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**Longing for the past is not a fissure,
but a *feature* of the present.**

Recycling seems to be the word of order in most Western societies today. Recycling is (or should be) part of our everyday behavior. It reflects our (righteous) obsessions with ecology, vintage, retro, recuperation, reevaluation, reciting, redesigning, and reprocessing.

The domain of the images – being them visual arts, cinema, media or popular culture – makes no exception from this trend or “rule of the Re-”. A rule that, although devised only a few decades ago, has a long history in the field of visuality. Indeed, recycling is neither a modern, nor a postmodern concept: the idea and the mechanisms of recycling are the very motor that assured the continuity of cul-

ture over centuries. Recycling was always a way to valuate – and, surely, *re*-evaluate – the predecessors: Roman art was consciously fashioned on Greek models; medieval art took a great deal of inspiration from the previous pagan cultures; Renaissance art was an “update” version of the classical art (and much more); various realisms and expressionisms of the modern period were inspired by the precepts of visuality established long before them; avant-garde discourses have always been built on (negating) previous artistic moments; high-modernism’s pretended autonomy and originality was largely based on former avant-garde principles; postmodernism’s appropriation and recuperation (read relativization) of models was nothing but the systematization (and theoretization) of an already validated pattern of cultural exchange.

Of course, this doesn’t mean that there is nothing new under the sun in the arts field. Originality is not just a “modernist myth” (Krauss 1986), and newness is not an undesirable construct (as per post-

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modernists). Art and media's effective survive – and yes! evolution – is based on finding new ways of expression and original means of manifestation. The problem, then, is not (the possibility of) innovation, but the fetishization of the new. That is, the frequent practice of presenting any new (media) arrival as a turning point in our culture, a historical change that will break with the immediate past and will surely change our future, an attitude manifested mainly in the media world, since art has somehow escaped from this obsession with the new. Such technological determinism proves to be not only “uncool” in the academia, but also intellectually unproductive. In the media theory field, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin dedicate a book-length study to demonstrate that no mediums (or, by the same token, artistic means) are singular and unified, but their definition and existence is in fact the effect of transfers and absorptions. This phenomenon is what they call *remediation*: “the formal logic by which new media refashion prior media forms” (1999, 273). If these earlier forms are still actively present among us or if they are only occurrences of what Charles Acland (2007) calls “residual media” is a question of technological change or elective affinity.

Therefore, remediation plays an important role in defining the idea of recycling in this context although its forms and denominations are rather vast: adaptation, manipulation, quotation, remix, remediation, serialism, appropriationism, simulations, mash-up, cut-and-paste, or simply copy-paste. All of them are different manifestations of the same idea of recycling images; all of them are part of what was called in various contexts the “Re- culture”. Such diversity proves that recycling – as a concept and as a means – is not linked to a specific artistic trend, media, technique or time period. It is as actual as ever: it is rather the mark of an attitude and a way of doing things. Longing for the past is not a fissure, but a *feature* of the present.

Having long played an essential role in the development of art, cinema, media and culture, recycling has emerged also as a field of theoretical exploration. Thus, the idea of recycling is understood here in a wider sense, not only as a production means, but also as an analytical and critical thinking tool, as an instrument for approaching and reclaiming – equally with deference and irreverence – the established cultural models. The main consequence of the practice of freely borrowing and recirculating sources is that artists, producers and theorists are able to question, if not quite undermine, the established values such as originality fetishism, uniqueness, authorship and copy-right. So, instead of narcissism and hermetic construct, recycling relies on networking and borrowing, on adaptation, free reference and intertextual commentary. In this process, both the sources recycled and the resulting products are seen not as terminals, but as networked nodes, as open narratives ready to be incorporated and reinterpreted in a new, recyclable discourse.

The articles of this issue of the journal *Ekphrasis* deal with the theme of recycling in the larger context of the digital age, taken more as a temporal framework than a strict technical or conceptual delimitation. The essays bring together a truly interdisciplinary approach while addressing questions such as: how scholars, producers and artists

mobilize the notions of adaptation, manipulation and quotation nowadays? Do the recent developments of new media technologies affect the act of recycling images? What role the new recycling methods play in cinema, visual arts, literature and mass media? What are the goals, expectations, means and limitations of recycling images in the digital age? Is recycling a possible catalyst for the emergence of new technologies and mediums? How recycling images acted upon the development of new audiences?

The essay lineup offers a range of analytical discourses that reflect a number of important issues related to the idea and practice of recycling and how they are articulated through adaptation, manipulation and quotation.

The first section, *Re-appropriating Cinema*, looks at the various ways in which contemporary cinema appropriates and re-appropriates previous models. The section opens with Doru Pop's essay that evaluates the myth-making processes in the history of film, claiming that we are witnessing the coming together of a myth-illogical universe, where Hollywood practices and narrative structures have reached a point of amalgamation with no return. Using the concept of *cinematic kakology* the paper develops a reading of the consequences of the absurd amalgamation of myths and mythological figures in contemporary cinema.

Agnieszka Rasmus' essay addresses the important role of remakes in film culture and their vital function in reflecting societal and cultural transformations via a British to American cross-cultural exchange (from the 1938 *The Lady Vanishes*, to the 2005 *Flightplan*).

Florence Bögelein's essay discusses the anamorphic representations in *Dogville* by Lars von Trier, a film dominated by repetitions, allusions and literary clichés and where intertextuality may be said to play a major role.

