FCJ-174 Constructing the contemporary via digital cultural heritage

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Abstract: The present article questions the construction of 'the contemporary' in digital cultural heritage archives as specific strategic articulations between past and present with regard to the future. A historical exploration of the discourse of cultural heritage presents three strategic axes supposedly executed by the archive. Via a fourfold problematisation of the notion of the contemporary these axes are further developed with regard to W.J.T. Mitchell and Georges Didi-Huberman's respective readings of Warburg's Atlas Mnemosyne and Malraux's Musée imaginaire. The article finally questions the possibility of ascribing inherent epistemological, existential, empirical and geopolitical force to a given technological archival order.

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1 The digital cultural heritage archive appeared in the discourse of cultural heritage around the beginning of the new millennium and did so with certain specific goals, € the digital preservation of and accessibility to cultural heritage should serve global tolerance, strengthen regional and national identity and, finally, inspire entrepreneurial creativity and innovation. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the predominant global agent of cultural heritage since the Second World War, has tended to express the potential use-value of cultural heritage by appropriating a quote from Arjun Appadurai: 'Culture is the resource that society needs to move from today to tomorrow' (UNESCO, 2010: 7). According to this discursive formation, operated internationally by UNESCO in parallel with its supranational and national counterparts, digital cultural heritage has a specific strategic temporality, € the digital construction of the past as a force driving the present into the future.

2 This article examines the specific strategic temporality of digital cultural heritage archives. It briefly discusses both the long history and more recent digital development of cultural heritage archives, particularly via UNESCO's discursive framing of digital cultural heritage. It then questions the possibility of ascribing epistemological, existential, empirical and geopolitical force to a specific technological construction of the contemporary. It thus questions both the archival organisation of heterochronous objects in digital cultural heritage archives, and the shared temporality of communal formations that may congregate around them, that is, the possibility of collectively being in and for the same time.

3 To develop this line of questioning, the article takes as its theoretical point of departure Peter Osborne's (2013) fourfold (UNESCO, 2010: 7) problematisation of the concept of the contemporary: 1. The epistemological problem of the contemporary as Kantian idea, that is, as heuristic fiction without any actual object; 2. The existential problem of the necessarily anticipatory structure of fragmented time; 3. The empirical problem of the speculative fiction of the contemporary as both a disavowal of politics and a productive act of imagination; and, 4. The geopolitical problem of the contemporary as the only possible articulation of the regional or national discourse in a theoretically coherent whole of history.

4 This problematisation of the contemporary is developed through a study of two paradigmatic archival forms that are often claimed as forerunners of the digital archive: Aby Warburg's Atlas Mnemosyne (1924–1929) and André Malraux's Musée imaginaire (1947–1965). Through an engagement with two different readings of these archives, those of W.J.T. Mitchell and Georges Didi-Huberman, the examination of Warburg and Malraux then finally leads to the questioning of the present possibility of experiencing a heterochronous past of a coming community of memory via the digital cultural heritage archive.

The presence of the past

5 Political initiatives and strategies for the technological preservation of national, supranational and international cultural heritage did not, of course, originate with the advent of the digital. The preservation of specific monuments has been a priority for millennia, although the scope of the preservation effort has varied greatly through the ages. According to The Modern Cult of Monuments (1903), a classic description of preservation strategies by Austrian art historian Alois Riegl (1858–1905), antiquity and the Middle Ages acknowledged only 'intentional monuments', that is, 'those works which recall a specific moment or complex of moments from the past' (Riegl, 1982:

24). Within this framework, should the historical occasion of a given monument fade in importance or 'commemorative value' for its preservers, the monument's protection would cease and its materials simply be repurposed for other endeavours.

Around the Italian Renaissance, antiquity's appreciation of intentional monuments was joined by certain 'unintentional monuments' that obtained either an artistic or a historical value which transcended the specific identifications of 'those for whom they had been erected and those who had an interest in preserving them [...]' (Riegl, 1982: 26). The difference between the intentional and unintentional monument is, as the names suggest, that the commemorative value of the first is attributed to the monument by its makers, whereas the latter gains its value from the recipients of the monument if they recognise in it elements of historical or aesthetic value.

