



MAST: Journal of Media Art, Study and Theory

CFP: Special Issue

TOTAL SCREEN: Why Jean Baudrillard, Once Again?

Guest editors

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Extended deadline for full proposals: **15th November 2020** (for publication in May 2021).

What place does or could Jean Baudrillard occupy in media studies, visual studies, and art theory today? How does his work—as both a philosopher and a vernacular photographer—continue to influence visual artists and other forms of media art? How can we confront his radical views with feminist, intersectional, queer, postcolonial, and other critical approaches? This special issue of MAST journal seeks to answer and further explore these questions through proposals from arts practitioners and theorists.

Provocative, eclectic, ironic, playful, and anticipatory, Baudrillard's thinking propels both the image and photography—and that which evades them—into a dimension that inspires, questions, amazes, and disturbs. Almost thirty years after 1991, when he argued that “the Gulf War did not take place” (Baudrillard, 1995) in an attempt to demonstrate the extent to which our society of images has deviated from an already-vanished reality; almost twenty years after 9/11, when he referred to the destruction of the Twin Towers on live television as a symbiotic apex between experience and its image; his conception of the image, of its forms, and of its plasticity remain resolutely contemporary and open to criticism. More powerful than its own presence in a reality that it renders less and less real while confined to an endless media feedback loop, the image has become an event and the event an image. The early philosopher's writings certainly illustrate the force of his visionary view of a society, he has not lived in since his death in 2007, but whose vision has nevertheless encompassed the dominance of simulacra, transparency, and hyperreality, the injunction of computer code, the virality of communications, and the

implementation of artificial intelligence—each of which are profound present-day issues that permeate his work from beginning to end. If Baudrillard’s philosophy was supposed to have become irrelevant by now (Baudrillard, 2009), it nevertheless persists and does not cease to resurface within the ideas of the critics of our present time (Smith *et al.*, 2017). Rereading his work, it is remarkable that “these texts never cease to amaze by their extraordinary ‘topicality’” (Latouche, 2019, p. 18), especially with regard to the supremacy of images in a society that has become a total screen (*écran total*, Baudrillard, 2007).

From animated gifs of design objects to selfies in front of architectural works, from visual shots captured by drones to Instagram’s ‘stories’ or ‘snapshots’ of a reinvented everyday life, to all the forms of visual recognition made possible by artificial intelligence, imagery is at the core of today’s social experience (Peraica, 2019; Mirzoeff, 1999). Flowing through our lives, cutting across from one end to the other, images merge and interact with one another (Bolt, 2004; Gumbrecht, 2004; Manovich, 2001). However, the behavior of images concerns their auratic force, too (Alexander *et al.*, 2012), in other words, their capacity to reveal a social situation, a cultural prism, or a singular experience as well as their agency as artifacts in public spheres. This raises questions about the role of images in relation to both the possibilities of our emancipation and of our restriction, (self-)surveillance, and manipulation. In the current context of COVID-19, it seems premature to concentrate on the pandemic as a central theme of this special issue, however, it would be equally inadequate to ignore it in light of Baudrillard’s systematic and sometimes debatable reflections on virality and its relationship to disaster. In fact, he perceived the individual as “the chosen terrain for viruses and viral diseases, just as computers become the chosen terrain for electronic viruses (...) For viruses resist and proliferate as soon as they have free space” (Baudrillard, 1997, p. 11). Moreover, it is crucial to take a critical look at the screen, which, in the early spring of 2020, has become our (almost) only communicative interface with the world: national and international news, shopping, domestic and social activities, sports and online games, as well as the consumption of fiction on various platforms, to name a few examples. This is especially relevant considering how much we invest our professional, family, and social lives in the screen—including our most intimate moments—but also, and most importantly for this special issue, our creative moments and artwork.

Situated between the dual significance of visibility—to make visible/ accessible and to show/ exhibit, today, the image is the source of many paradoxes, thus inviting numerous interpretations

for artists and media- and art-theory scholars alike. This special issue proposes a critical investigation of Baudrillard's provocative theoretical work and beyond (Lovejoy, 2004; Toffoletti, 2011 and 2014).

We especially welcome proposals that undertake the critical "Baudrillard adventure" by focusing on *visuality*—pictures, (moving-) images, and photographs. Topics of interest in this context may include but are not limited to:

- Baudrillard, media, visual, and/or art theory today
- Baudrillard in discussion with feminist, queer, intersectional, and postcolonial approaches
- Hyperreality and virality in media theory, visual studies, and/or visual arts
- Visual implosion and seduction
- Simulation and singularity
- Transparency and opacity
- Loops, memes, and gifs

We encourage submissions in the below categories:

- Full papers (4000-6000 words)
- Short essays (1000-2000 words)
- Video articles (5-10 min)
- Practice-based studies (a media artwork/project accompanied by a 1000-2000 words essay)

The last category (practice-based studies) demonstrates that a creative media artwork/project is the basis of developing research and making a contribution to knowledge in the context of this issue's theme. Practice-based studies may include (but are not limited to): digital arts, media installations, web-based arts, screen-based arts, VR/AR, and hybrid media projects. Practice-based studies must also accompany an essay (1000-2000 words) and are assessed for publication on how well they speak to the issue's theme. We strongly recommend including images (up to three) and/or link(s) to video/audio/web in the submissions in this category.

Essays must be unpublished in order to be considered, and the provided materials must be copyright cleared.

For formatting style and full submission guidelines, please visit: <https://www.mast-journal.org/submission-guideline>

The extended deadline for full submissions is 15th November 2020 (for publication in May 2021).

Please send your submissions (and questions) to specialissue@mast-nemla.org

About the guest editors:

Katharina Niemeyer is a media theorist and professor at the University of Québec in Montréal, Canada (Faculty of Communication, School of Media). She holds a PhD from the University of Geneva, an MA from Bauhaus Universität Weimar, and is the co-founder of Rabbitresearch, an undisciplined art group. Trained in media philosophy, media semiotics, and media archaeology, her research addresses diverse topics that engage with a critical understanding of media (theory) and their relations to memory, historiography, and nostalgia. Niemeyer's work has mostly been published in French, but she also has work in English, German, and Portuguese, which can be found in journals such as the *European Journal of Media Studies*, *New Media and Society*, *Communication et Langages*, *Le Temps des Médias*, and *Réseaux*.

Magali Uhl is a full professor of sociology at the University of Québec in Montréal (UQAM) and Director of the research centre *Cultures-Arts-Society* (CELAT-UQAM). She holds a PhD in the epistemology of human sciences (Panthéon-Sorbonne University, 2000), and her publications aim at seizing cultural mutations as seen through the prism of contemporary art. She currently tackles the questions about the role of spaces and images in the construction of social knowledge. Her research revolves around the understanding of the contemporary city in North America and Europe with a focus on topics such as subjectivity, identity, body, and memory. She is the co-director of the thematic workgroup: *Visual Studies and Methodologies* at the AISLF (International Association of French-Speaking Sociologists).

About the journal:

MAST is an online, open-access, and double-blind peer-reviewed journal featuring interdisciplinary scholarship in the domain of media studies. MAST stands for “Media Art,

Study and Theory” and aims to publish and promote innovative research, writings, and works by artists and scholars who present new methods, approaches, questions, and researches in the field of media studies in theory and practice. MAST is sponsored by NeMLA at the University at Buffalo, State University of New York. Journal editors: Maryam Mulihae (University at Buffalo), Mani Mehrvarz (University at Buffalo)

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