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The "Charismatic Illusion" and the Profile of the Social Media Viewer

Abstract: When faced with artistic productions on social media, whether we are talking about reworkings of established works of art, AI-generated images, or critical approaches to famous paintings, we are more seduced than ever by the message being conveyed. Starting with two key concepts: "hyperaesthetics" (Yves Michaud) and "instagramism sensibility" (Lev Manovich), our analysis explores how contemporary individuals, as both creators and consumers, interact with artistic productions in virtual environments. The discussion also incorporates Jean Baudrillard's notions of "simulacrum" and "hyperreality" to illustrate the crisis of the referent and the accelerated production of images. Following in the footsteps of Pierre Bourdieu, this paper analyzes the conditions for achieving a "happy encounter" between habitus and the viewer's world, drawing on images found on relevant social media networks. The central question we aim to address is: how has image capital become the new focal point in contemporary society?
Keywords: Habitus; Charismatic Illusion; Visual Culture; Aesthetics; Instagramism Sensibility.

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Discussing the foundation of the *charismatic illusion*, Pierre Bourdieu outlines the conditions for what he calls a "happy encounter" between the system of appraisals and perceptions, shaped by a set of acquired practices, and the world of the viewer, which he understands as the emotional dimension specific to each individual and closely tied to his/her sentimental side[1]. Although loosely grounded, charisma requires an "encounter" with the viewer, which seems to be motivated by the recognition of a dreamed model, a prototype that reality discloses at a glance. Economic rationales are thus transposed into the realizable field of artistic vision. Through the work of art – Bourdieu observes – the Quattrocento man discovers within his own world the recognition of values, themselves part of that fertile and ever-changing mechanism called habitus.

The immediate pleasure experienced by the social media viewer is, in turn, motivated by a "happy encounter" between a habitus and the viewer's world. The virtual environment eliminates the distinction between established figures in the artistic or quasi-artistic field and newcomers, thereby legitimizing a continuous present in the ongoing struggle to establish a

presence within the social media-driven scene. Therefore, the pursuit of gaining image capital increases social media viewers' receptivity to a specific cultural product. Artistic taste appears more firmly rooted within communities that have developed a distinct identity alongside their audience. Moreover, the transient participation of community members, coupled with the potential for migration to other communities that promote different aesthetics in virtual spaces, requires an ongoing reassessment of their position within the artistic field. In this context, we can observe that perceived value is not primarily established through a process of "historical anamnesis"[2], in which viewers search for references within an image or a collection of images to demonstrate the "quality" of artistic production. Instead, value is derived from the capacity to communicate a compelling message that enables immediate engagement with the content.

At the outset, we establish that our analysis focuses on the profile of an active Instagram user, interested in art or pseudo-artistic forms, yet without being a specialist or connoisseur of said field. A study published this year and carried out in 2024 by Ruxiao Yang on consumer behavior in art management indicates that 78% of respondents use social media platforms to discover new artists and artworks in general, with Instagram emerging as the preferred platform[3]. Numerous studies also show that images featuring artworks, such as selfies taken in museums or *mise-en-abymes* featuring a famous painting, are highly valued and categorized as "instagrammable". The term *instagrammable*, widely used, refers to photography deemed worthy or suitable for the platform. More specifically, it designates a type of visual aesthetic.

In one of his works, Lev Manovich, a renowned theorist of digital culture, links the term *instagramism* to twentieth-century cinematography. In his view, "Instagramism here refers not to any particular narrow aesthetics, but rather construction of scenes and images that are atmospheric, visually perfect, emotional without being aggressive, and subtle as opposed to dramatic"[4]. Interestingly, Manovich does not simply trace a path from painting to photography, although he nonetheless identifies the pictorial as a quality of the instagrammable image. He recalls a few painters whose works could be described as instagrammable or as possessing an "instagramism sensibility": i.e. Pierre Bonnard, Robert Falk[5].

Returning to the basis of the *charismatic illusion*[6] of the social media viewer, we find that aesthetic pleasure arises from the mechanism built around a brand, an aesthetic or identity recognized as dominant for a particular audience category. The "mercantile disposition" of the Quattrocento merchant is here transposed into the image capital generated by the visual aesthetics promoted on Instagram. When we refer to images of processed artworks or artistic productions on this platform, the investment with meaning is not made through a predefined set of codes that the user deciphers one by one. The viewer is less likely to identify the original reference and more likely to discover analogies with other images circulating on the same platform, in other words, to recognize the image's instagrammability.