We can then, although somewhat reductively, distinguish three main Riegelian periods in our attitude towards monuments. Antiquity and the Middle Ages were primarily interested in the monuments explicitly meant for their attention and commemoration. This meant claiming a sort of immortality of the past, its unceasing monumental persistence in the prolonging of the present. Next, Renaissance Italy generated an interest in non-intentional monuments but still favoured monuments with an affiliation to related cultures of antiquity as the recovered source of their true identity. This meant including the achievements of earlier generations in a 'notion of development' from past artefacts to a future destiny which amounted to assuming 'the heritage of related cultures of antiquity' (Riegl, 1982: 28). This attitude, prevalent until the eighteenth century, acknowledged the passing of time but, nonetheless, attempted to suspend it by granting the past 'a present-day value [*Gegenwartswert*] for modern life and work' (Riegl, 1982: 26).

Finally, it is not until the nineteenth century and the new prominence of cultural history that an interest in the tiniest minutiae of the 'developmental chain' of history is established leading to '[...] the modern shape we know today [...]: an interest inclusive of the smallest deeds and events of even the most remote peoples, who, despite insurmountable differences in character, allow us to recognize ourselves in each and every one of them' (Riegl, 1982: 26). In addition to this enlarged scope that allows humanity to encounter itself where e'er it may venture, this attitude is also characterised, especially in its early twentieth century incarnation, by the appreciation of 'age-value', that is, the visible signs of time's passing in the decay of monuments.

From the point of view of preservation, this age-value was at odds with the goal of historical value to preserve the monument in its given state of decay, € neither allowing complete restoration (newness-value) or further decay (age-value). But already for Riegl, developments within the technical means of reproduction and, furthermore, dissemination of artefacts were seen as a way to ease the tension between opposing values:

> [...] the development of modern techniques of reproduction promises that in the near future (especially since the invention of color photography and facsimile reproduction) new and perfect means of compensating for the originals will be found (Riegl, 1982: 37, € 38).

Building blocks of the future

Since its early beginnings in the late 1940s, UNESCO shared Riegl's interest in the capacity of the latest technologies to both preserve that which could be lost and disseminate that which was not easily accessible:

> The Department of Cultural Activities also tries to recommend and promote the use of the most modern methods in the pursuit of its permanent aims, € the preservation and enhancement of the cultural heritage of mankind, and the dissemination of culture (UNESCO, 1952: 378, € 379).

At this time, UNESCO's 'modern methods' comprised the preservation of art and music reproductions on film, microfilm and records and dissemination was done via television, radio and 'special vans' bringing reproductions and books to remote locations (UNESCO, 1952: 379). The goal was to enlist the 'help of modern technology [...] to encourage a taste for, and knowledge of, the arts [...] to raise the average cultural level and to promote international artistic exchanges [...] with the object of improving the standard of living of contemporary man' (UNESCO, 1952: 379). Although the term is here used unemphatically, the aim of constructing the contemporary via technological preservation and dissemination of cultural artefacts should be noted.

The promotion of education via modern technology slowly entered the digital domain in the late 1980s and 1990s where the use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) figures prominently in many UNESCO documents recognising:

15 > […] the important role that the new information and communication technologies, and particularly informatics, can play in extending educational services to new sections of the population, and in improving the quality and efficacy of the educational process (UNESCO, 1987: 40).

16 This introduction of information and communication technologies, 'in particular those relating to informatics as a subject taught', also aimed at 'distance education' (UNESCO, 1987, 43), thus continuing by digital means the earlier efforts of disseminating culture.

17 UNESCO's educational effort explicitly demonstrated the understanding of the past as an untapped potential for driving the present into the future, when, in 1993, UNESCO established a World Commission on Culture and Development, claiming that 'Genuine development can only be built on the basis of culture, which is its source, its mainspring and its ultimate goal. Ready-made imported development models have collapsed, because they have neglected the circumstances specific to each society, and the untapped potential of cultures' (UNESCO, 1993: 1). In spite of a certain metaphorical confusion, culture is clearly presented as: firstly, a source or potential; secondly, the driving mechanical force of development, and finally, the goal of this development.

