



IASS PANEL in Thessaloniki, Greece (August 30 – September 3, 2022)

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Semiotics and Digital Art History Facing the Challenges of Image Big Data

The main contribution of the computational instruments used today in Digital Art History is a reconnection with the project of a genealogy of forms that goes back to the mathematician and biologist D'Arcy Thompson (1917), and was further developed in the contributions of art historians such as Heinrich Wölfflin (1915), Henri Focillon (1934) and Aby Warburg (1924- 29), with his notion of migration of motifs. Yet the project of a genealogy of forms, despite important revisions, has remained incomplete because of the difficulty in detecting patterns in very large corpora of images obtained from collections that are both dispersed and disparate (in terms of both historical periods and storage media).

The objective of several studies engaging either Deep Learning methods, or more classical Computer Vision approaches, is to reveal similar patterns in groups of images that have not yet been linked together. Newer technologies offer us the possibility to amend some of the delays of semiotics (especially in diachronic studies) and to reclaim the investigation of the notion of symbolic form as a discursive device (an ANR project involving Belgium, France and Luxembourg is moving in this direction).

The objective of our panel is to combine research in the field of advanced Big Data analysis of images, particularly but not exclusively, images designated as artworks, with semiotics research. We welcome papers discussing:

- Digital Art History as semiotics of symbolic forms
- Aby Warburg's 'transmigration of forms' and the art historical background of digital imaging
- Big Data theory and the artwork
- Image software design and semiotic analysis
- Digital imaging and its practices

Keywords: Big Data society, automatic analysis, digital art history, symbolic form

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