AHST 4342-501 (27532)
History of Media and New Media Art
Spring 2018
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University of Texas at Dallas
Arts & Humanities
T-Th 1:00-2:15

Thursday 01/11/18
Medium, Media, Mediation, Remediation and Recursion, an Introduction to Terms

Introduction to Terms

Medium
Media
Mediation
Remediation
Recursion

medium – a middle state or condition

artistic medium - In the arts, a medium (mediums, media) is a material used by an artist to create a work.

painting, sculpture, architecture, poetry, theater

…ut pictura poesis…

Ars Poetica, Horace, 18 BCE

As is painting so is poetry.

> The Horatian simile asserted the likeness, if not the identity, of painting and poetry; and from so small a kernel came an extensive body of aesthetic speculation and, in particular, an impressive theory of art which prevailed in the 16th, 17th, and most of the 18th centuries. While a few poets assented to the proposition that painting surpasses poetry in imitating human nature in action as well as in showing a Neoplatonic Ideal Beauty above nature, more of them raided the province of painting for the greater glory of poetry and announced that the preeminent painters are the poets.

http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/88/utpict.html

Paragone
(meaning comparison)

Which of the arts is best equipped to rival nature - painting or sculpture?

Leonardo da Vinci, *Treatise on Painting*, notes compiled after his death, comparing painting and sculpture: Painting has universal truth because of its superior ability to mimic nature and sits at the top of the arts hierarchy.

Leonardo, Lady with an Ermine, 1489-90

MEDIUM SPECIFICITY

Marcel Duchamp, Fountain, 1917

Clement Greenberg

- “The task of self-criticism [in modern art] became to eliminate from the specific effects of each art any and every effect that might conceivably be borrowed from or by the medium of any other art. Thus would each art be rendered ‘pure’, and in its ‘purity’ find the guarantee of its standard of quality as well as of its independence.” (Greenberg [1965] 2004, p.775)

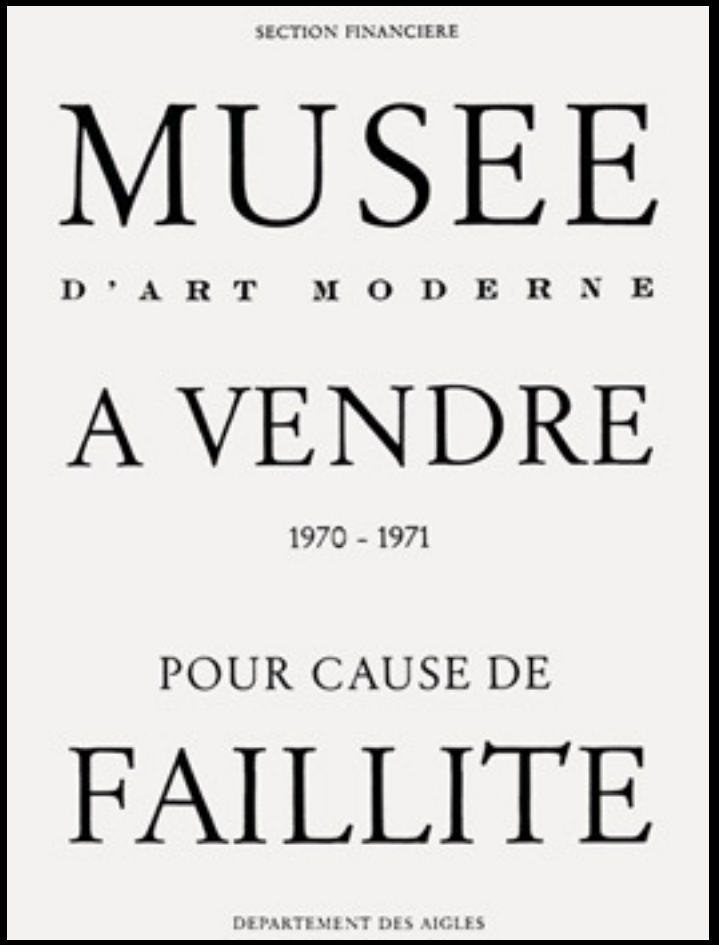
Clement Greenberg (1909-1994)
“Modernist Painting” 1960/1965