In his essay, Dan Curean analyzes the aesthetic, cultural and technological dimensions of the dialectical move that takes place in the last century from perception to recording, from vision to visibility, from the organic to the technologic function, represented by the transformation of Eye into the "Cinema-Eye".

The second section, *Poetics of Adaptation*, takes as its focus adaptation and its various applications, definitions and theoretizations. Using a comparative and intermedial approach, Claudiu Turcuș's paper has three objectives: to outline a typology of the representation of communism in literature and cinema after 1989, to analyse communist nostalgia via the novel and the homonymous film adaptation entitled *I'm an Old Communist Hag!*, and to circumscribe this type of adaptation through the concept of the "ethics of infidelity".

Carla Cariboni Killander explores the avatars of the narrator in three different mediums: theatrical monologue, film and comics. The lateral, rather than hierarchical, adaptations prove that the differences between various modes of artistic expression determine not only the specificities of each medium, but also the public expectations and reception.

Employing Polysystem Theory Elaine Barros Indrusiak's paper maps some of the contributions film industry has brought to the Brazilian literary and cultural systems. She argues that adaptation of the literary works into new texts and to new readers, may renew and enrich the original text, thus performing what Walter Benjamin conceived as translation's major role: to grant the original text "afterlife".

Liviu Lutas's essay aims to answer the question "why" an adaptation is made by studying three particular cases: Jasper Fforde's novel *The Eyre Affair* (2001), Abdellatif Kechiche's film *Black Venus* (2010) and Peter Greenaway's film *Goltzius and the Pelican Company* (2012). Concentrating on aspects related to immersion and self-referentiality, he concludes that these examples might even put into question the canonical definition of adaptation itself.

Heidi Hart's contribution focuses on Olga Neuwirth's ongoing re-adaptation of Alban Berg's opera *Lulu*. The article argues that the opera's sonic fault-lines open a space for a parallel, visual opera to emerge that allows the original to be heard less as a canonical work than as an open process in which music is an entry, not an end in itself.

Exploring stage adaptations of novels through Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, Jane Sunderland argues for rejecting as far as possible any sort of "fidelity discourse", i.e. that the stage adaptation—as a recontextualisation in a new medium—should be "faithful" to its novel sourcetext in terms of plot, characters, dialogue and resolution, or even, arguably, in "theme" or spirit.

Focusing on the adaptation of a Norwegian theater play (Jon Fosse's *Nightsongs*) for the big screen (Romuald Karmaka's film *Die Nacht singt ihre Lieder*), Daria Ioan's paper proposes a comparison between the two artists' aesthetic styles and working methods, in order to establish the degree of compatibility between theater and cinema in this specific production.

The third section, *Remediating Visual Arts*, is concerned with the problems of recycling and remediation processes in the visual arts field. Horea Avram's essay addresses the problem of remediation and medium's cross-identification proposing the concept of In Between Frames as the main theoretical instrument. Analyzing Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills* (1977–80) and Adad Hannah's "video stills" he demonstrates that the use of an atypical temporality in defining the image, photography turns into film, and video aspires to the condition of photography – a way to recuperate, reevaluate, recite and recycle a medium by turning into its opposite.

Elizabeth Mix's essay offers speculations and insights about appropriation as an "alchemic" act. The author explores how both art history and popular culture is appropriated, manipulated and transformed by new media artist Jason Salavon via processes that include operations upon databases and the application of digital interference to recycled music, films, videos or TV.

The aim of the paper authored by Mara Rațiu and Bogdan Jacob is to analyze the process of "digitalization" of activist art practices following the case of the Cluj-based (artists) collective MindBomb. Examining group's images created via appropriation,

recycling, détournement or cultural jamming, the authors argue that the use of the Internet and social media to reach larger audiences is not only scope broadening, but it has also an impact on the very nature of art activism.

Nils Jean's paper explores the idea of digital debris in Internet Art (words typed in search engines, bits of obsolete codes, abandoned web pages, broken links, etc.), demonstrating how such instances of discarded, hidden, elusive and ephemeral pieces of information can be recycled and resurfaced in art practice.

Ruth Pelzer-Montada discusses different approaches to recycling images generated by diverse technologies, from historical print to digital video, taking the concept and practice of "translation" as a methodological tool. These approaches, she argues, not only extend notions affiliated with media and processes, they also question established values of originality, authorship and cultural conceptualizations of the copy.

In his article, Florin Ștefan proposes a reflection on the shifts occurred in contemporary art production and theory that marks the move toward what Nicolas Bourriaud calls "post-production". He proposes the term "nostalgic paradigm" to analyze this larger artistic strategy characterized by indetermination, fragmentation and recirculation of models.

Last but not least, in the *Interview* section Rodica Mocan discusses with multi-media artist Klaus Obermaier about technology, art, modes of production and spectatorial involvement. (This is the first of two parts of the interview; the second part will appear in the next issue of *Ekphrasis*.)

Therefore, by marking a number of key issues – inevitably uneven and incomplete – related to the problem of recycling in arts, cinema, and media, the essays selected here offer important insights not only into the actual state of the theory and practice of recycling, but, even more, into our present and future past-oriented cultural conditionings. This research effort will hopefully contribute to open and reopen new fields of debate about and through the very concept of recycling. Since, we should keep in mind that recycling, in both practice and theory, means searching rather than finding solutions. Recycling proves that there is no definitive statement in art. It has never been. Recycling means rather to *activate* what is over there for us to use: forms, ideas, art pieces, mediums, models and concepts.

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