The French philosopher Yves Michaud identifies a necessary tendency in

the age of consumption to capture and stimulate attention through the delivery of experiences. Shopping, for instance, is no longer limited to making purchases; likewise, the museum visit must anchor the visitor as much as possible, surprise them, and draw them into an immersive universe, and "these experiences are often fabricated, controlled, and technically directed. They are experienced as wholes in a new living environment to which a new sensibility is adjusted"[7]. We may therefore speak of atmospheric experiences, in which the viewer's world contemplates "the atmosphere, the ambience, the tonality of the surrounding world, of the environment, of the *Umwelt*"[8].

The same French philosopher refers to certain producers of experiences as "aestheticizers"[9], those capable of generating hyper-aestheticized experiences. In the realm of atmospheric image production, it is typically the artists – professional aesthetes – who, through their intentionality, aim to convey a specific message. In social media, however, and particularly on the platform under discussion, occasional "aestheticizers" appear to "invade" virtual space. Consequently, the dynamics underlying the formation of a historical habitus acquire a particular character, shaped by the specificities of the virtual environment in which these forms of artistic expression circulate. Therefore, the basis of the *charismatic illusion* in social media lies in the "visual dispositions" that the environment cultivates for the production of atmospheres, which in turn intensify the sense of pleasure.

The concept of the substitutive image, theorized by Horst Bredekamp, provides insight into how the "happy encounter"

between habitus and the viewer's world is achieved. In this context, the idea of the vivification of the image, or *vera icon*[10], perhaps more than ever serves as the driving force behind the user's retention within the virtual space they inhabit. Bredekamp notes that one can speak of a history of the relationship between body and image, with the principle of substitution underpinning iconographic representations such as St. Veronica with Robert Campin's veil[11], or even early photographic processes, which preserve the notion of a "true image", alive, and serving as an identifying relic of the substituted object. Bredekamp reinforces the persistence of an undeniable truth: the *vera icon* has never abandoned the ideal of materializing the presence of the represented object. We can further note that the ideal of vivifying the image finds its fulfilment in the virtual environment, where hyperreality provides the conditions necessary for reproducing the desired reality.

Returning to the notion of atmospheric experience, Instagram shapes the constitution of the "visual dispositions" mentioned above through a mechanism (which we will not examine in detail here) that presents the user with content in their feed similar to what they have previously preferred, visualized, or appreciated. This generates series of images, and even entire collections, that "educate" a particular sensibility for recognizing and evaluating an image according to its instagrammability. Everyday life now more than ever embraces technical direction and the simulacra of experience delivered through orchestrated events. Michaud therefore observes that there are contexts that can be "aesthetically perceived without being art"[12]. Although Jean Baudrillard no longer identifies the

atmospheric in the so-called improper spaces of reality ("hyperspace without atmosphere"[13]), it is worth noting that the infinite reproduction he invokes may correspond to the idea of a replicable model that Yves Michaud himself describes. In this sense, we admit that reality can no longer provide the pure experience of the natural, as it becomes monopolized by "atmospheric realities" that reproduce the situation *ab origine*.

This is why Michaud emphasizes the *mise-en-scène* character of the various contexts that are continually presented to us. It is also why social media offers a multitude of images designed to delight the eye. In discussing the *charismatic illusion*, Pierre Bourdieu highlights the need to decrypt and then reconstruct an anthropological trail that ultimately reveals the economic and social context in which the "pure disposition"[14] was realized. Aesthetic pleasure, he observes, is in fact a privilege that derives from a confluence of circumstances that facilitated the "happy encounter between the habitus and the world of the viewer". However, the "practical experience of understanding"[15] for today's contemporary Indigenous[16] viewer results from the unprecedented accessibility of art objects in human cultural history, coupled with the decline of elite culture.