18 The reason for this final emphasis, on culture as goal, is further illustrated in 1996: '[…] culture shapes all our thinking, imagining and behaviour' (UNESCO, 1996: 12). The idea was to implement 'culture' in 'development strategies' as 'a central variable […] if not the essence itself, of sustainable development, since attitudes and life-styles govern the ways we manage all our non-renewable resources' (UNESCO, 1996: 10). Culture is thus crucial to 'humankind's creative capacities in the face of a treasured past and an unpredictable future' (UNESCO, 1996: 10).

19 Whereas Riegl presented different commemoration values and strategies of preservation and wondered how to solve their inherent tensions, UNESCO focuses on the use-value of 'a treasured past' in 'the educational process' (UNESCO, 1987: 40) to further 'human development' and 'human betterment' (UNESCO, 1996: 7). For Riegl, use-value, € a subcategory of present-day value, € is expressed, for example, in the inhabitability of a house which, if inhabitable, must not be left to decay (age-value). For UNESCO, the use-value of heritage is a way of encountering an 'unpredictable future'. There are no tensions between conflicting commemoration or preservation values, only the 'untapped potential of cultures'. This is the ideological framework into which the term 'digital heritage' was inscribed when, in 2001, it first found its firm place within major UNESCO documents such as the Medium-Term Strategy and the General Conference Resolutions.

20 The movement from analogue to digital modes of use-value is evident in the move from 1952's educational couple of 'preservation' and 'dissemination' to the frequent coupling by 2001 of 'preservation' with 'access'. UNESCO becomes concerned with 'preservation and continuing accessibility' or 'preservation of and permanent access to digitally produced materials' (UNESCO, 2001: 71). According to UNESCO, the digital past should have a 'permanent' present-day use-value: 'The purpose of preserving the digital heritage is to ensure that it remains accessible to the public' (UNESCO, 2004: 75). And finally, the 'digital information life cycle' is described as going 'from creation to access' (UNESCO, 2004: 75). Access is presented here as the telos of creation.

21 UNESCO's focus on access reorders Riegl's perception of use-value and age-value. For Riegl believed that use-value would usually triumph over age-value as it makes no sense to leave a perfectly useful house to decay. However, if use-value was diminished enough, then age-value could reign free: 'Only works for which we have no use can be enjoyed exclusively from the standpoint of age-value, while those which are still useful impede such pure contemplation' (Riegl, 1982: 42). For UNESCO, however, age-value and historical value's concern for 'authenticity' and 'an authentic record' serve the purpose of optimising use-value in the form of 'potential of the heritage' as 'the building blocks of the future' (UNESCO, 2004: 75, € 76). The focus of the digital cultural heritage archive is on the preserved past as the building blocks of the future that need to be assembled in the present via unfettered access.

Three strategic axes of digital cultural heritage

22 The goal of preserving the past in order to make it accessible in the present as building blocks of the future manifests itself in the general interest in digital cultural heritage archives from 2001

onwards across UNESCO, the EU and nation states. This strategic temporal construction seems to fall along three axes:

– Global tolerance by facilitating knowledge of the other;

– Regional and national identity through the knowledge of the self;

– Entrepreneurial creativity and innovation through the knowledge and possible exploitation of the abundant cultural resources inherited from our common forebears.

Admittedly, these axes are not new but in the shift from dissemination to access their scope has changed. For example, 'special vans' are no longer needed to transport reproductions to remote locations. In fact, both temporal and spatial remoteness seem to have been vanquished altogether:

> The digital heritage is inherently unlimited by time, geography, culture or format. [...] The digital heritage of all regions, countries and communities should be preserved and made accessible, so as to assure over time representation of all peoples, nations, cultures and languages (UNESCO, 2004: 75).

