

**Theory of the Image** aims to provide a *conceptual framework* based on the primacy of motion, to better understand contemporary structures of sensation and aesthetics,

The contemporary rise of the image draws our attention to a previously hidden dimension of all previous images that it is only now possible to glimpse.

**The method** deployed here is neither realist nor constructivist in the traditional senses of those words but rather minimally or **critically realist**.

A "theory" in the etymological sense of the Greek word **θεωρία**, *theōría*, as a "movement," "sending," or "process." Theory is the process of describing the structure of material-kinetic processes as they emerge – in this case, the contemporary ubiquity of the moving image.

The **digital image** has incited a huge revolution in publishing, journalism, entertainment, education, commerce, and politics unmatched by that of radio and television. The digital image has both integrated and carried forward analog media, giving rise to new digitalized industries in the process.

We have entered a new historical-aesthetic regime: **We are now in the age of the image.**

None of our senses has remained unchanged by the new digital imageas

„The image is **up in the air and on the move** also requires us to seriously rethink the *materiality of affect and sensation beyond human limits*. New empirical realities require *new conceptual frameworks*”

The word **image**, from the Latin word *imago*, means "reflection," "duplication," or "echo." These definitions imply precisely the opposite of what we typically think of as a copy.

*Reflection*, from the Latin word *flex*, means "bend" or "curve." A reflection is a curving or bending that folds back over itself. *Duplication*, from the Latin word *pli*, meaning "fold," makes this meaning quite apparent.

**The image** is not a distinct or separate copy but, rather, **the process by which matter curves, bends, folds, and bounces back and forth, or "echoes."** The image is, therefore, the mobile process by which matter twists, folds, and reflects itself into various structures of sensation and affection.

The image is not reducible to a strictly visual kind image alone but, also, is optical, sonic, haptic, olfactory, and gustatory. All sensation is thus bound together in a continuous flow of images.

*"more than that which the idealist calls a representation, but less than that which the realist calls a thing—an existence placed halfway between the 'thing' and the 'representation.'"*

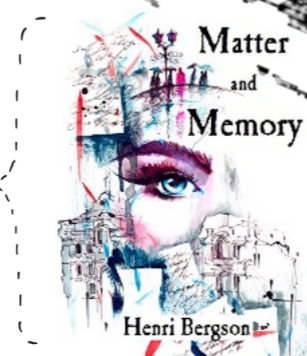
**Kinetic materialism** is therefore neither a Copernican revolution, in which it is we who move around the stars, nor a Ptolemaic counterrevolution, in which we are at rest while the stars move, but, rather, a **Hubblean revolution** in which everything is in motion. To become image, **matter must be able to flow and, by flowing, return to itself** as process of self-differentiating or iterated materialization.

### The Digital Image

The image has always been digital and generative, and that all art has always been kinetic.

When a region of the electromagnetic field affects itself, folds, or "interacts," as physicists say, it produces a sensible image: **a photon wave**. Like waves in the ocean, the movement of these photons allows for a transfer of energy between charged electrons, themselves wave folds in an electron field.

The kinetic transfer and release of energy flows occurs throughout nature and follows the second law of thermodynamics: entropy. The electrical or digital image is, therefore, defined by a fundamentally continuous, material, and kinetic process by which all material self-affection is possible. This kinetic process gives the digital image its three features: **hybridity, kinetic feedback, and pedesis.**



### Hybridity

The transistor as a **binary quantum switch** that can be opened or closed simply by modulating an electrical voltage. (...) In this way, the electromagnetic flow of electrons is reduced to its most simple binary difference: on or off, open or closed. **Anything that can be coded can be transcoded and thus hybridized.**

The digital image's capacity for radical differentiation and **hybridization through binarization** – is often used to define the entire image. However, this would be a critical mistake. The digital image is not identical to its binary code, precisely because the digital image is defined by the flow and fold of the electromagnetic field, which precedes the code as its basic material condition.

# The Image

The digital image appears to be the kinesthetic pinnacle of a fragmented and fragmenting modernism with respect to its hybrid image.

