





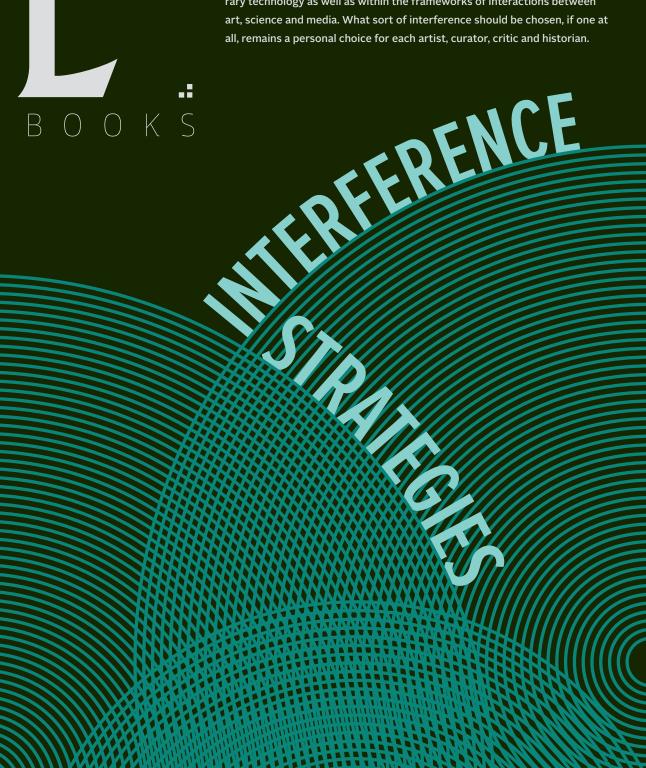






# VOL 20 NO 2 BOOK EDITORS LANFRANCO ACETI & PAUL THOMAS EDITORIAL MANAGER CAĞLAR CETIN

In this particular volume the issue of art as interference and the strategies that it should adopt have been reframed within the structures of contemporary technology as well as within the frameworks of interactions between art, science and media. What sort of interference should be chosen, if one at all, remains a personal choice for each artist, curator, critic and historian.













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# **Interference Strategies**

**BOOK EDITORS LANFRANCO ACETI & PAUL THOMAS** 

EDITORIAL MANAGER ÇAĞLAR ÇETİN

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# Interference Strategies: Is Art in the Middle?

If we look at the etymological structure of the word interference, we would have to go back to a construct that defines it as a sum of the two Latin words inter (in between) and ferio (to strike), but with a particular attention to the meaning of the word ferio being interpreted principally as to wound. Albeit perhaps etymologically incorrect, it may be preferable to think of the word interference as a composite of inter (in between) and the Latin verb fero (to carry), which would bring forward the idea of interference as a contribution brought in the middle of two arguments, two ideas, two constructs.

It is important to acknowledge the etymological root of a word not in order to develop a sterile academic exercise, but in order to clarify the ideological underpinnings of arguments that are then summed up and characterized by a word.

This book, titled *Interference Strategies*, does not (and in all honesty could not) provide a resolution to a complex interaction - that of artistic interferences - that has a complex historical tradition. In fact, it is impossible, for me, when analyzing the issue of interference, not to think of the Breeches Maker (also known as Daniele da Volterra) and the coverings that he painted following a 1559 commission from Pope Paul IV to 'render decent' the naked bodies of Michelangelo Buonarroti's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel. That act, in the eyes of a contemporary viewer, was a wound inflicted in between the relationship created by the artwork and the artist with the viewer (*intentio operis* 

and intentio auctoris with intentio lectoris), as Umberto Eco would put it. Those famous breeches appear to be both: a form of censorship as well as interference with Michelangelo's vision.

