

IMAGE, SPACE, AND THE CONTEMPORARY FILMIC EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

The article tackles the current debate dealing with the possibilities of expansion of contemporary cinema, trying to provide theoretical tools in order to build a framework, which takes into account the delicate relationship between space, image, and cinematic experience.

Based on the background of researches devoted to cinema's medium-specificity, the author identifies some possible contribution from Cultural, Media and Visual Studies, with the aim of formalizing some key-concept for the study of contemporary "cinematic forms".

Settling the research

After a century-long history, one of the main issues of cinema theory seems to neglect its exclusive attention to film, in order to focus on the hybridization of expressive visual arts and reflect on its own specificity. The comparison with different objects, which progressively became worth studying, and the subsequent approach to various disciplines led to a widening of the theoretical field. This features in contemporary debates, and it is precisely the territory my research aims to explore.

The idea of an "expanded cinema" is not something typical of the latest reflections: the text by Gene Youngblood¹ represents the main and most explicit contribution in this sense, but it is just one of the voices emanating from a larger choir. For a long time, scholars and intellectuals have been dealing with the idea of a moving image able to go beyond its own precinct, spreading itself in space, conquering alternative situations and surfaces. This is an opening process, which broadens the traditional linguistic possibilities and allows cinema to mix itself with other arts, in a sort of contamination, which turns different territories into cinematic ones. In the last years a similar perspective worked as speculative basis both for artistic projects and for further academic or institutional explorations.² Quite paradoxically, film studies recently included in the debate the expanded forms of cinema and those hybrid productions, which test the use of moving images in new contexts and experimental filmic works.³ Although they take root in a series of previous famous editorial and research experiences, such developments of theory are particularly flourishing in the most contemporary studies.

In fact, the presence of screen media and the use of the cinematic element are increasingly frequent in the most diverse situations, establishing themselves as typical aspects of the communicative processes and as assumed tool of everyday practices. Moreover, the artistic production and the cultural industry both contribute in setting this framework (in which cinema is also expected to survive), where languages mix, expressive forms tend to converge, codes and arts end up hybridising.⁴ The resulting scenario is thus characterized by a constant redefinition: media convergence gives birth to complex platforms and to superimpositions among *dispositifs*, which often complete one another and sometimes even collide. Codes and media are constantly subject to a mechanism of unification, a tendency that coexists anyway with a strong tension towards innovation⁵. In this perspective, cinema and every medium in its way “overflow” their own original formats, “eroding” territory from other cultural productions. The instability of such a scenario is self-evident.⁶ In this environment, media are literally invested by convergence, which plays a central role in leading to a medial “explosion”. The same dynamics obviously involve cinema as well, enlarging the pertinence of the moving image domain.

Such an expansion implicitly raises a theoretical urge: being conscious of such an enlargement obliges to revise the aesthetic and medial status of cinema, that is to say to establish what is to be defined “cinema” and what is not, what are the most suitable categories and tools to analyse the new set of practices and procedures shaped by the widening of the possible film studies scenario.

Medium-specific approaches risk simplifying technological change to a zero-sum game in which one medium gains at the expenses of its rivals. A less reductive, comparative approach would recognize the complex synergies that always prevail among media systems, particularly during periods shaped by the birth of a new medium of expression.⁷

The traditional methods, which distinguished media from a particular specificity, are now breaking up, because of the current blurring of medial boundaries. The strong remediation process,⁸ which characterizes the contemporaneity, causes a sort of repetition, an extension and a critical re-examination of styles, texts and cultural products. The distribution mechanism of content is deeply altered, influencing the nature and the functionalities of medial devices as well; this opens up a wide range of possibilities which are now reserved to spectators/users, allowing them to act and play a first rank role. Far from being replaced, the old media transform themselves; their uses and the conventional behaviours connected to them are reshaped. This does not simply represent our time as “media transition time,”⁹ but also highlights a further modification that takes place in terms of imaginary, since the symbolic construction of media undergoes a massive renovation. In fact, the coexistence of multifaceted and articulated medial systems creates what Henry Jenkins defines “transmedia storytelling.”¹⁰ In other words, a series of aesthetic choices gives birth to a brand new language, able to answer the questions of convergence and its systemic, structural needs.