In one of his studies[17], Jay David Bolter observed that the rise of New Media has led to the loss of a central authority, enabling communities of artists to be widely "accessed" and, consequently, contributing to a devaluation of the art object or the artist's status. Without implying any pejorative connotation, this process illustrates how new media have encouraged the "contemporary indigenous" viewer to aspire to

a status similar to that of the artist. One cannot help but wonder whether this technically driven process, originally intended to enhance quality of life (accidentally?), has inadvertently become a project of mass enlightenment reminiscent of the aims of eighteenth-century intellectuals. The question is not meant to be answered; rather, it invites us to consider the extent to which the beholder's eye (re)cognizes the quality of the image under contemplation.

An interesting perspective on the new "face" of contemporary society, where the revival of art takes on a different nuance, appears in Peter Murphy. It is not the acute crisis of art that is at the center of his reflections, but the way in which contemporary society has managed to bring the atmosphere of art galleries and museums into the environment intended for everyday activities. A society that has thus "produced" an aesthetic by placing at the center of its concerns the need to harmonize the roles that the urban rhythm has demanded of it: "At the heart of things what we have seen is the transformation of art into aesthetics – and the aesthetic stimulation of economics"[18]. This is why social media abounds in images that are highly evocative of emotion, intriguing, or subtle in their minimalist style. These images are part of the philosophy of wellbeing, when people seek to "engage" in their current activities the "aesthetic qualities" they need to overcome the platitudes of everyday life.

What determines the "happy encounter" between habitus and the viewer's world? The "army" of aestheticizers plays an essential role in a capitalist society, bringing the dreamed-of "experiences" to the public[19] and transforming the "contemporary indigenous" into the special customer who
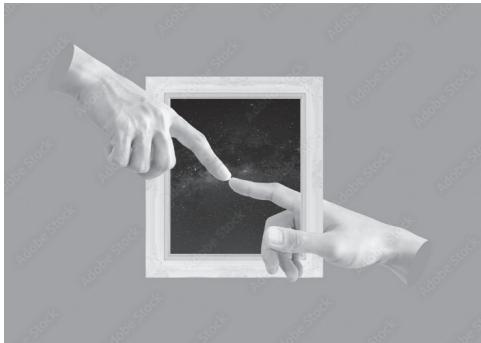
Fig. 1: *Digital collage modern art. Hands, pointing finger through out of picture frame,* by Sasin-Paraksa. Source: https://stock.adobe.com/

can achieve maximum fulfillment through a simple image addressed to them. The feeling of belonging is built through the intense promotion of a certain type of image, through the obsessive suggestion of content inscribed in the aesthetics of the platform. Instagram gives rise to a sensualism specific to the voyeur who – as a matter of fact – is satisfied with these visual guarantees, which he perceives as total. And by total, we are referring to the visual dispositions of the contemporary person who "lives" the image they see in a multisensory way. We are at the point where the hegemony of sight has been conquered by the chiasm of the gaze.

The social aesthetics Peter Murphy talks about have also made their way into the virtual environment. The presentation pages of architecture studios, residential developments, office properties, and fashion houses evoke the atmosphere of spaces designed for leisure and cultural activities. The aesthetics of the page has as focus the "artistic" layout, a harmonious combination of photographs in the same color scheme, as a result of a necessary brief in order to be visible and relevant in the social media era. On Instagram, the user's page

is characterized by the presentation of a subject and a style[20] in an artistic manner. Here, Claude Monet could tell us about the French Riviera in millions of images, just as "in the style of Edgard Degas" French fashion could be rendered through collections of photographs promoting the typology of the delicate woman. This is an aesthetic society that Lev Manovitch would describe in the same way that Peter Murphy did when he spoke about the relationship between art and economics in modern capitalism. Therefore, "if in modern societies carefully constructed aesthetic lifestyles were the privilege of the rich, today they are available to all who use Instagram, VSCO, or any other of 2000+ photo editing apps, or shop at Zara which offers cool, hip and refined styles in its 2200 stores in 93 countries (see Forbes, 2017)"[21].

Visual Culture on Social Media Platforms

When Baudrillard talks about Disneyland as a model for all types of mixed simulation, he identifies a childish world, poor in representation and altered by the friction of reality[22]. Opposed to that of adults, the world suggested by Disneyland proposes an imaginary that masks the distortion of reality and its submission by transforming it into hyperreality. Virtual space retains this principle of animation[23] and mimics the appearance of a world that has constituted itself from an illusion. But what are the coordinates of this world? Although Richard J. Gerring[24] analyses how a reader is transported into a narrative world and describes the experience (which he calls a journey) of narrative worlds as an activity valid in several contexts (novels,

works of art, cinema, television programs etc.), he focuses only on these "experimenters" represented by readers. We can extend, as he himself suggests, the experience we refer to and consider the narrative scenarios that occur in the virtual environment, more precisely in social media. The "transport" into the narrative world takes place in a moment of „depth" that the text has prepared, guiding the reader and "shaping their textual identity"[25]. But how does the pact with the reader work in social media?

