorphic potency of artistic expression. J. B. Rhine's (extrasensory perception) is likened to Daria's eye as a camera shutter, epitomizing the blend of spirituality and technocratic principles. The explosion is an all-encompassing occurrence where every entity disintegrates and merges into the vastness of the celestial expanse. The visual representation captured within Daria's gaze conveys the total embodiment of Zabriskie Point, an inward-looking projection of her internal musings. Antonioni deliberately chose instances of impactful importance to communicate their unique significance, prompting viewers to dish out their renditions. In *Blow-up*, London embodies the spirit of the entire nation, and Antonioni grapples with the robust synergy between photography and cinema, catalyzing a discourse on the transformative power of snapshots. Then, he ventures into the vast expanse of Los Angeles in *Zabriskie Point*, immersing himself in the sublime beauty of the landscapes that invokes cinema's evolution and adaptation. Through this film, which is unencumbered by traditional and social excrescences, he curates a *parasitic anti-cinema*, a captivating melding of mixed media elements where photography and Earth flicker continuously within the cinematic realm. It propels us to ponder

how cinema can transcend its own medium and embrace the expansiveness of the world. Here lies the emergence of cinema in the expanded field, a realm where the established demarcations dissolve and new narrative territories open. Antonioni stands as a pioneering figure, delving into the intricacies of data complexity within a medium that is itself steeped in complexity. His visionary approach aligns with the era of the post-medium, as eloquently articulated by Krauss in her seminal essay on the expanded field. In this intrepid endeavor, cinema found itself impelled to actively engage with the media, technology, and scientific domains. In this regard, Antonioni emerges as a paramount figure among analogue directors with the profound historical undertaking that AI set out on. Cinema became inextricably connected to AI through the expansion of human consciousness, navigating a new medium, and pioneering an innovative and unexplored ethical landscape. Now comes:

C. Antonioni's *The Passenger*, galvanizing the trans-continental, aka the world— The Trans-Individual

The world is undergoing a phase where news and theory merge through social media, while the Anthropocene provides a conceptual backdrop. Reflecting on previous dynamic social uprisings incorporating facets like organized crime, narcotics, underground parties, sexual exploration and acts of violence, there has been a return to conventional discourse. Emerging media structures signify tranquility after upheaval. Within this context, the film *The Passenger* explores the absorption of disco-era colors and synesthetic experiences into everyday life's monotony. McLuhan's notion of *Narcissus Narcosis* explores the tendency of individuals to avoid facing the profound influence of technology on their existence, choosing instead to perceive it as banal and unremarkable, as embodied by David. In addition, it highlights the co-optation of the European revolution, exported to the Third World through support for socialist and fascist movements. The protagonist, David Locke, turns a nomadic lifestyle into a business enterprise focused on financial gain through arms smuggling, demonstrating the emergence of individual entrepreneurship and immaterial labor. In *The Passengers*, Antonioni continues his exploration of how the landscape, geography, and Earth are shaped by cultural activities carried out by a younger generation who were not participants in the war as adults. Trans-Individuals now shape history, aided by computations that facilitate polyphonic approaches, departing from the uniformity of books, language, and cinema. The transindividual, symbolized by a monad or singular tsunami wave, propel forward individually, interlinked yet indifferent, traversing a complex network like a web assemblage. In *The Passenger*, the protagonist comes across a character known as *The Girl*, underscoring the interchangeability within individuals. David continuously edits his passport photos as he acknowledges the intrinsic similarity among individuals and assumes that in a world filled with apathy, discerning between them would be negligible. The film then moves into the countercultural context, highlighting how individuals in that sphere often adopt multiple identities at different stages of their lives, rendering it difficult to discern one from another. This might elucidate the transition from visual representations and cinema to numerical and mathematical concepts, prompted by the inherent instability and philosophical ambiguity of images.