Rosalind Krauss, *"A Voyage on the North Sea" Art in the Age of the Post Medium Condition* (1999)

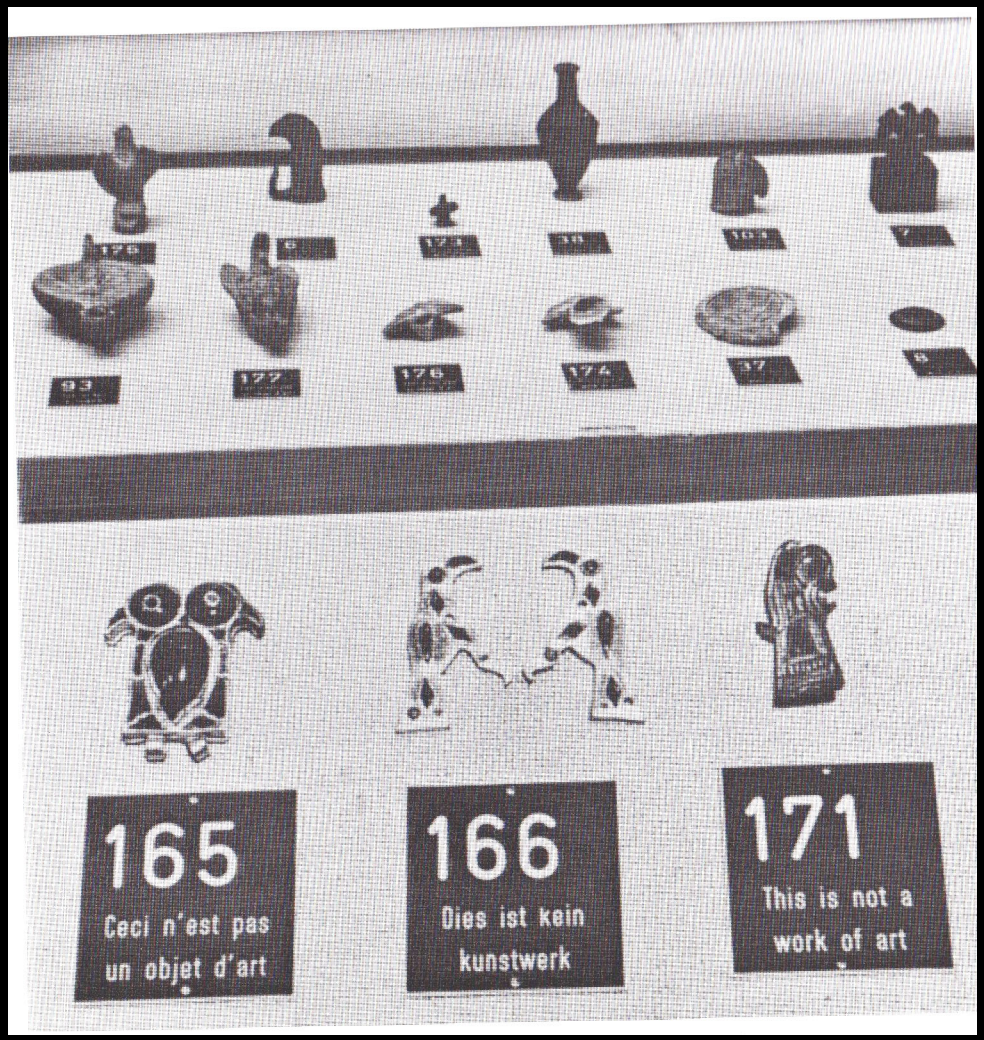
"For the eagle principle, which simultaneously implodes the idea of an aesthetic medium and turns everything into a readymade that collapses the difference between the aesthetic and the commodified, has allowed the eagle to soar above the rubble and to achieve hegemony once again."