Like any traveller visiting a foreign territory, the reader makes an effort to recognize the similarities with other familiar territories. The "laws" dictated by the text intervene and draw boundaries. The reader returns from their journey, but retains the memories of one's trip and conforms to the customs of one's home territory. Unlike what is achieved in the act of reading presented by Gerring, the space generated by social media retains and standardizes the traveler's experiences, melting them into a virtual reality that competes with the territory of origin[26]. The reader can no longer leave the world they have entered, because it faithfully preserves and reproduces a world similar to the one they know. Thus, a simulacrum is created that steals identities and influences the perception of reality, potentially replacing the real world at any time.

In what follows, we will analyze, based on concrete examples, the nature of certain images present on social media. We have established that there is an inability to produce meaning in today's visual culture, and that images are therefore self-referential. On their way to annihilation and superficiality, there has always been the canonical model – "figures of figuration, pictures that

reflect on the nature of images"[27]. These duplicates of images lose their suggestive power, and iconology comes to resuscitate their old provocative force and restore their dialogical capacity[28].

We consider what lies behind the selected images, the trends they have induced, and the relationships they have established or could have established by virtue of the affirmation of new and new sequences in this long chain of ideas. In fig. 1, an anatomical sequence from Michelangelo's painting in the Sistine Chapel is present by marking what we could call, in the spirit of the ideas presented so far, a narrative frame which, in this case, does not separate two worlds, but rather provides access to the world. The reconstruction of the myth reveals that the image has nothing to do with Michelangelo's intention, not even as a symbol of the revelation of inaccessible truths. The sequence is taken out of the context of the scene referring to the creation of Adam and associated with contemporary life in the digital age, while also mentioning the distance from Michelangelo's work. The effect produced by the digital creation in question is rather similar to those pictograms that carry the message of a "call to action". This is confirmed by the overwhelming series of related images that express variations on the same theme so prevalent in the virtual space.

It is revealing how media arts determine new processes of interactivity and re-evaluate the relationship between the viewer and artistic production. The "call to action" suggested by the images is all the more an invitation to read this message, a reading that represents an immersive experience because, as Katja Kwastek notices in her book, *Aesthetics of Interaction*

in Digital Art, the action of the recipient is placed at the center of the aesthetics of that art/image[29]. Continuing this idea, she draws attention to the difference in action between media arts and performative practices which, in her opinion, involve the co-presence of the artist and the recipient, the performance being necessary for the work to create itself. What we have presented above represents the first level of interactivity, as a suggestion offered to us by a message conveyed by the image. For the other levels of interactivity, we can give the example of artistic means that involve technically mediated feedback or more recent proposals, which take on a variety of forms and configure spaces that become the stage for real performances.

The inability to produce meaning in images, specific to today's culture, is presented by John Berger when he refers to the status of paintings "in the age of their technical reproducibility". We are witnessing an alteration of meaning and its transformation into information, and this causes the work to serve a certain purpose, while its ontological status is ignored[30].

If Umberto Eco considered the combination of terms "industry" and "culture" (cultural industry) obsolete and he justified this by evoking the natural transition from one cultural stage to another, along with the inherent technical progress, he also qualifies – on a different scale, of course – contemporary culture, which he places in the wake of history. In this way, the expression "mass culture" should not be viewed in a connotative sense, but as such, because we are talking about a single direction that cannot delimit, for example, a high culture, that of people of spirit, of a class that continues to carry on a tradition that affirms the special status of the intellectual, from a mass culture which is specific to the many.