From a theoretical point of view, this implies a methodological necessity: in order to study cinema today and to understand the new forms the filmic element takes up, a wide perspective is essential. This would include the profitable intersections between cinema and other media, and would give the chance to compare those aspects, which still maintain a cinematic specificity. To explore the contemporary “extended cinema” scenario, the research approach should consider the width imposed by the trends just mentioned. In this sense, the cinematic specificity is not to be intended

as something outdated, but it definitely has to be taken into account under a comparative light, able to emphasize its features and the new relationships and balances with the specificities of other media. Therefore, a methodological view such as that of media studies has such a qualification and would show the phenomena of reconfiguration concerning the filmic element, simultaneously providing the opportunity to frame them, focusing on their connections with those processes that produce and regulate the whole media system. The devices, the practices and the contexts, which get increasingly closer to the cinematic element depicting a new medial and visual geography, are programmatically included in the domain of the post-cinema debate.

How to explore post-cinema: Some methodological hints

From what has already been explained, it seems that an exploration of the field is needed, to sketch the borders of the occurring media expansion, and in particular to trace the changes in the cinematic precinct. This will be useful at least to identify its potential developments, observe its products and results, describe its ruling principles and – possibly – try to give an interpretation of them. The main intention of this article is exactly to suggest a possible framework able to answer the theoretical urge to update the debate, encompassing the forms that shape and reshape moving images. The ambition is thus to propose a sort of taxonomy of those forms.

To focus on the unconventional cinematic forms means here to choose a particular observation point: the reflection has to be close to its objects in order to really be able to follow and trace their evolutions, without the risk of a self-referential theorization. In this sense, this research attempts to be a reflection about the real processes taking place in our contemporary society and daily practices, exploring the phenomena from the inside.

Cultural studies

The complexity featuring the analysed phenomena should emphasise the status of cinema taking into consideration the processes which progressively involve moving images on the one hand, and on the other hand, those dynamics which the filmic element influences. This provides the opportunity to take into account both the vectors challenging cinema's condition as a medium, and the linguistic characters together with the fruition patterns imposed by a "cinematic attitude" to reality. Only the intersection of these aspects can support the true chance to sketch the audiovisual and medial geography framing the filmic instance. In other words, the main issue is to catch the redefinition which is touching cinema, in terms of its symbolic meaning, of its cultural position within a wider mediascape, of the ways in which it is perceived and defined by people and their use.

The value assumed and the practices developed by moving images are the centre of interest of such a theoretical framework. It has to go through the expressive hybrid dynamics, describing how one cultural space absorbs another and how elements belonging to a certain field turn out to become cinematized component of our visual system. This research perspective shares with cultural studies a special attention reserved to social praxis, intended as an important component

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of culture and an accumulation of values and shared imagery. To assume such an approach allows a wide exploration, which succeeds in including a number of mechanisms that would otherwise be excluded from the research field. It is an important step, because these processes provide important experimental materials for the construction of a media aesthetic of transition. In fact, the deep sociocultural uncertainty and the strong technological development characterizing the present historical period are accompanied by a bidirectional response: the effort to pragmatically answer the urge of finding new linguistic and expressive models has a counterpart in the need to reflect and analyse culture and its forms with the aim of absorbing innovation at best. The idea of “culture” in its full potentiality is fundamental: it is “something much larger than the arts, something anthropological in definition. Given the particular functions of culture that were being explored – identity, cohesion, direction – media assumed increasing prominence.”¹¹ Just for these reasons, the centrality reserved to culture is clear. The culturological perspective guarantees this attention¹² and moreover, it does underline the structural connection between culture and media. Cultural and media studies are set side by side by the belief that both perspectives can offer a set of study tools and assumptions which fit one another, representing the basis to investigate the forms of moving images today.

Media studies

Media, and cinema among them, play a central role in the articulation of cultural practices. They represent essential elements, which concur to the construction of a complex scenario. This complexity is the result of governance policies, experiences and the fragile balance between editors and users/spectators that are connected by a set of highly embedded relations. The junction between cultural and media studies aims precisely to interface the research with “a full definition of media [that] requires an embrace of multiplicity, complexity and even contradiction if sense is to be made of such a pervasive cultural experience.”¹³ In order to face the intertwining nature of such a scenario the most suitable methodological perspective seems to be an interdisciplinary one. The explicit choice is not to close the research within rigid theoretical constraints. On the contrary, it is important to deal with the cinematic element in its “environmental” condition, trying to seize intertextual and intermedial links. Moving images should be considered then as part of the contemporary mediascape, emphasizing their potential as representational strategies and visual experiences.