This goal of global representation and the beneficial consequences for our relation to the other, are not unique to UNESCO. They are are further expressed as part of a general discourse of cultural heritage, for example in the plans for the European Union's digital library Europeana, which acts as an Internet portal to a wide selection of European cultural institutions' digital collections: 'Improved access to our cultural heritage will create "unity in diversity"' (Europeana, 2013: 5).

Not surprisingly, the second axis takes 'identity' as its watchword and is more prominent in supranational or national contexts, since global identity would coincide with the question of 'unity in diversity':

> '[...] through the meeting, exchanging and sharing that culture entails, [a European digital library] can help to bring the European Union into closer contact with its citizens and a true European identity to take root and find expression' (European Parliament, 2007: 3).

Access to culture as the root of identity is also found on a national level. A report on the state of digitised cultural heritage in Denmark, for instance, clearly claims:

> 'Cultural heritage is of significant importance for the Danish sense of identity in a globalised world, and in these years, the importance of art and culture will increase. The government will therefore continue the work with communicating Danish cultural heritage, nationally and internationally' (Digitaliseringsudvalget, 2009: 3). [1]

We have already seen the third axis in UNESCO's 1996 call for a closer coupling of 'culture' and 'development'. It finds a more recent expression in a current UNESCO theme, 'Protecting Our Heritage and Fostering Creativity' (UNESCO, 2014), which in November 2013 fostered UNESCO's fifth most popular tweet of the month: 'Put culture & creativity at the heart of sustainable development & public policy! #supportcreativity pic.twitter.com/dcdCr1zk1B' (UNESCO, 2013). Preservation and access, € also referred to as 'safeguarding' and 'sharing', € are aimed at supporting 'creativity, innovation and the emergence of dynamic cultural sectors' (UNESCO, 2014). And furthermore: 'Both heritage and creativity lay the foundations for vibrant, innovative and prosperous knowledge societies' (UNESCO, 2014).

These three axes also form the three main aims of the EU Horizon 2020 Work Programme for 2014–2015, although in a different order:

> The first aim is [...] to analyse and develop social, economic and political inclusion and positive inter-cultural dynamics in the EU. [...] The second aim is to foster the development of innovative societies and policies in Europe through the engagement of citizens, civil society organisations, enterprises and users in research and innovation [...] The third aim is to contribute to an understanding [...] of its cultural heritage and of its identities in order to strengthen cohesion and solidarity and to encourage modern visions and uses of its past (European Commission, 2014: 5).

The formulation of each aim ends with the proclamation of its ability to support a general notion of innovation as bringer of economic growth. For example, the third aim of identity concludes:

35 'In these efforts, new technologies and digital cultural heritage should play an important innovative role as they enable new and richer interpretations of our common European culture while contributing to sustainable economic growth' (European Commission, 2014: 5).

36 The three aims of EU Horizon 2020 are formulated in the context of the current financial crisis. As has hopefully been demonstrated, though, these aims do not appear within the discourse of cultural heritage as a result of the crisis. They are but the culmination of a long development of a cultural heritage discourse with what is now a technologically enabled global scope. As mentioned previously, this scope is summed up nicely by Director-General of UNESCO Irina Bokova's quote from Arjun Appadurai, € a quote also used on numerous other occasions by UNESCO, including on Twitter: 'Culture is the resource that society needs to move from today to tomorrow' (UNESCO, 2010: 7).

The idea of contemporaneity

37 Within the discourse of cultural heritage the contemporary is presented as a relatively uncomplicated gateway between past and future. Yet such uninhibited access is only possible via the strategic construction of the specific interactions between past, present and future. In order to question this construction, it is useful here to begin with the problematisation of the concept of the contemporary by Peter Osborne. Although his (2013) investigation of the concept of the contemporary aims to make the distinction between contemporary and modern art, his fourfold problematisation holds for our purpose as well.

38 The contemporary, Osborne argues, is an 'idea' in the Kantian sense, that is, 'its object (the total conjunction of present times) is beyond possible experience [...] and is hence a problem that requires investigation' (Osborne, 2013: 22). The idea as the representational form of reason, is thus distinct from Kant's two other representational forms: intuition as the immediate representation of an experiential object through sensibility and the concept as the representation of an experiential object mediated by other representations through understanding (Deleuze, 1984: 8). Such ideas are 'heuristic fictions' that may '"regulate" experience as long as they are not contradicted by it' (Osborne, 2013: 22).