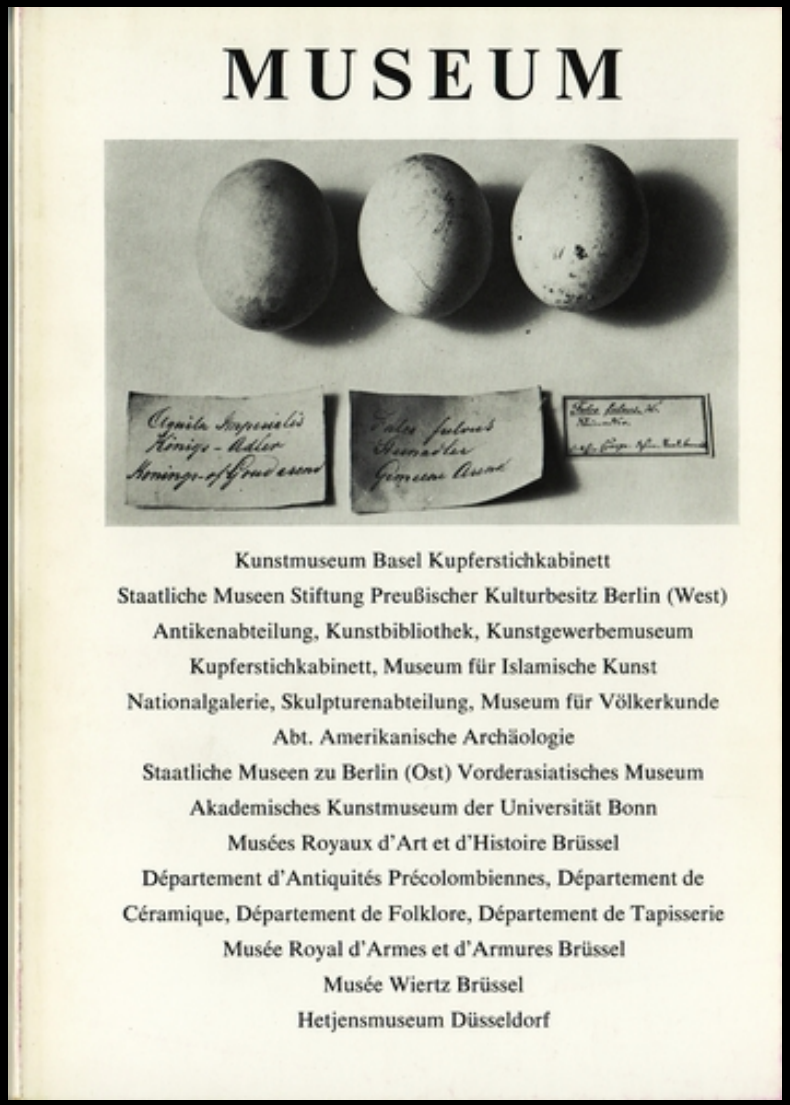
Marcel Broodthaers, Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles Series, 1968

Rosalind Krauss, *"A Voyage on the North Sea" Art in the Age of the Post Medium Condition* (1999)



Marcel Broodthaers, Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles Series, 1968





Marcel Broodthaers, Museum of Modern Art, Department of Eagles Series, 1968

media - the means of communication, as radio and television, newspapers, and magazines, that reach or influence people widely: The media are covering the speech tonight.

The medium is the message.