Interference is a word that assembles a multitude of meanings interpreted according to one's perspective and ideological constructs as a meddling, a disturbance, and an alteration of modalities of interaction between two parties. In this book, there are a series of representations of these interferences, as well as a series of questions on what are the possible contemporary forms of interference - digital, scientific and aesthetic - and what are the strategies that could be adopted in order to actively interfere.

The complexity of the strategies of interference within contemporary political and aesthetic discourses appears to be summed up by the perception that interference is a necessarily active gesture. This perception appears to exclude the fact that sometimes the very existence of an artwork is based on an interfering nature, or on an aesthetic that has come to be as nonconsonant to and, hence, interfering with a political project.

Interfering artworks, which by their own nature challenge a system, were the artworks chosen for the exhibition *Entartete Kunst* (1937). The cultural and ideological underpinnings of the National Socialist German Workers' Party could solely provide an understanding of aesthetics that would necessarily imply the defini-

tion of 'degenerate art' produced by 'degenerate artists.' Art that was not a direct hymn to the grandeur of Germany could not be seen by the Nazi regime as anything else but 'interfering and hence degenerate,' since it questioned and interfered with the ideal purity of Teutonic representations, which were endorsed and promoted as the only aesthetics of the National Socialist party. Wilhelm Heinrich Otto Dix's War Cripples (1920) could not be a more critical painting of the Body Politic of the time, and of war in general, and therefore had to be classified as 'degenerate' and condemned to be 'burnt.'

Art in this context cannot be and should not be anything else but interference; either by bringing something in between or by wounding the Body Politic by placing something in between the perfectly construed rational madness of humanity and the subjugated viewer. An element that interferes, obstructs and disrupts the carefully annotated and carefully choreographed itinerary that the viewers should meekly follow. In this case interference is something that corrupts, degenerates and threatens to collapse the vision of the Body Politic.

In thinking about the validity of interference as a strategy, it was impossible not to revisit and compare the image of Paul Joseph Goebbels viewing the *Entartete Kunst* (*Degenerate Art*) exhibition 1 to the many images of pompously strutting corporate tycoons and billionaires in museums and art fairs around the globe, glancing with pride over the propaganda, or - better - over the breeches that they have commissioned artists to produce.

Today's contemporary art should be interfering more and more with art itself, it should be corrupted and corrupting, degenerate and degenerating. It should be producing what currently it is not and it should create a wound within art itself, able to alter current thinking

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and modalities of engagement. It should be - to quote Pablo Picasso - an instrument of war able to *inter-fe-rio*: "No, painting is not done to decorate apartments. It is an instrument of war for attack and defense against the enemy."

If art should either strike or bring something is part of what has been a long aesthetic conversation that preceded the Avant-garde movement or the destructive fury of the early Futurists. In this particular volume the issue of art as interference and the strategies that it should adopt have been reframed within the structures of contemporary technology as well as within the frameworks of interactions between art, science and media.

What sort of interference should be chosen, if one at all, remains a personal choice for each artist, curator, critic and historian.

If I had to choose, personally I find myself increasingly favoring art that does not deliver what is expected, what is obvious, what can be hung on a wall and can be matched to tapestries. Nor can I find myself able to favor art that shrouds propaganda or business under a veil with the name of art repeatedly written in capital letters all over it. That does not leave very much choice in a world where interference is no longer acceptable, or if it is acceptable, it is so only within pre-established contractual operative frameworks, therefore losing its 'interference value.'

This leaves the great conundrum - are interferences still possible? There are still spaces and opportunities for interference, and this volume is one of these remaining areas, but they are interstitial spaces and are shrinking fast, leaving an overwhelming Baudrillardian desert produced by the conspirators of art and made of a multitude of breeches.

In this introduction I cannot touch upon all the different aspects of interference analyzed, like in the case of data and waves presented by Adam Nash, who argues that the digital is in itself and per se a form of interference: at least a form of interference with behavioral systems and with what can be defined as the illusory realm of everyday's 'real.'