The photographs presenting the winter collection (*Campaign* series for 2023 [Fig. 2, 3]) by the creator Shaima Al Mansoori offer nostalgic cut-outs in the manner of Renaissance paintings. The backgrounds reminiscent of Jan van Eyck's oil painting technique and the iridescence typical of chiaroscuro's light-shadow contrast evoke the couturier's ambition to poetically transcend an ultra-accessed space. In an interview with "Vogue Arabia" (September 2023 issue), the creator reveals her sources of inspiration – Giovanni de Paolo, Masolino da Panicale and Masaccio – appreciating the painter's ability to convey the effect of life through their works. Alberti's metaphor of the window to the world now opens up the horizon of a different kind of rapport; the viewer contemplates a world that has been revealed to one before, but their consciousness is captive to a predefined voyeurism, the result of the artistic field (produced by new media culture) in which each actor fulfills their own mission. Renaissance frames also highlight a product, and the viewer is the target of the act of persuasion, so that artistic production manifests an ambivalent function.

Returning to the observations made at the beginning of the chapter, we reinforce the idea that the effect produced by the suggested images is comparable to *meraviglia*, given that their appearance indicates a subversion of the known order. Derived from the field of "consumerist", "maintenance culture" will take into account the dynamics of supply and demand[31] and will always involve society as a whole. On the one hand, if Umberto Eco raises the question of the existence – as a utopian prefiguration – of

Fig. 2-3: Monsoori, Fall 2023, Couture Collection. Source: Instagram

a "tacit understanding", intellectuals could ensure the permeability of these levels of culture and, consequently, make use of it. On the other hand, a "culture of proposal" is on a higher level than the one mentioned above in terms of value and it belongs to an informed consumer, trained in the direction of the product one consumes. The order we mentioned earlier refers to the series of images overused in social media, those that confirm the submission of the "culture of maintenance" to the dynamics of supply - demand. Attributed to "realities in transit", words, images and things themselves have ephemeral existences, projecting the consumer into a story about oneself. As in any story, the narrative scenario involves several possible readings, and the "readers" reading grid "depends on the different knowledge invested in images"[32].

To a large extent, the fact that what virtual space delivers involves the coexistence of the levels of reading discussed above means that the receptivity of the image is achieved in different ways, thus appealing to different reading grids. This is precisely what happens with art mediated by the interface screen; being a story about itself, the perceiving subject receives an invitation to identification[33]. When we talk about fashion, the recipient of the message is the woman that the artist can imagine in various ways; from the *femme fatale* type to the androgynous figure and the contemporary muse, the staging of the creations communicates the intention and selects the audience.

When the creative director of the Ferragamo fashion house, Maximilian Davis, places his clothing creations in a space whose background cuts out narrative scenes from Italian artists' paintings, he invests the viewer with a superior capacity for comprehension specific to a "reader-type" who, as Umberto Eco describes, enters into the game and knows how to play it. It should be noted that the reader the image envisages is often not the same with the consumer who buys the product. Pierre Francastel, in his book, *Figure and Space,* shows how time and place, as part of the narrative scenario, are introduced at
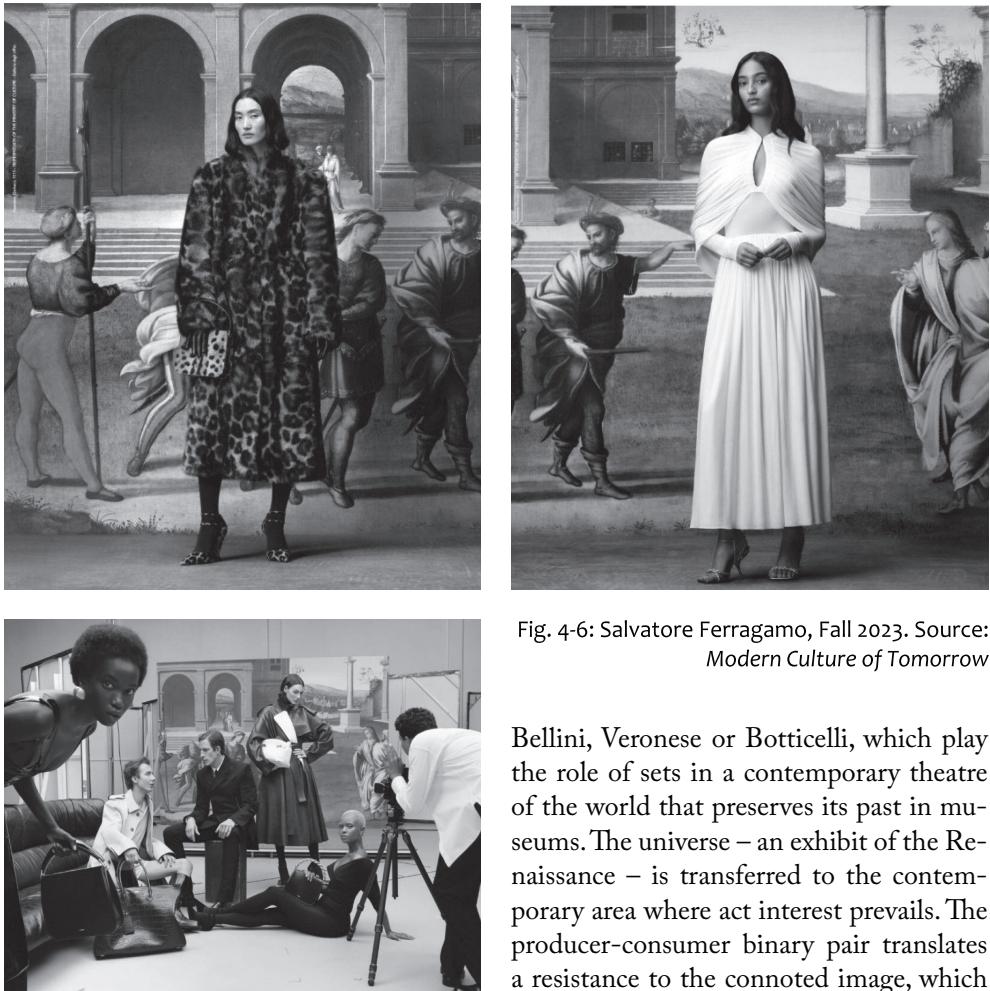
Fig. 4-6: Salvatore Ferragamo, Fall 2023. Source: *Modern Culture of Tomorrow*