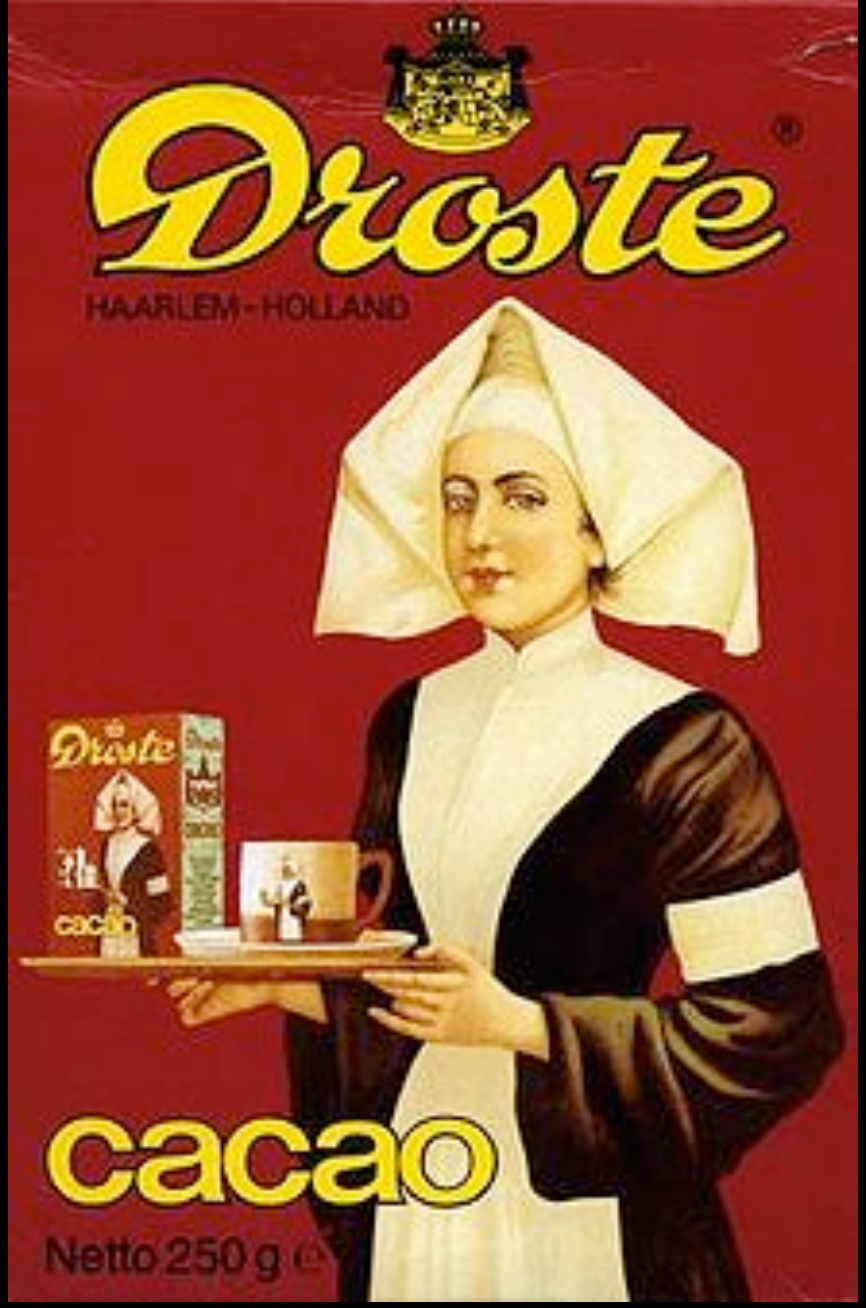
Marshall McLuhan (1964)