39 Apart from UNESCO's 1952 evocation of 'contemporary man', the term 'the contemporary' is not widely and certainly not emphatically used in the above-mentioned sources. The 'total conjunction of present times' is, however, distinctly operational in the specific ordering of the cultural past as 'untapped potential' in order to drive the present into the future. And not only do the presented sources claim a contemporaneity of global presents, they also claim a contemporaneity of global pasts: 'The digital heritage is inherently unlimited by time, geography, culture or format' (UNESCO, 2004: 75).

40 The specific temporal conjunction into which our three strategic axes are deployed constitutes the operational field of cultural heritage agents. The permanent present-day use-value of the past as the heuristic fiction of the unlimited contemporaneity of past and present is what allows for the constitution of cultural heritage as untapped potential.

41 What Riegl described as the recognition of ourselves in 'the smallest deeds and events of even the most remote peoples' (Riegl, 1982: 26) has now presumably been technologically relieved of remoteness. The recognition of ourselves and others via the heritage of deeds and events is open for creative innovation, € a development which, we will remember, entails the shaping of 'our thinking, imagining and behaviour' as well as the management of 'all our non-renewable resources'. The operations of the contemporary as unlimited temporal conjunction are thus a necessary presupposition for the strategic goals of the guardians of cultural heritage. The specific construction of the contemporary as idea establishes the terrain for these strategic operations.

Existential time or standing reserve

42 The temporal conjunction of cultural heritage is, of course, an idea or fiction contradicted by experience in several ways, and is as such an epistemological 'problem that requires investigation'. Heidegger delivered one such investigation via an existential problematisation in which he argued that the present itself 'in its presentness, cannot be considered some kind of self-contained temporal receptacle for objects of experience, since it only exists as the differentiation or fractured togetherness of the other two temporal modes (past and future), under the priority of its futural dimension' (Osborne, 2013: 23). A common and false conception of time as a receptacle containing

a past, present and future is only derivative of a more profound temporality (Heidegger, 2001: 374) which has as the 'ontological condition for its possibility, the state of Being of care' (Heidegger, 2001: 437). Care is here characteristic of Dasein which, in its thrownness, 'is essentially futural [...] [O]nly an entity which, as futural, is equiprimordially in the process of having-been, can, by handing down to itself the possibility it has inherited, take over its own thrownness and be in the moment of vision for "its time"' (Heidegger, 2001: 437).

43 This Heideggerian heritage is not a past as resource. For Heidegger, time is the 'unity of a future which makes present in the process of having been' (Heidegger, 2001: 374) and not the ordinary understanding of 'the world-historical [as] something present-at-hand which comes along, has presence, and then disappears' (Heidegger, 2001: 437). Nor is time in any way unlimited in this passing, it is directed towards its own end in death. Being 'for one's time' is a reckoning of time. It is an articulation and constitution of time itself, a specific singular temporality, and not the inscription of the self in the linear passing of time or in the eternal present of past time.

44 From this perspective, the very specific strategic construction or implementation of the past in the present as a driving force with regard to the future must be described as the ordering of culture in terms of the later Heidegger's concept of 'standing reserve' (Bestand). That is, the past in the present becomes a resource reduced to its ready availability with regards to a specific purpose: creativity and innovation as modes of actualising the 'untapped potential of culture' in the production of a specific future (economic growth). This would also articulate certain reverberations between Riegl's rendition of recognition of the self in the tiniest detail of cultural history and Heidegger's critique of the technical attitude of 'Enframing' (Gestell) which orders a given entity as standing reserve. The human ordering of the entirety of being as standing reserve seemingly lets humanity meet only itself in the world: 'In truth, however, precisely nowhere does man today any longer encounter himself, i.e., his essence' (Heidegger, 1977: 27).