the level of visual language. *Mutatis mutandis*, the photographic images presented by Ferragamo collection (see Fig. 4-6) postulate not an eventful order, but a lack of unity in terms of space-time. As in a *mise-en-abyme,* the recurrence of the image "rewrites" the code and symbolically recovers an ontological path that the viewer receives unequivocally.

Disambiguated and adapted to the universal reader, the content of the image signals these Renaissance cut-outs from Bellini, Veronese or Botticelli, which play the role of sets in a contemporary theatre of the world that preserves its past in museums. The universe – an exhibit of the Renaissance – is transferred to the contemporary area where act interest prevails. The producer-consumer binary pair translates a resistance to the connoted image, which the viewer of the image "translates" in turn according to their own degree of intelligibility. Ultimately, we can say that, beyond conveying perennial realities about ideals of beauty etc., the artistic director of Ferragamo house "seeks a way out of the visual entropy specific to hypermodern culture"[34].

An example of contemporary artistic production is the series of images proposed by the artist Svetlana Petrova (see Fig. 7 & 8) who, starting from the phenomenon generated by memes, introduces the form of "viral" humor into Renaissance pictorial

Fig. 7 (left): *No, just leave me be* (Svetlana Petrova & Zarathustra the Cat FatCatArt)
Fig. 8 (right): *Let me relax with my woman* (Svetlana Petrova & Zarathustra the Cat FatCatArt); Source: *Huffington Post*

representations and many others. The appearance of *Fat Cat Art: Famous Masterpieces Improved by a Ginger Cat with Attitude* is described by "Huffington Post" as a charming invention: "It's official. That thing that classic art has been missing is a chubby reclining kitty"[35]. The ginger cat Zarathustra appears in the famous paintings of Michelangelo and Titian as an "additional" element that becomes the center of interest of the image and an "aesthetic 'façade'"[36].

In the context of these daily practices, it is well known that bricolage and the appropriation of diverse content, but also the importance of cultural reference (established works of art are sufficient for the additional element to divert attention and provoke a reaction from the receiver) as part of the representation envisaged are defining features of contemporary art forms. It is demonstrated that being in front of such an image is, in fact, being in front of time. Didi-Huberman's statements remain valid here because the anthropological path that Gilbert Durand refers to when discussing the structures of the imaginary is felt or actualized more through the acceptance of the loss of knowledge by the image[37]. The cat Zarathustra cancels out the spatial depth suggested by linear perspective, and

its gulliverisation gives the viewer the impression of a close-up rendered by reverse perspective.