Visual studies

The same interdisciplinary background is something typical of visual studies as well. This approach takes into account visual data considering their historical and sociocultural context, in order to highlight both their origin and developments. The notion of *visual culture* gives synthetically the idea of the importance of the environmental aspect: the visual element inevitably features something around it, something which turns out to be vital, since it influences its relationships with the scenario it enters and the individuals it addresses.

The reflection on visual culture focusses on everything able to define images as they are, their functions, their ways of transmission and distribution – mechanisms characterized by a central role played by media.¹⁴ Moreover, this research perspective reserves a deep attention – once again – to the concept of culture, emphasizing the shift which characterized it: the huge development of mass media, combined with a number of variables, not only granted a progressively larger importance to the visual element, but also encouraged the production of different visual expressive forms, that are part of culture and are spread and reproduced as products of the cultural industry.¹⁵ On a conceptual level, this implies a broadening of the idea of culture, which is not reserved to the *élite* anymore but opens up to alternatives or non-institutional forms.¹⁶ The classical cultural model, in which the artwork represented the manifestation of a non-reproducible originality, preserved in museums collections and symbol of “high culture”, gives way to a new conception of culture. This renovated approach directs the attention to visual language; in other words, towards objects which historically belonged to the most intellectual production, and towards common and definitely standardized ones. The focus shifts to a more basic meaning of culture, where the aesthetic qualities and the refinement are not lost but where the base for reflection is just wider and more accessible: the core concern for a visual culture model is the visual nature of objects, which represents the sufficient condition to make something worth studying. This is an important difference, because it includes in the debate grassroots artistic and filmic forms.¹⁷ The strength and pregnancy of the visual element throughout the cultural and cinematic productions work as qualitative factors, as aspects that make a certain object to be thought of as the result of a representation system, an element able to intersect reality, users, their imagery and the traditional producers of content. In practical terms, the attention is drawn to cultural objects, which are part of a wider discourse, whose peculiarities are seized thanks to perceptive experiences – particularly thanks to vision. The scopic experience is thus intended as an action able to articulate and influence meaning. It finds expression both traditionally and through a broad practice: vision becomes a full perceptive modality, in which the eye assumes a sort of “touching” ability; a haptic perception, where the eye activates a tactile prehension. This dynamic triggers the subject embedment in the visual space of perception – in this sense, vision is a powerful kind of scopic experience, in which more than seeing is involved, and the senses seem to merge in order to emphasize an intense corporeal feeling.¹⁸

Images, with their meanings, values, aims, and their fruition patterns give birth to what has recently been named “contemporary iconosphere”.¹⁹ The subjects who are responsible for the interpretation of images are also part of this context, because they are in charge of the construction of the symbolic establishment connected to the visual element, that is to say they formalize its meaning and redefine their own identity starting from it. The idea of a discourse weaved around the image underlines the passing from a simple visual “data” to a more complete visual “instance”. Moreover, it supports the reflection on visual culture as research paradigm characterized by a bilateral and structural relation between visual and social elements.²⁰

A big part of the explorations developed within visual studies considered the object of their inquiries as visual text. In fact, one of the first aims was to reinterpret the visual-/artwork as textual system, but the necessity of taking into account an expanded scenario (including the social, medial, cultural element) redirected the whole approach. More precisely, this has been possible thanks to a number of conceptual turns, that marked the evolution of the framework. Assuming that a visual text always sets itself at the intersection of different practices, means to focus on the

hypersaturation and pervasiveness of media, on the rising importance and influence of the cultural element, on the synesthetic predisposition of the image to produce sensory overloads. For these reasons, the visual culture perspective is nowadays a dynamic project, which tries to mirror socio-cultural trends, aesthetic choices, and the most innovative technological offer. This opens up the approach towards a research, which neither only studies the pure image, nor the image producer in an exclusive way, but on the contrary, addresses the creative intersections and the fruitful relations between the two of them. In particular, the visual culture debate tries to work on the one hand on the ability of the image to signify something, and on the other, on the individual's capability to interpret a certain meaning.

To see the research object as a simple "visual sign" is a limited interpretation. Indeed, the visual culture perspective guarantees an extended set of objects, explicitly including in its debate practices and processes concerning the visual instance in its complexity. First of all, this legitimates the focus not (only) on what is seen, but on the act of seeing. Emphasizing practices and processes does not mean to focus just on vision, because it does not encompass the whole set of mechanisms connecting the object and the subject of observation. The concept of visual experience comes therefore into play: vision, plus a complex set of dynamics able to define its articulations enter the arena.