Empirical time or imaginative disavowal

45 Next, the temporal conjunction of an unlimited past in an unlimited present is contradicted by experience on empirical grounds: 'There is no socially actual shared subject-position of, or within, our present from the standpoint of which its relational totality could be lived as a whole, in however epistemologically problematic or temporal-existentially fragmented anticipatory form' (Osborne, 2013: 23). The temporal conjunction of global cultural heritage operates as if this totality were an actual empirical entity liveable both as a resource shared by a global community and an individually accessible potential affording personal edification and development.

46 Such an entity is an operative fiction which amounts to a disavowal of politics in its postulation of a unity of time as standing reserve. It obliterates the possibility of any fundamental disagreement or dispute of history in favour of the tranquility of creative potential. On the other hand, it is also a 'productive act of imagination' positing this tranquil historical coexistence as a given. Or, in the specific case of global cultural heritage, the productive act of imagination of a 'heritage inherently unlimited by time, geography, culture or format' disavows all political disputes within that unlimited sphere in favour of the community of peacefully coexisting individuals engaged in creative and innovative pursuits.

47 We must acknowledge that in our present context, the rapid succession of technological generations is itself the necessary mechanical foundation of the fictional eternity of heritage. [3] Executive Director of the Digital Public Library of America, Daniel J. Cohen, states that far from the fetish of unfettered access to the eternally preserved artefact, the digital object requires 'a special set of eyes, often unique hardware, and an accompanying operating system and application software, to view or read them properly' (Cohen 2005, 15). As Wendy Hui Kyong Chun has argued, far from fulfilling 'the archival promise' of a calculable 'future simple' the digital format is but an 'enduring ephemeral' (Chun, 2008: 148, € 150).

Geopolitical time and the task of the archive

48 In the very construction of its temporality, the supposedly limitless digital heritage archive projects an imaginary global present and therefore actively disavows any possible dispute, disagreement or strife. Yet there are many potentially antagonistic relations within this projected unity. For example, different postcolonial temporalities involve 'not just temporal, but equally, indeed, in certain respects primarily, € spatial' antagonisms (Osborne, 2013: 25). This, of course, poses a

geopolitical problem, and consequently, it poses a task. Such a task demands that the imaginary act of the contemporary be other than the constitution of a coherent whole of history, whether national, supranational or international. In this regard, Osborne explicitly references the young Nietzsche's notion of the 'untimely' (unzeitgemmÃ¤Ã e):

49 > 'That much, however, I must concede to myself on account of my profession as a classicist: for I do not know what meaning classical studies could have for our time if they were not untimely–that is to say, acting counter to our time and thereby acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come' (Nietzsche, 1997: 60).

50 For Nietzsche, history serves not a consolidation of time, but a challenging of the present in order to open up the future.

51 This was also Deleuze's point when, still referencing Nietzsche, he located the untimely (intempestif / actuel) as the other side of Foucault's archaeology: the diagnostics that brought archaeological analysis of what we have ceased to be into an emancipatory relation to our own becoming (Deleuze, 1992: 164). [4] This was also, finally, the crux of Agamben's argument when he discussed Barthes' explicit bringing of the Nietzschean notion of the 'untimely' into relation with the 'contemporary' ('il contemporaneo') (Agamben, 2009a: 40). For Agamben, to be contemporary is never to belong to or coincide with one's time. Rather, the opening of time in con-temporaneity as being 'for one's time' and not just engulfed in it, necessarily entails a challenging of the projection of a community of peacefully coexisting individuals engaged in creative and innovative pursuits.

Grid vs. Vortex

52 So far, we have examined and problematised one of the main recent discourses of cultural heritage that has rendered possible and in many cases framed the funding of digital cultural heritage archives. The problematisation of 'the contemporary' has demonstrated that the idea of the contemporary is the presupposition that allows for the constitution of cultural heritage as the terrain of untapped potential for the three strategic axes of cultural heritage discourse. Yet we have seen that this potential rests on a specific temporality of standing reserve which ignores the possibility of a more fundamental existential temporality claimed by the earlier Heidegger. From an empirical perspective, it has then been suggested that the cultural heritage discourse projects a contemporary conjunction of temporalities beyond any liveable subject position and that it thereby entails the negation of any political disagreement or dispute with regards to the past. Finally, I have begun to suggest that this disavowal of politics poses a geopolitical task which–according to the tradition running from Nietzsche via Deleuze to Agamben–must challenge the unified contemporaneity of cultural heritage and instead consider contemporaneity as being out of time and 'for time' in order to bring about a time to come.