Antonioni also presents a contrasting view of Europe around 1975, unlike the other two films, wherein it strives for racial uniformity confirmed within its own set of fences, still expanding to welcome the entire world, with David striving to become the other. The copiousness of pop simulation and its strident affect don't find a way



Figure 9. *The Art of Identity Swapping.*



Figure 10. *The camera gazes upon the dusty street scene visible through the steel security bars that guard his entrance.*



Figure 11. *The flight over the Mediterranean.*



out of this enclosed mass, thereby fueling racial segregation. This world of 1975 has relinquished counterculture movements and radicalism both in thought and action. The inability to differentiate and identify faces is at the core of *The Passenger's* problems, as evidenced by the automated switch between Robertson and David with legerdemains of image swap. David is in fact suffering from catatonia, and in the neurologically damaged world around him he can't position visages due to their pertinent ennui and phlegmatic state of being. The sense of no identity also includes a metaphysical sense of connection between David and Robertson, who transfer their souls while exchanging countenances. Subsequently, David becomes Robertson by gazing at him, and then he expands into the room, the earth, and the cosmos while being fixated on them. This hyperspace evokes the void through this wide-angle, deep composition, turning into the most sublime form of the brain, AI—ethereal mist drifting through the void, moving away from and at us. Antonioni's snapshot shock imagery and shock editing generate the effect of electronically compressed processing. The Girl in *The Passenger* is also one such scapegoat for the advanced theory of revolution in the dialectic when that world is over. Antonioni cites this "apparatus" by steadying the final sequence in the motel room, wherein David meets his end with gyroscopes.^[13] The same configuration is used to frame the girl when she's in the car and David is flying over the sea like a seagull. This single shot of David flying over the Mediterranean is extremely profound in its nature and the connections it draws from Greek mythology—dolphins—suggest the human genesis in aquatic beginnings, which in turn poses challenges to our perception of our singular species and fixed identities. Consequently, David, in the end, appears deflated and entropic, as he

And we get back to the desert.

Conclusion

As Valie Export writes in her phenomenal essay *Expanded Cinema as Expanded Reality*, expanded cinema accounts for “multiple projections, mixed media, film projects, and action films, including the utopia of pill films and cloud films.”^[14] This liberated form of cinema is utilized all through Antonioni’s trilogy, framing a symbiosis of multiplicity and the apparatus that registers it. It’s like a synchronized and yet uncanny turntablism of the earth’s composed data. There’s a jitterbug of masquerading images materialized through the dematerialization of several technologies of expanded cinema. The aggressive snapshot cutting and bifurcating temporality simultaneously get manifested in all three films, wherein they generate a VR apparatus-like simulation of choosing from one avatar to another, moving into the depths of parallel universes, almost becoming schizophrenic.

Thomas’ previously energetic and spontaneous photography has morphed into a serene and uninterrupted documentation of African revolutions, as observed by a seemingly disengaged David. There are both real and sexually aerial movements in the film. The nonchalant encounters and emancipation from conventional norms regarding sexual expression depicted in *Zabriskie Point*, have given way to a sense of melancholic neurosis, where sex becomes a brief instant within a prevailing sense of everlasting sameness. The trilogy transitions between bustling urban environments and the vast expanse of the desert; with brief interludes in cities, it ultimately concludes near the desert's edge once more. From the aspiration for global cultural integration through the fusion of diverse life forms and materials in *Expanded Cinema*, to the diverse and harmonious lifestyles of young individuals in the interconnected Global Village encompassing different races and animals and the nomadic pursuit of creative expression in *Land Art*, there has been a regression towards exclusive racial divisions and Western superiority. This has ensnared the Third World not through the influence of the phonetic alphabet but through the proliferation of military weaponry. The dialectic of *Land Art*, which emphasizes the Earth as a shared landscape, contrasts with the exclusive focus on video imagery. Antonioni's trilogy should be interpreted both chronologically and concurrently, as a sequential documentation of reconstruction in the period 1965 to 1975 and as a collection of simultaneous narratives intertwined with one another having a remarkable Hitchcockian influence all over. It's essentially like this- *Blow-up*: Convergence of masculinity and creative pursuits ; *Zabriskie Point*: Influence of the defense industry; *The Passenger*: Ramifications of the fusion between Smithsonian works, military machinery, and political power via cybernetics all moving towards entropy. In banking, demat accounts are used for dematerialization, wherein physical securities are transformed into electronic superhighways. Virtual shares that are converted through dematerialization follow somewhat the same trajectory as what has happened in the art world with the advent of non-fungible tokens: the complete and thorough dematerialization of forms, wherein materiality is exchanged for a situational beat between two objects (the camera and the protagonists). Hereby, the trilogy accounts for the contemporary dematerialized products that simultaneously incorporate trans-aesthetics to accommodate and handle the sublime of the trans-individual, who’s the only one to transcend the dread of

existential trepidation. These images stage the attack on visibility with an invasion of the spectator's body into the optical field, which is now void of both purity and stabilized form.