As Tom Gunning also stated, visual culture

*identifies [a] new field as a research based on a description of the alteration of modern experience. [...] Gunning uses the word "experience" instead of "perception" to describe the situation when "visual stimuli [...] have multiplied enormously, often outside of the regimes that are usually thought of as culture, such as the museum or the gallery". These stimuli are simultaneously part of our experience and a record of it, and visual culture accordingly reflects and investigates the entire domain of this experience.*²¹

After the *iconic* and the *cultural turn*, the visual culture perspective seems to face a further shift – an *experiential turn*. The approach follows a more general orientation recently influencing the humanities. This is the sign of an overall urge towards a "restoration of experience as a central concern of cultural theory at the present time."²²

Analytical perspective and research hypothesis

The analytical framework I propose is part of the same trend, since its main references are cinema²³ and semiotics²⁴ theories assuming an experiential approach. It is precisely in these contexts that scholars have explicitly referred to an "experiential turn,"²⁵ which does not refer to a strict disciplinary precinct, rather opens up an interdisciplinary exchange. In this perspective, those discourses and processes gravitating around the new contemporary filmic forms are included in the theoretical debate, in which they are considered as vivid fabric, made up of different fibers, constantly revived and re-articulated. In fact, the essence of the expanded forms of cinema represents something which is continuously subject to reorganization, reformulation, since its *mise en forme* is directly influenced by sociocultural trends, technological innovation, evolution of aesthetic and medial codes.

This leads to two consequences at least: firstly, new expressive configurations appear, implying a reflection and a research of new interpretative strategies of images. In other words, in order to take into consideration cinema in its expanded dimension, diverse analytical perspectives should intersect, assuming precisely their junction as the vantage point where the observation has to be settled. This clearly implies a hybridization of method, based on a programmatic blurring of disciplinary boundaries and an intense dialogue among the inquiry directions. According to this idea, such research perspective should be founded on a threefold frame, set right in the area where *media*, *cultural* and *visual studies* overlap, emphasizing continuities and discontinuities among them.

The second consequence is the urge not to separate theory from the phenomena it wants to describe. Moving images are thus to be considered as part of experience, since this gives the chance to seize their true nature and their full potential in the very moment in which they are *moving*. Even visual culture literature shares a similar point of view: in his *Introduction to Visual Culture*, Nicholas Mirzoeff states that “the constituent parts of visual culture are [...] defined [...] by the interaction between viewer and viewed, which may be termed the visual event,”²⁶ that is to say “an interaction of the visual sign, the technology that enables and sustains that sign, and the viewer.”²⁷

To stress the dynamic element of the process means to underline the sensory and meaningful immediacy of moving images, but above all, it means highlighting the ability of the filmic element to collect components from the context where it is settled, earning vitality and shaping itself from it, whilst feeding it at the same time. The context itself does not simply contain the image; on the contrary it also gains new substance through it. The idea of an image displaying itself *en train de se faire* is something important precluding a progressive mechanism along which a visual and symbolic fulfilment is expected. Moreover, this process echoes the sense of progress characterizing the concept of experience,²⁸ and thus legitimates the methodological choice of according to an experiential research frame.

This is a central passage within the framework of visual studies, but at the same time it is something grounded on a phenomenological conception of experience,²⁹ and on a certain philosophical tradition which examines the two essential faces of experience itself, that is to say its nature of manifestation and encyclopaedia.³⁰

On a conceptual level, dealing with such an *experiential turn* means to divide the visual element from its textual medium, supporting its substance in itself. As I have already pointed out, the experiential perspective turns the traditional visual text into visual instance, not neglecting the textual framework, but showing how a text is always to be intended as an experience too. Following this shift, seeing becomes a full interpretative practice, contributing to the composition of experience as many other social, symbolic and aesthetic mechanisms do. Obviously, the image plays a central role in this dynamic, since it is still the representing core, but many other elements are added to it in order to get the complex nature of the filmic experience. “Visual experience in this sense is an event resulting from the modern that takes place across the ‘wandering lines’ marked by consumers traversing the grids of modernism.”³¹ Therefore, I would argue that visual experience is defined by the continuity/discontinuity trajectories followed by the cinema medium, remaining inside the precinct of its classical pertinence or – on the contrary – going outside of it, exploring new strategies and thus creating those very expressive forms which are the center of this analysis.