Transversal interference, as in the case of Anna Munster, is a socio-political divide where heterogeneity is the monster, the wound, the interfering and dreaded element that threatens the 'homologation' of scientific thought.

With Brogan Bunt comes obfuscation as a form of blurring that interferes with the ordered lines of neatly defined social taxonomies; within which I can only perceive the role of the thinker as that of the taxidermist operating on living fields of study that are in the process of being rendered dead and obfuscated by the very process and people who should be unveiling and revealing them.

With Darren Tofts and Lisa Gye it is the perusal of the image that can be an act of interference and a disruption if it operates outside rigid interpretative frameworks and interaction parameters firmly set via intentio operis, intentio auctoris and intentio lectoris.

It is the fear of the unexpected remix and mash-up that interferes with and threatens the 'purity' and sanctimonious fascistic interpretations of the aura of the artwork, its buyers, consumers and aesthetic priests. The orthodoxical, fanatic and terroristic aesthetic hierarchies that were disrupted by laughter in the Middle Ages might be disrupted today by viral, amorphological and uncontrollable bodily functions.

My very personal thanks go to Paul Thomas and the authors in this book who have endeavored to comply with our guidelines to deliver a new milestone in the history of LEA.

As always I wish to thank my team at LEA who made it possible to deliver these academic interferences: my gratitude is as always for Özden Şahin, Çaglar Çetin and Deniz Cem Önduygu.

# Lanfranco Aceti

Editor in Chief, Leonardo Director, Kasa Gallery

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# Interference **Strategies**

The theme of 'interference strategies for art' reflects a literal merging of sources, an interplay between factors, and acts as a metaphor for the interaction of art and science, the essence of transdisciplinary study. The revealing of metaphors for interference "that equates different and even 'incommensurable' concepts can, therefore, be a very fruitful source of insight." <sup>1</sup>

The role of the publication, as a vehicle to promote and encourage transdisciplinary research, is to question what fine art image-making is contributing to the current discourse on images. The publication brings together researchers, artists and cultural thinkers to speculate, contest and share their thoughts on the strategies for interference, at the intersection between art, science and culture, that form new dialogues.

In October 1927 the Fifth Solvay International Conference marked a point in time that created a unifying seepage between art and science and opened the gateway to uncertainty and therefore the parallels of artistic and scientific research. This famous conference announced the genesis of quantum theory and, with that, Werner Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. These events are linked historically and inform interesting experimental art practices to reveal the subtle shift that can ensue from a moment in time.

The simple yet highly developed double slit experiment identifies the problem of measurement in the quantum world. If you are measuring the position of a particle

you cannot measure its momentum. This is one of the main theories that have been constantly tested and still remains persistent. The double slit experiment, first initiated by Thomas Young, exposes a quintessential quantum phenomenon, which, through Heisenberg theory, demonstrates the quantum universe as a series of probabilities that enabled the Newtonian view of the world to be seriously challenged.

If the measurement intra-action plays a constitutive role in what is measured, then it matters how something is explored. In fact, this is born out empirically in experiments with matter (and energy): when electrons (or light) are measured using one kind of apparatus, they are waves; if they are measured in a complementary way, they are particles. Notice that what we're talking about here is not simply some object reacting differently to different probings but being differently. 2

In the double slit experiment particles that travel through the slits interfere with themselves enabling each particle to create a wave-like interference pat-

The underlying concepts upon which this publication is based see the potential for art to interfere, affect and obstruct in order to question what is indefinable.

This can only be demonstrated by a closer look at the double slit experiment and the art that is revealed through phenomena of improbability.

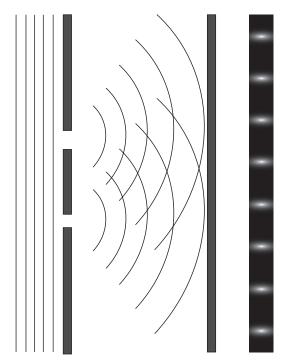


Figure 1. Diagram of the double slit experiment that was first performed by Thomas Young in the early 1800's displays the probabilistic characteristics of quantum mechanical phenomena

When particles go through the slits they act as waves and create the famous interference pattern. The concept is that one particle going through the slit must behave like a wave and interfere with itself to create the band image on the rear receptor.