On closer inspection, the cat is "enlarged" and introduced into the world of the work not as a figure of the real, but as an effect of visibility intended to open up the field of possibility. Its appearance is not perceived as unnatural, and the role of defamiliarization of the space that such a character could mark is cancelled out, the cat becoming an expression of the familiar, of recognized comfort and of closeness to the space suggested by the image. Being on the same page with Bachelard, we can say that the cat is the optical instrument for analyzing the psychic relief. Just as the house is the protective place par excellence, the cat is the exponent of such spaces in which the folded being, to return to Leibniz's metaphor, is provoked in the direction of other images, products of "comforting" reveries, representative of an entire imaginary of the house.

If the figure "No, just leave me be" (see Fig. 7) takes up the theme analyzed above (as part of Michelangelo's "Last Judgement"), the figure "Let me relax with my woman" (see Fig. 8) is the interpretation given to Titian's painting, "Venus of Urbino".

Partially covering the nude figure, the cat blends into the Renaissance setting and, appealing to the viewer's sense of humor, it adds a third frame to the already present, an almost imperceptible one. This time, the frame we are discussing is, in fact, a meta-frame as an expression of the *fun* so desired in the new media. Since we are talking about a painting within a painting (why not?), Daniel Arasse brings into play, in his spectacular style, the hypothesis of a cliché image. Venus of Urbino (the original) would be an erotic invitation, a *pin-up,* as we call it today, and the play of distances is not about constructing spatial unity, but rather a mental one[38]. The floor and the edge of the drapery do not delimit spaces, but rather points of view on how Titian's painting is viewed.

Conclusions.
„Instagramism Sensibility" or
„Feeling Hyperaesthetic"?

The hyper-aestheticised era of atmospheres is the space-time in which everyone is chasing experiences. Cultural actors, commercial actors and others compete to offer lived experiences, to surprise the recipient to such an extent that the delivered object becomes an addiction. A foreshadowing of contemporary hypersensitivity is also indicated by Yves Michaud who, together with other important figures concerned with the study of the culture of the last two centuries, notes that, in preparation for the present moment, there was the cultural industry aimed at the masses, which gave voice to the uninformed at the expense of the specialized individual. When art became accessible, all that was needed was a sensitivity to receive the artistic message.

Today, the permeability of social media has made this phenomenon possible: the informed opinion of the connoisseur has been partially replaced by those who have made the most of all the mechanisms that generate success on social media. The influencer is the artist, or rather the digital aesthete who has created a community that adheres to a philosophy of life, and this philosophy of life is very much in the spirit (rather than the style...) of something that once was. In this context, reloaded nostalgia becomes a way of accessing the past without being aware of it, an attempt to intensify the emotion that only "atmospheres" can achieve. Michaud makes the distinction between the individual of the last century and the hyperaesthetic individual; he noticed that, for the latter, the stake is not the search for the factor that differentiates you from the crowd, but the attainment of immediate pleasure, the full satisfaction of being a member of a virtual community.

The artistic productions we often see on Instagram no longer arouse any cultural emotion in the hyperaesthetic individual. The viewer's world is in itself a hyperreality, and the autonomy of the artistic field a myth. Unlike Pierre Bourdieu's symbolic or social capital, image capital is, we believe, a more appropriate term to describe the stakes of the game that the contemporary indigenous person enters when responding to the demands of the "market" articulated in the virtual environment. It is obvious that "instagramism sensibility" is cultivated; it appears with increasing exposure to a certain type of content specific to the social media platform.

The *charismatic illusion* is based on an encounter with a mirror world of one's own inner world. The contemporary indigenous person may not know about Botticelli's Primavera, but because one feels

"hyper-aesthetic", one recognises the potential of the image, its pictorial dominance. One finds it in series of images labelled "aesthetic", in fashion editorials, in ironic visuals that speak of a past ideal of beauty, or, finally, in Italy's tourism promotion campaign. "The Social Genesis of the Eye"[39] in the era of the virtual environment and the AI revolution is inextricably linked to the new identity attributed to the viewer.

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Notes

1. Pierre Bourdieu, *The rules of Art. Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, translated by Susan Emanuel, Stanford California, Stanford University Press, 1995, p. 318-319.