My main hypothesis is that the proliferation of screens and the wide variety of occasions in which the filmic device finds its space in the contemporary scenario, does not simply cause a new

collocation of cinematic experience. A *relocation*³² is definitely the first phenomenon to occur, but something else seems to characterize the situation as well: a real colonization of space takes place, and the moving image does not just enter new contexts but merges with them. It becomes part of it, forming its surface, allowing it to be practicable and dwelled in. The filmic experience becomes the rough material of space – or better, it is the subject of a kind of weaving process with space, which gives birth to a complex visual and experiential texture. A *space-image* materializes, meaning with it the place of filmic experience, which is a synthesis of the imaginary, symbolic, representative environment and physical one.

Exploring the situations in which this space-image seems to arise, it is possible to sketch its typical aesthetical, expressive features, the relationships linking its components, and its possible function. These variables can be useful in order to reconstruct the context framing those particular experiences and situations in which the filmic element is to be found today. Such a territory represents the area where a conceivable theoretical framework should develop, aiming to explore the possible research directions and to systematize them. The attempt is to understand the regulation and working mechanisms of space-image by means of an analysis of certain examples (i.e. space-image and the city, space-image and the gallery, space-image and everyday practices, space-image and performance, space-image and surveillance, etc.).

A second hypothesis is tightly related to these dynamics: the main idea is that the interpretation key to be used in order to study the space-image is the concept of *design*. This notion of design originally includes a manipulation, an operative and a projectual attitude, which is here to be directed towards space. Design becomes thus synonym for an action on space able to connote, furnish and dwell a certain environment.

The question which arises refers to the very experience of this manipulation: where does it come from? Which circumstances are propitious for the space-image to take place? And which are those that help to develop its design?

Design defines a space-image as the place of a specific filmic experience, characterized by a set of contextual features and a particular aim. In this sense, the main experiential features of the situations in which a space-image is recognizable are important variables in order to define its design. Taking them into consideration is essential to identify how and in which context the filmic element is used nowadays, whilst simultaneously sketching the basis of contemporary cinematic experience. The attention is to be directed towards the formal and functional feature of space-image. From time to time, the synthesis of these two sets of traits give birth to a microcosm. This intersection allows the determination of a number of situations where the filmic device is inserted as formal and functional part of the mechanism able to shape visibility and reality. It is precisely the experience, in its visual aspect and in its adherence with reality that is here at stake. In particular, this deals with the configuration of filmic experience. Better yet, it means to deal with a design that weaves the cinematic element and the spatial dimension it enters. The space-image resulting from this weaving process represents the direct effect of the disposition operated by the cinematic element in space, which makes the space itself become a place characterized by a specific function.

Further developments of such a research should consider a number of images and situations, which testify to the presence of moving images outside its precinct. Emphasizing the potential of the cinematic element for differential use³³ will possibly be useful in composing a catalogue of different space-images.