Interference Strategies looks at the phenomenon of interference and places art at the very centre of the wave/particle dilemma. Can art still find a way in today's dense world where we are saturated with images from all disciplines, whether it's the creation of 'beautiful visualisations' for science, the torrent of images uploaded to social media services like Instagram and Flickr, or the billions of queries made to vast visual data archives such as Google Images? The contemporary machinic interpretations of the visual and sensorial experience of the world are producing a new spectacle of media pollution, obliging the viewers to ask if machines should be considered the new artists of the 21st century.

The notion of 'Interference' is posed here as an antagonism between production and seduction, as a

redirection of affect, or as an untapped potential for repositioning artistic critique. Maybe art doesn't have to work as a wave that displaces or reinforces the standardized protocols of data/messages, but can instead function as a signal that disrupts and challenges perceptions.

'Interference' can stand as a mediating incantation that might create a layer between the constructed image of the 'everyday' given to us by science, technological social networks and the means of its construction. Mediation, as discussed in the first Transdisplinary Imaging conference, is a concept that has become a medium in itself through which we think and act; and in which we swim. Interference, however, confronts the flow, challenges currents and eulogizes the drift.

The guestions posed in this volume, include whether art can interfere with the chaotic storms of data visualization and information processing, or is it merely reinforcing the nocuous nature of contemporary media? Can we think of 'interference' as a key tactic for the contemporary image in disrupting and critiquing the continual flood of constructed imagery? Are contemporary forms and strategies of interference the same as historical ones? What kinds of similarities and differences exist?

Application of a process to a medium, or a wave to a particle, for example, the sorting of pixel data, literally interferes with the state of an image, and directly gives new materiality and meaning, allowing interference to be utilised as a conceptual framework for interpretation, and critical reflection.

Interference is not merely combining. Interference is an active process of negotiating between different forces. The artist in this context is a mediator, facilitating the meeting of competitive elements, bringing together and setting up a situation of probabilities.

In response to the questions posed by the conference theme, presentations traversed varied notions of interference in defining image space, the decoding and interpretation of images, the interference between different streams of digital data, and how this knowledge might redefine art and art practice. Within that scope lies the discourse about interference that arises when normal approaches or processes fail, with unanticipated results, the accidental discovery, and its potential in the development of new strategies of investigation.

In "[t]he case of Biophilia: a collective composition of goals and distributed action", 3 Mark Cypher highlights the interference in negotiations between exhibit organisers, and space requirements, and the requirements for artist/artworks, resulting in an outcome that is a combination generated by the competition of two or more interests. As part of the final appearance of Biophilia, the artwork itself contained elements of both interests, an interference of competing interests, comprising a system in which the artist and the artwork are components, and the display a negotiated outcome. Each element interferes with itself as it negotiates the many factors that contribute to the presentation of art. In this sense the creation of the final appearance of *Biophilia* is the result of the distributed action of many "actors" in a "network." 4 (To put this in another form all actors are particles and interact with each other to create all possible solutions but when observed, create a single state.)

In summing up concepts of the second Transdisciplinary Imaging conference, particularly in reference to the topic of interference strategies, Edward Colless spoke of some of the aspirations for the topic, entertaining the possibilities of transdisciplinary art as being a contested field, in that many of the conference papers were trying to unravel, contextualise and theorise simultaneously.

The publication aims to demonstrate a combined eclecticism and to extend the discussion by addressing the current state of the image through a multitude of lenses. Through the theme of interference strategies this publication will embrace error and transdisciplinarity as a new vision of how to think, theorize and critique the image, the real and thought itself.

# Paul Thomas

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