...the mass media

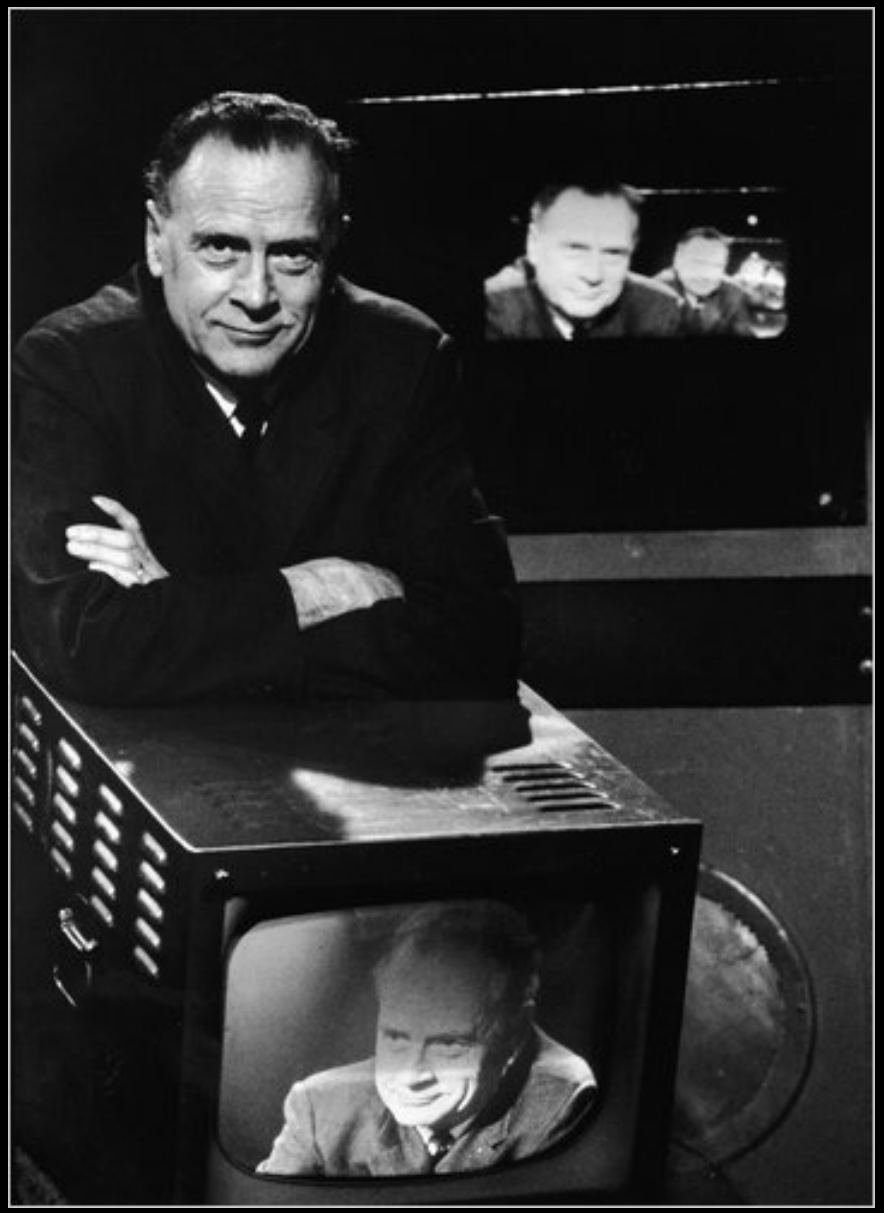
mediation – a process or phenomenon; “Agency or action as an intermediary; the state or fact of serving as an intermediate agent, a means of action, or a medium of transmission; instrumentality. The interposition of stages or processes between stimulus and result, or intention and realization.

remediation - Defined by Paul Levenson as the "anthropotropic" process by which new media technologies improve upon or remedy prior technologies. We define the term differently, using it to mean the formal logic by which new media refashion prior media forms. Along with immediacy and hypermediacy, remediation is one of the three traits of our genealogy of new media. (from *Remediation: Understanding New Media* by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin)