If *Blow-up* ended in the silence of the universe and an erasure of personal Oedipal histories, then *Zabriskie Point* concludes by imparting a major insight : the acquisition of a mystical annihilating gaze, a cognitive force poised to obliterate all adverse histories while regressing to elemental simplicity. It frames a gendered dichotomy: the masculine pursuit of silence, oblivion of Oedipal histories, contrasted with the feminine embrace of a destructive third eye akin to Shiva, advocating for the austerity of substance. *Zabriskie Point* is basically about the need to destroy the world of consumerism and Capitalism via the power of the look itself. *Zabriskie Point* provides the bird's eye view of us as tiny, puny and irrelevant, while *Blow-up* shows us as the insect we need to become in AI self-sufficiency. Antonioni's ending for *Zabriskie Point* is thus ambiguous- in blowing up commodities he produces a simulacrum of the garbage that our society produces, but he also beautifies it as in Pop Art, recycles the garbage for art. But there are strange contradictions in this sequence. Antonioni liberates objects cybernetically disciplined in ergonomics, compressed in entropy to create order and more accumulation. But he does so in a cool, compressed cybernetic space. The AI brain, in computation. The explosion of order into chaos is a muffled explosion. The music is muffled exactly as in *Blow-Up* and even more so. *Blow-Up* is an earlier film, earlier electronica, more radio, television. *Zabriskie Point* is later and squarely in the domain of computational electronic compression. The digital realm offers endless possibilities for self-animation and a sense of multiplicity, granting us the power to become anything. We aren't far from this transcendence, as recently exhibited WiFi routers turning into cameras through AI and integrating visuals show the upcoming finale in this real-life version of *Black Mirror*.

In the world of Baudrillard's trans-aesthetics, every object in our digital cybernetic world gets its "fame for 15 minutes."^[15] He further discusses the elimination of illusion with total disillusionment, and this total sense of simulation is what the trans-aesthetic world symbolizes. It is exactly like the images in the trilogy in its expansive and immersive nature. The simultaneous chiasmus of the film's rejection of political realism and its obsequiousness towards multiplicity creates a circadian flow towards the apogee of capitalism in America as illustrated in the expanded sequence of explosion, dematerializing all forms, all molecules into the negative energy and away from negentropy. Drawing from Baudrillard's writings, we live in a world of "trans-economics", "trans-politics", "trans-national" and essentially the enveloping of trans-aesthetics.^[16]

Hyper-reality and the glitch are omnipresent, from the pixelated clothing ensembles by Loewe's to the cartoonish abstraction embodied in MSCHF's *Big Red Boots*.^[17] Today, Baudrillard's concept becomes a framework where images are shared, transferred, stored, and generated, but they have zilch meaning. The process of transcendence and becoming a body without organs through the experience of VR is essentially nothing but the dematerialization of ourselves and our history through the expansion of another hyper-reality, something that Tim Cook promises with his new Vision Pro. With AI, integrated post-cinematic modalities making VFX techniques obsolete, Virtual productions re-arranging the orders of production and Software like Unreal engine re-aligning the praxis of making movies, it becomes imperative to understand and explore the interconnectedness of new media with cultural studies, cybernetics, machine perception and human-computer interaction to name a few. In this trans-aesthetic world, everything—each participate in it—is

aesthetic, yet it is dematerialized. Antonioni realized that cinema had some other function than that defined by cineastes and theorists until then- that of redoing its status as the seventh art that summed up the previous six in both deconstructing itself in new relationships with all the arts around it and going beyond art history to properly encompass all of human experience. In doing that, cinema would now have to directly engage with media, technology and science. For this reason, he is the greatest of the analog directors who thought through the larger historical task of AI, where cinema was connected to AI via the expansion of human consciousness to a new medium and a new horizon of ethics. Godard was the greatest in creating the techniques of AI in making cinema go New Media. Taken together Antonioni and Godard figured pretty much everything there was about AI.

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