53 The digital cultural heritage archive is thus positioned within a battlefield of temporalities. The battle sees a a singular temporality challenge the archive's supposed universal contemporaneity of presents and pasts, the temporal conjunction of heterochronous objects and the global conjunction of collectivities. In order to understand the privileged role of the digital archive within this battlefield, we must now consider the temporal constructions of more specific archival orders. Or rather, staying within discourse analysis, we should consider the discursive attribution of potential to certain archival configurations. If the digital cultural heritage archive holds a specific threefold promise as articulated along the strategic axes depicted above, how does the digital archival order honour that promise?

54 Aby Warburg's Atlas Mnemosyne and André Malraux's Musée imaginaire have both been referenced as paradigmatic archival forms of great promise ultimately fulfilled by their digital successors. [5] They supposedly held specific potentials for knowledge creation and a sense of human collectivity. W.J.T. Mitchell's and Georges Didi-Huberman's respective analyses of specific arrays, albums and atlases have both attempted to distill the respective characteristics of these two exemplars.

55 In a recent lecture entitled Madness and Montage – Symptom and Symbol from Aby Warburg to A Beautiful Mind (Mitchell, 2014b), Mitchell deploys a spatial dialectics between grid and vortex as a way of describing image arrays: grid representing rational Cartesian space and vortex as an expression of transformation, vertigo and madness. [6] Mitchell is less interested in the attempts

to transform multiple images into 'unified artistic compositions', for example in Gerhard Richter's Atlas (1964–1995) and Robert Morris' Untitled (Scatter Piece) (1968–1969), that could in themselves hint at, respectively, the grid and the vortex. Rather, Mitchell wants to examine the 'provisional assemblage', the operations behind the production of 'image knowledge'.

56 Mitchell highlights two notable exceptions to the 'normal practice in art history' in which the display of image arrays is controlled in relation to a predetermined discourse or interpretation. Warburg's Atlas Mnemosyne and Malraux's Musée imaginaire instead acknowledge the provisional character of the assemblage. One common characteristic of these two arrays or assemblages, which renders them especially relevant to the present context, is that, € similar to Riegl's tentative technological solution to the tension between historical value and age value and UNESCO's increased use of 'the most modern methods' in their pursuit of 'preservation and dissemination' and, later, 'preservation and access', € they both consist of photographic reproductions.

57 Although the distinction was never explicit, one got the impression that, according to Mitchell, Warburg tended towards the vortex while Malraux tended toward the grid. Maurice Jarnoux's famous depictions of the latter in his home (André Malraux chez lui, 1953) shows the floor covered by a nice grid of reproductions for his Musée imaginaire, a grid brought to only the slightest degree of turbulence around the feet of the organising mastermind. On the other hand, although Warburg's plates do have a certain grid-like distribution, Mitchell quoted Didi-Huberman's comments that Warburg's goal was to set art history in motion:

> 58 To create a knowledge-montage was [...] to reject the matrices of intelligibility, to break through the age-old guardrails. This movement, with its new "allure" of knowledge, created the possibility of vertigo. [...] The image is not a closed field of knowledge; it is a whirling, centrifugal field. It is not a field of knowledge like any other [...] (Mitchell, 2014b) [7].

59 Mitchell ended his lecture by showing the art installation T_Visionarium developed by iCinema which 'offers the means to capture and re-present televisual information, allowing viewers to explore and actively edit a multitude of stories in three dimensions' (T_Visionarium, 2008). The digital installation demonstrated how the current enormous capacity for capturing, storing, displaying and manipulating data can move from grid to vortex in an instant. As Mitchell concluded: 'If we are to study the totality of the world's images, we had better get used to vertigo' (Mitchell, 2014a).