- 1 Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema*, P. Dutton & Co., Inc., New York 1970.
- 2 Among the recent initiatives which can be described as an expanded form of cinema, there is for example Peter Greenaway's work *Tulse Luper VJ Performance*, or the complex *Urbanscreens* project directed by Mirjam Struppek. As far as the editorial work is concerned, see Susan Lord, Janine Marchessault, *Fluid Screens, Expanded Cinema*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto 2007; Jeffrey Shaw, Peter Weibel (eds.), *Future Cinema: The Cinematic Imaginary After Film*, The MIT Press, Cambridge (MA)-London 2003; Martin Rieser, Andrea Zapp (eds.), *New Screen Media: Cinema/Art/Narrative*, BFI-ZKM, London-Karlsruhe 2002; Domenico Quaranta, *Media, New Media, Postmedia*, Postmedia, Milano 2010; Philippe Dubois, Lúcia Ramos Monteiro, Alessandro Bordina (eds.), *Oui, c'est du cinema. Formes et espaces de l'image en mouvement*, Campanotto, Pasion di Prato 2009; Philippe Dubois, Elena Biserna, Frédéric Monvoisin (eds.), *Extended cinema*, Campanotto, Pasion di Prato 2010; Alice Autelitano (ed.), *The Cinematic Experience: Film, Contemporary Art, Museum*, Campanotto, Pasion di Prato 2010.
- 3 This implies an updating of theory as well; on the one hand this means that the research has to encompass some aspects which were initially not pertinent with the film studies field. On the other hand, the debate unavoidably triggers a redefinition of the research objects: along this direction are to be considered those efforts to elaborate a "post-textual" approach and the so called "post-cinema" debate. The theoretical basis of this study are to be found along the vector which connects the reflections about medium-specificity by Rosalind Krauss, to the position formalised by Stanley Cavell regarding the ontology of film, and – in turn – to a number of more recent contributions about "post-media aesthetics." The most important references are: Rosalind E. Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," in *October*, no. 8, Spring 1979, pp. 30-44; Id., "Reinventing the Medium", in *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 25, no. 2, Winter 1999, pp. 289-305; Id., *A Voyage on the North Sea. Art in the Age of the Post-Medium Condition*, Thames & Hudson, London 1999; Id., *Perpetual Inventory*, The MIT Press, Cambridge (MA) 2010; Staley Cavell, *A World Viewed. Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA) 1979 (1971); with regards to the more recent debate, please refer to Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, The MIT Press, Cambridge (MA) 2001; Christine Gledhill, Linda Williams (eds.), *Reinventing Film Studies*, Arnold-Oxford University Press, London-New York 2000; Anne Friedberg, *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles 1993; Id., *The Virtual Window: from Alberti to Microsoft*, The MIT Press, Cambridge (MA) 2006; John Fullerton (ed.), *Screen Cultures: History and Textuality*, John Libbey, Eastleigh 2004; Ji-Hoon Kim, "The Post-Medium Condition and the Explosion of Cinema," in *Screen*, vol. 50, no. 1, Spring 2009, pp. 114-123; Francesco Casetti, "Theory, Post-theory, Neo-theories: Changes in Discourses, Changes in Objects," in *CiNéMAS: Journal of Film Studies*, vol. 17, no. 2-3, July 2007, pp. 33-45; Id., "L'esperienza filmica e la ri-locazione del cinema," in *Fata Morgana, Esperienza*, no. 4, 2008, pp. 23-40; Id., "Filmic Experience," in *Screen*, vol. 50, no. 1, Spring 2009, pp. 56-66; Id., "Back to the Motherland: the Film Theatre in the Postmedia Age," in *Screen*, vol. 52, no. 1, Spring 2011, pp. 1-12 (already published in *Montage AV. Zeitschrift für Theorie und Geschichte audiovisueller Kommunikation, Erfahrung*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2010, pp. 10-35 and in *Fata Morgana, Visuale*, no. 8, 2009, pp. 173-188).
- 4 Among the others, see Wu Ming, *Prefazione*, foreword to the Italian edition of Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, New York University Press, New York-London 2006 (it. ed. *Cultura convergente*, Apogeo, Milano 2007), especially pp. vii-xv.
- 5 See Ithiel De Sola Pool, *Technologies of Freedom: On Free Speech in an Electronic Age*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA) 1983, mentioned in: Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, cit., p. 10.
- 6 A rich literature is available as this regards; see, at least, Francesco Casetti, "I media dopo l'ultimo big bang. Cosa cambia e cosa resta, quando sfumano i confini," in *Link. Idee per la televisione, Che fare? La tv dopo la crisi*, no. 8, 2009, pp. 197-209; Matteo Bittanti (ed.), *Intermedialità. Videogiochi, cinema, televisione, fumetti*, Unicopli, Milano 2008; Nicola Dusi, Lucio Spaziantè (eds.), *Remix-remake: pratiche di replicabilità*, Meltemi, Roma 2006; Henry Jenkins, "The Cultural Logic of Media Convergence," in *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, no. 7, March 2004, pp. 33-43; Id., "Taking Media in Our Own Hands," *Technology Review*, <http://www.technologyreview.com/biomedicine/13905/>, last visit 7 May 2012.