2. The expression belongs to Pierre Bourdieu.

3. Ruxiao Yang, "Research Article Consumer behavior in art management: The perspective of social psychology" in *Environment and Social Psychology*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2025, https://esp.as-pub.com/index.php/esp/about.

4. Lev Manovich, *Instagram and Contemporary Image*, 2017, http://manovich.net/index.php/projects/instagram-and-contemporary-image, p. 81.

5. *Ibidem*, p. 81.

6. Pierre Bourdieu, *op. cit.*, p. 318-319.

7. Yves Michaud, *"Arta chiar s-a sfârșit". Eseu despre hiperestetică și atmosfere*, translated from French into Romanian by Bogdan Ghiu, Timișoara, Contrasens, 2023, p. 100. Translation by the author from Romanian.

8. *Ibidem*, p. 100.

9. *Ibidem*, p. 107.

10. Horst Bredekamp, *Image Acts. A Systematic Approach to Visual Agency*, translated, edited, and adapted by Elizabeth Clegg, Berlin/Boston, De Gruyter, 2018, p. 170.

11. *Ibidem*, p. 181-182.

12. Yves Michaud, *op. cit.*, p. 159, translation by the author from Romanian.

13. Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacres et simulation*, Paris, Galilée, 1991, p. 11.

14. *Ibidem*, p. 432.

15. *Ibidem*, p. 433.

16. We have preferred this tautological type of expression, to preserve the expression used by Bourdieu, while emphasizing that we are referring to the indigenous in the social media era.

17. The book we are referring to is *The Digital Plenitude. The Decline of Elite Culture and the Rise of New Media,* Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, The MIT Press, 2019.

18. Peter Murphy, "The Aesthetic Spirit of Modern Capitalism Aesthetic", in Peter Murphy and Eduardo de la Fuente (ed.), *Aesthetic Capitalism*, Boston, Brill Leiden, 2014, p. 51.

19. Yves Michaud, *op. cit.*, p. 166-167.

20. Lev Manovich notes that when discussing AI's 'generative culture', the terms "subject" and "style" are more appropriate than "content" and "form".

21. Lev Manovich, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

22. Jean Baudrillard, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

23. Mihnea Măruță, *Identitatea virtuală. Cum și de ce ne transformă rețelele de socializare*, București, Humanitas, 2023, p. 85.

24. Richard J. Gerring, *Experiencing Narrative on the Psychological Worlds Activities of Reading*, New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 1993.

25. Marie Laure-Ryan, *Narrative as Virtual Reality. Immersion and Interactivity in Literature and Electronic Media*, Baltimore and London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, p. 93.

26. *Ibidem*, p. 93-94.

27. W.J.T. Mitchell, *Image Science. Iconology, Visual Culture, and Media Aesthetics*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2018, p. 158.

28. *Ibidem*, p. 158-159.

29. Katja Kwastek, *Aesthetics of Interaction in Digital Art*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 2013, p. xvii.

30. John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, London, British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1972, p. 25.

31. Umberto Eco, *Apocaliptici și integrați. Comunicații de masă și teorii ale culturii de masă*, translated from Italian into Romanian by Ștefania Mincu, Iași, Polirom, 2008, p. 69.

32. Roland Barthes, *L'obvie et l'obtus*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1982. Translated by the author from French.

33. Marc Augé, *Non-Places. An Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity,* translated by John Howe, London, New York, Verso, 2009, p. 104-105.

34. Luca Morchetti, "Fashion and Pleasure. Between Aesthetics and Aesthesia", in *Nirvana. Les étranges formes du plaisir*, 2014, https://www.academia.edu/35485957/_Fashion_and_Pleasure_Between_Aesthetics_and_Aesthesia_Eng_.

35. Katherine Brooks, "Fat Cat Invades Classical Art and The Results Are Glorious", in *Huffington Post*, online since June 1st, 2014, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/fat-cat-art_n_5419943, last accessed October 13th, 2025.

36. Yves Michaud, *op. cit.*, p. 304.

37. Georges Didi-Huberman, *Devant l'image: Question posée aux fin d'une histoire de l'art*, Paris, Les Éditions de Minuit, 1990, p. 25.

38. Daniel Arasse, *Take a Closer Look*, translated from the French by Alyson Waters, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2013, p. 108.

39. The expression belongs to Pierre Bourdieu.