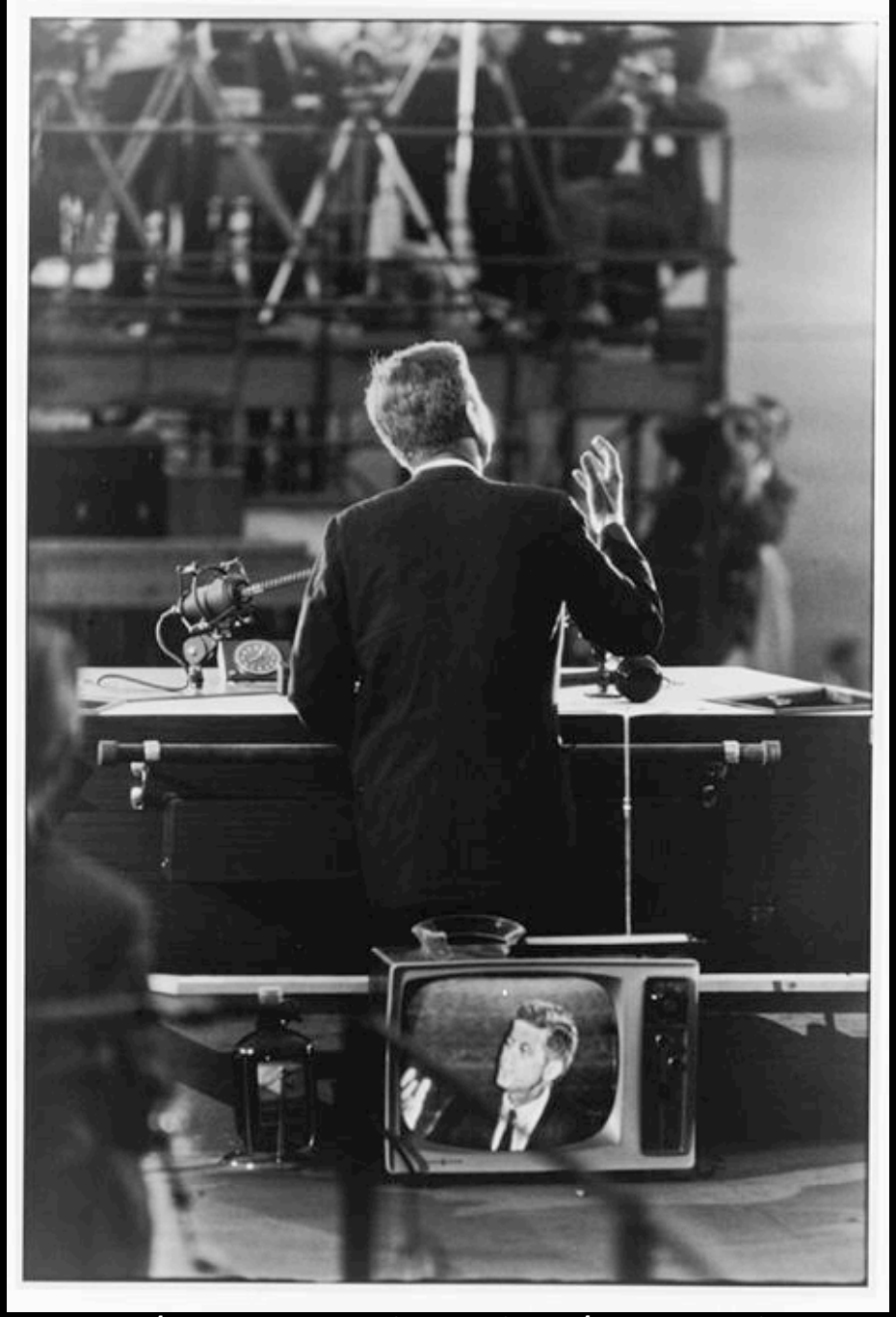
recursion – the condition of being infinitely embedded; the process of repeating items in a self-similar way. The most common application of recursion is in mathematics and computer science, in which it refers to a method of defining functions in which the function being defined is applied within its own definition.



Droste Effect



Marshall McLuhan recursively on TV



Garry Winogrand, *John F. Kennedy, Democratic National Convention, Los Angeles, 1960*