- 7 David Thornburn, Henry Jenkins (eds.), *Rethinking Media Change. The Aesthetics of Transition*, The MIT Press, Cambridge (MA)-London 2003, p. 3.
- 8 Jay David Bolter, Richard Grusin, *Remediation. Understanding New Media*, The MIT Press, Cambridge (MA)-London 1999.
- 9 David Thornburn, Henry Jenkins (eds.), *Rethinking Media Change. The Aesthetics of Transition*, cit.
- 10 See Henry Jenkins, "Transmedia Storytelling. Moving Characters from Books to Films to Video Games Can Make Them Stronger and More Compelling," *Technology Review*, <http://www.technologyreview.com/biotech/13052/>, last visit 7 May 2012; Id., "La vendetta dell'unicorno origami. Sette concetti chiave del transmedia storytelling," in *Link. Idee per la televisione, Vedere la luce. Dio e la televisione*, no. 9, 2010, pp. 17-28.
- 11 William Uricchio, *Historicizing Media in Transition*, in David Thornburn, Henry Jenkins (eds.), *Rethinking Media Change. The Aesthetics of Transition*, cit., p. 26.
- 12 The notion of *culture* is here intended as in the grounding contributions of cultural studies. See, for example, Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: 1780-1950*, Harper and Row, New York 1958; Id., *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, Fontana, London 1974; Id., *Politics of Modernism: Against the New Conformists*, Verso, London 1989; Stuart Hall, David Morley, Kuan-Hsing Chen (eds.), *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, Routledge, London-New York 1996; Stuart Hall (ed.), *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, Sage – The Open University, London 1997; Id., *Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies*, in Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, Paula Treichler (eds.), *Cultural Studies*, Routledge, London-New York 1992, pp. 277-294. For a definition of the concept, see Michele Cometa, *Dizionario degli studi culturali*, Meltemi, Roma 2004; Lawrence Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense*, Duke University Press, Durham-London 2010 (in particular, chapter IV, *Contextualizing Culture: Mediation, Signification, and Significance*).
- 13 William Uricchio, *Historicizing Media in Transition*, cit., p. 24.
- 14 The visual culture approach owes its germinal perspective to the German *Bildwissenschaft*, which is to be traced back to the beginning of the 20th century and has developed afterwards, with some important contributions by Hans Belting, Klaus Sachs-Hombach, Horst Bredekamp. For a definition of its research object see, for example, AA. VV., "Visual Culture Questionnaire," in *October*, no. 77, Summer 1996, pp. 25-70.
- 15 This is precisely what has been defined as the *iconic turn*.
- 16 This issue does not precisely belong to the visual culture reflection, but is eventually part of the agenda of visual studies in general. The question has been addressed by so many scholars that it would be impossible to list all their contributions here. Anyway, James D. Herbert's opinion (as it's been pointed out by Margaret Dikovitskaya) can summarize the debate and underline its importance for visual studies: "Visual studies does not pursue the goal of redefining all cultural artifacts as art, expanding the canon, or erasing the 'high-low' distinction. The boundaries – high, low, and middle – still exist, but their definitions are determined by the type of materials [...] rather than by the degree of aesthetic sophistication. What we see in contemporary exhibitions is that these margins are continually being redefined: there are mixtures of the high and the low, and there are instances of border crossing in multimedia works. At the same time, when mass culture items are placed in a museum, the border is reset as much as erased because of the nature of the museum as an institution." Margaret Dikovitskaya, *Visual Culture: The Study of the Visual after the Cultural Turn*, The MIT Press, Cambridge (MA)-London 2005, p. 70.
- 17 For a definition of the grassroots cinematic production, see Emiliana De Blasio, Paolo Peverini (eds.), *Open cinema. Scenari di visione cinematografica negli anni '10*, Fondazione Ente dello Spettacolo, Roma 2010; Barbara Klinger, *Beyond the Multiplex. Cinema, New Technologies, and the Home*, University of California Press, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 2006; Laura Tettamanzi, "I Want You. Il controllo dei big media sui contenuti generati dagli utenti," in *Link. Idee per la televisione, News from Everywhere*, no. 6, 2008, pp. 107-112.
- 18 On these issues, see Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1992 (in particular, chapter 1); Antonia Lant, "Haptical Cinema," in *October*, no. 74, Fall 1995, pp. 45-73; Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion. Journeys in Art, Architecture,*