### Pedesis

(Brownian motion, *πίδησις* / *pé:de:sis* - "leaping") The pedesis of the electron field is a key defining feature of the digital image, not just a defect. It is the material kinetic condition for both the possibility and the impossibility of the digital image.

Quantum noise occurs in both natural and technological electrical flows. However, because its differential structure binary code is particularly affected by these "noisy gates," it can become destabilized more easily than, for instance, an organism whose internal processes are much less hierarchical and centralized.

### Feedback

The third kinetic feature of the digital image. An electromagnetic field is defined by the movement of charged particles from negative to positive polarities. The movement of circulation, and recirculation is a type of kinetic feedback in which the flow of matter returns back to itself and modulates itself again and again.

All digital images, and to some degree all affective images and their kinesthetic fields, are therefore defined by this material kinetic interaction or feedback loop of intra-action. The contemporary digital image simply raises this process to the level of sensation in a way that emphasizes, expands, and diversifies this process to a much larger degree than any other kinesthetic field or pattern.

*"Analog media are things we passively consume or interact with only mentally, while digital media have keyboards, software, and hyperlinks that we interact with physically."*

*Kinetic interaction is not just the structure of contemporary media; it is the structure of all fields of images*

**The image is self-affection** When matter interacts with itself, it produces sensory images, qualities, and pleats in being.

**The XXI century is defined by the pedetic digital image in the same way that antiquity was defined by the centrifugal formal image.**

*Computer software does allow for a greater degree and range of aesthetic transformation than what is typically possible in the viewing of a painting in a museum.*

*"Everything under electric conditions is looped. You become folded over into yourself. Your image of yourself changes completely."*

**Marshall McLuhan**  
*"The Future of Man in the Electric Age,"*

Pedetic nature of the electrical flow by itself provides **capacity for ordered disorder.**

### The Hybrid Image

*The hybrid image is made possible because the electromagnetic field can be binarized. Since all sensuous material has an electromagnetic field, it can be similarly binarized and transcoded into other media objects. These media objects thus become **transcoded hybrids** capable of producing sensuous images of multiple media objects. Hybrid media abound in the twenty-first century, but the transcoded device par excellence of our century is the mobile device—*

Because of the mobility and mutability of the electrical flow itself, all previous arts can be digitalized and expressed through the mobile device.

### The Generative Image

The generative image is defined by a high degree of pedesis and feedback in the electromagnetic flow.

One can make programs that introduce a higher degree of unpredictability, disorder, and feedback into the computational and aesthetic process. In this way, the generative image increasingly privileges the process of kinesthetic interaction above the subject (creator) and object (product). By doing so, the **generative image discovers and makes intensely sensible the kinetic nature** hidden in all previous aesthetic fields.

The kinesthetic exploration of the electromagnetic field is, in a way, **also an exploration of quantum-field patterns** more generally, and thus of nature.

### The Arts

For the first time in history, we **have found a way to directly engage and manipulate the most pedetic and highly interactive media in nature: the quantum field.** One of the fundamental reasons that nature is capable of producing the highly disordered and pedetic images that it has is because matter itself (as quantum fields) is pedetic and interactive. Beyond dice throws, drip painting, condensation patterns, and so on, **the combined powers of the digital image—hybridity, pedesis, and interaction**—are able to transcode almost any disordered material process, filter, and add degrees of material pedesis, expanding its interactivity immensely.

No other aesthetic medium, including others in the natural world, are or have ever been capable of this level of direct modulation of hybridity, pedesis, and interactivity of a single image. The aim of digital generative art is, therefore, not to mimic or represent the products of nature's processes (as Leonardo dreamed), or even to simply mimic natural processes themselves (as Fermat dreamed) but rather, **to invent new kinesthetic processes with the new tools we have.**

The beauty of contemporary generative art lies not in its "random" number generators and the sublime affirmation of chaos against the orderliness of contemporary reality. Rather, it is in its **capacity to create new kinesthetic processes** that play in the complex region between highly ordered and highly disordered images. It gives a high degree of kinetic agency to the matters at work.

Today pedesis and interactivity have become a primary and dominant focus of the most cutting-edge aesthetic experiments.