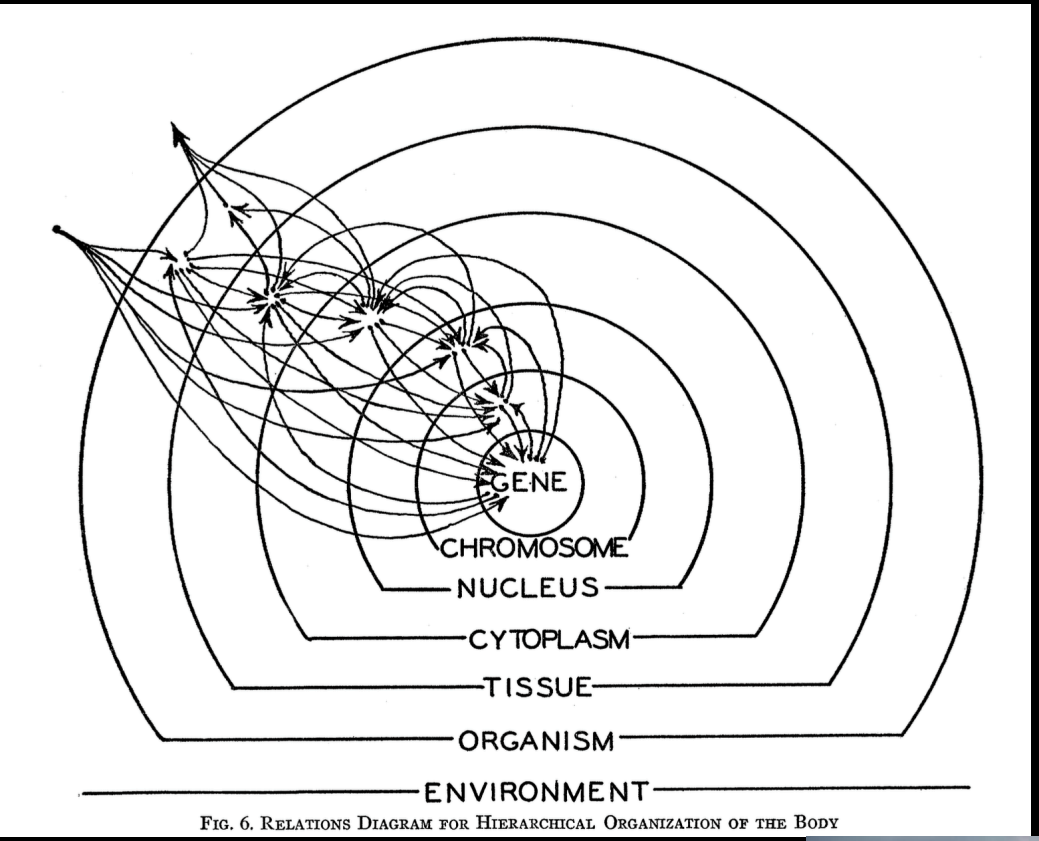


FIG. 6. RELATIONS DIAGRAM FOR HIERARCHICAL ORGANIZATION OF THE BODY

Emergence

Recursion

Murmuration

Emergent function, taken from Paul Weiss, "Perspectives in the Field of Morphogenesis" *The Quarterly Review of Biology,* vol. 25, no. 2 (Jun. 1950) 190.

Art and Electronic Media

Ed Shanken

- The serious artist is the only person able to encounter technology with impunity, just because he is an expert of the changes in sense perception. (13)
- Although electricity has become so ubiquitous as to be mundane, artists continue to discover its poetic significance, if not magic. In so doing, they simultaneously humanize and mythologize electronic media, transforming it through artistic alchemy to stretch the imagination, expand consciousness and inspire others to new levels of creativity and invention. (16)

-In 1959, German-born artist Gustav Metzger published *Auto-Destructive Art*, the first of several related manifestos, including proposals for integrating art with science and technology and using cybernetics and computers to creates self-destructing civic monuments that would exist 'from a few minutes to twenty years.' p. 20

-One of the most interesting developments over the last four year decades has been the use of electronic media by artists to transform or translate between various forms of energy – what Robert Mallary referred to in 1969 a 'transductive art.' p. 21

-Studying the entropic effects of light, Mary Lucier's *Dawn Burn* (1975) pushed the physical limits of video equipment. p. 22

-In ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’ (1936), Walter Benjamin argued that technologically reproduced images lacked the ‘aura’ of an individually handcrafted original. p.23

-Indeed, artists utilizing electronic tools to produce form by duplication, or by using algorithmic and other generative approaches, have challenged conventional notions of originality, creativity, and art itself. p. 23

-[According to Shanken, how have new technologies transformed conventional images and image-making?]

-[What are examples of electronic environments (28)?]

-[What is E.A.T.? p. 29]

-[Who is John Cage? What is “ambient sound”? p. 29]

-As the number of hybrid practitioners increases, their impact on the centrality of technology and science in the production of art and design (and vice-versa) will force reconsideration of the canons of art history and the histories of science and technology. p. 51