- and Film*, Verso, New York 2002; Jane Stadler, "Intersubjective, Embodied, Evaluative Perception: A Phenomenological Approach to the Ethics of Film," in *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, vol. 19, no. 3, July 2002, pp. 237-248; Nicholas J. Wade, *Perception and Illusion. Historical Perspectives*, Springer, New York 2005; *Infant Behavior and Development, The Development of Haptic Perception* (edited by François Jouen, Michèle Molina), vol. 28, no. 3, September 2005, pp. 227-388; Andrea Pinotti, *Un'immagine alla mano. Note per una genealogia dello spettatore tattile*, in Antonio Somaini (ed.), *Il luogo dello spettatore. Forme dello sguardo nella cultura delle immagini*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2005; Jennifer M. Barker, *The Tactile Eye. Touch and the Cinematic Experience*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2009. On corporeity and the relation between body and emotions, see Luca Malavasi, *Racconti di Corpi. Cinema, film, spettatori*, Kaplan, Torino 2009.
- 19 The idea of "contemporary iconosphere" is used here as understood by Antonio Somaini. See Antonio Somaini, *Sul concetto di cultura visuale*, in Tonino Griffero, Michele Di Monte (eds.), *Potere delle immagini?*, Mimesis, Milano-Udine 2009, p. 211.
- 20 See W. J. Thomas Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago-London 2005.
- 21 Margaret Dikovitskaya, *Visual culture: The Study of the Visual after the Cultural Turn*, cit., p. 79; see also the full interview with Tom Gunning, pp. 173-180.
- 22 Martin Jay, *The Limits of Limit-experience*, in Id., *Cultural Semantics. Keywords of our Time*, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst 1998, p. 78.
- 23 The main reference is to Francesco Casetti and his studies about filmic experience; for a systematic synthesis of the author's perspective, see Francesco Casetti, "Filmic Experience", cit.
- 24 See Ruggero Eugeni, *Semiotica dei media. Le forme dell'esperienza*, Carocci, Roma 2010.
- 25 *Ibidem*.
- 26 Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, Routledge, London 1999, p. 13.
- 27 *Ibidem*.
- 28 The almost obvious reference is to the idea of *Erfahrung* and the implicit sense of movement it conveys (from German, *fahren*, namely *to go*).
- 29 It's the Heideggerian elaboration to be taken here into particular consideration. My idea is neither to ignore the primary work by Husserl and his important studies leading to the foundation of phenomenology, nor to reduce and underestimate the connection among the reflections by the two philosophers, but to assume them and focus on the notion of being as "being in the world." This is something which mainly characterizes Heidegger's thought and his further conception of phenomenology, leaving somehow the fundamental logics of eidetic reduction and *epoché* on the background, developing a framework that encompasses a situated subject, who directly experiences the authenticity and historicity of reality, plus the subsequent feeling of thrownness. Experience rouses in this sense as something "alive," occurring as an event which unfolds itself in space and time as "projected" action (etymologically, from Anglo-French *pro-jecter*, from Latin *projectus*, to throw, send forth). Such a connotation represents an important hint, because at least it describes one of the two meanings of experience, that's to say its immediacy and its projectual possibilities. This last observation represents the link connecting the concept of vivid experience and the notion of design, which will be introduced further on. The two categories share the idea of an ideal progression: the movement of experience which develops as occurrence on the one hand, and the "culture of the project" featuring design, making the whole view progressing and turning it into something tangible. For the most important references on the phenomenological and the experience issue in the frame of Heidegger's literature, see Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Niemeyer, Tübingen 1927 (eng. ed. *Being and Time*, Harper and Row, New York 1962); Id., *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes*, in Id., *Holzwege*, Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main 1950 (eng. en. *The Origin of the Work of Art*, in Id., *Off the Beaten Track*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2002); Id., *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, Günther Neske, Pfullingen 1954 (eng. ed. *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Harper and Row, New York 1971); Id., *Identität und Differenz*, Günther Neske, Pfullingen 1957 (eng. ed. *Identity and Difference*, Harper and Row, New York 1969).
- 30 I refer to the concepts of *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, intended as two aspects of a complex structure which

encompasses a double temporality. The former concerns to things as they are happening (the event dimension), while the latter is connected to what remains after the manifestation of events and feeds our memory, ideas, knowledge – a sort of “symbolic material,” deposited by *Erlebnis*. These notions intersect a vast literature, belonging to philosophy of experience and to different Western philosophical traditions; see, for example, Wilhelm Dilthey, *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung. Lessing – Goethe – Novalis – Hölderlin*, Vanderhoeck & Rupert, Göttingen 2005 (1895); Giorgio Giannini, *La nozione di esperienza. Implicazioni filosofiche ed esistenziali*, Città Nuova Editrice, Roma 1987; Rüdiger Bubner, *Esperienza estetica*, Rosenberg & Sellier, Torino 1992 (1989); Valeria E. Russo (ed.), *La questione dell'esperienza*, Ponte alle Grazie, Firenze 1991; Loredano Matteo Lorenzetti (ed.), *La dimensione estetica dell'esperienza*, Franco Angeli, Milano 1995; Alfredo Marini, *Alle origini della filosofia contemporanea. Wilhelm Dilthey. Antinomie dell'esperienza, fondazione temporale del mondo umano, epistemologia della connessione*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2008 (1984). See also the short definition of the term *Esperienza*, in Nicola Abbagnano (ed.), *Dizionario filosofico*, UTET, Torino 1998, pp. 393-400.

31 Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, cit., p. 26.

32 Please refer to the research on the notion of “relocation” developed by Francesco Casetti. See Francesco Casetti, “L'esperienza filmica e la ri-locazione del cinema,” cit.

33 This expression is drawn from Rosalind E. Krauss, *A Voyage on the North Sea. Art in the Age of Post-Medium Condition*, cit.