Album vs. Atlas

60 Mitchell proposes to analyse image arrays as a dialectic between grid and vertigo, between synchronous order and productive madness, one based on simultaneity, the other on futurity. Any image array will interface between the two; with Malraux a bit more on the side of the grid and Warburg more on the side of the vortex. Similarly, Didi-Huberman spends the better part of a recent book, L'Album de L'art Ã l'époque du Â« Musée imaginaire Â» (2013), presenting a fundamental conflict between Malraux's Album and Warburg's Atlas as two opposing ways of approaching pictorial heritage.

61 Didi-Huberman perceives Warburg's Atlas, € with its arrays of heterogeneous reproductions indistinctly related to a given theme or Pathosformel, € as a fundamental complexity which can never be resolved into a unifying concept, a complete archive or a strict classification (Didi-Huberman, 2011: 20). This observation is based on the claim that images

> 62 [...] if organised in a specific way offered us the possibility, € or, rather, the undepletable resource, € for a rereading of the world. [...][The Bilderatlas] offered [...] an apparatus for setting thought back in motion, exactly where history had stopped or where words were still lacking. It was the matrix of a desire to reconfigure memory by refusing the fixation of memories, € the images of the past, € in an ordered, or worse, definitive, narration (Didi-Huberman, 2011: 20, € 21).

63 This imaginative perpetuum mobile is 'thus our heritage, the heritage of our time' (Didi-Huberman, 2011: 21); a heritage which is both aesthetic and epistemic in that the new aesthetic forms entail a new approach to knowledge.

64 For Didi-Huberman as for Mitchell, Warburg presents an articulation between grid and vortex, between 'raison et déraison' (Didi-Huberman, 2011: 22). Didi-Huberman is, however, explicitly critical of Malraux and his Album for snapping the images too firmly to the grid; for losing sight of

the 'mad' end of Mitchell's spectrum. [8] Although Malraux claimed that, contrary to the affirmation of the traditional museum, his Musée imaginaire was an interrogation (Malraux, 1999: 176), Didi-Huberman accuses Malraux of instantly answering his own questions (Didi-Huberman, 2013: 31). If Malraux claims his Album to be what Mitchell called a 'provisional assemblage', Didi-Huberman claims that this provisionality is directed solely towards a 'unified cultural composition'. In spite of the intended dialogue between reproductions of artefacts from the remotest as well as the most familiar cultures, this dialogue was never allowed to go astray, dissolve into nonsense or get stuck in irresolvable tension or conflict. It was always brought back to 'a stylistic or spiritual synthesis which grounds its notion of universal "art" or "creation"' (Didi-Huberman, 2013: 41).

65 The Musée imaginaire is the authoritative accumulation and presentation of timeless genius. It is open insofar as new or unknown old works of genius can be added, but closed with regard to a historical challenge of universal human essence. It is thus a re-sacralisation, € the reproduced work is included in the church of universality. And this re-sacralisation is quite literal, insofar as many of the works included in the Musée imaginaire are often former religious sculptures wrenched form their erstwhile cultic context and re-inscribed into the cult of universal cultural heritage. [9]

66 Where Walter Benjamin would have argued for the technologically induced decontextualisation of the reproduced work of art as potential emancipation from tradition in the passage from cult-value to exhibition-value (Benjamin, 1968a), Malraux re-inscribes the object in the universal eternity of the Album form of his Musée. For Malraux, the emancipation of mechanical reproduction is what allows the possible decontextualisation and subsequent inclusion in universality: 'In this way reproduction frees a style from the limitations which made it appear to be a minor art' (Malraux, 1974: 22). Mechanical reproduction salvages the artefact from its contextual limitations in order to include it in the family album: '[...] photography imparts a family likeness to objects that have actually but slight affinity' (Malraux, 1974: 21).

67 Malraux's praise of the present presence of the accumulated past in the universal eternity of cultural heritage can be gleaned in crystalline form from a speech he gave to Gaullist intellectuals in Paris on March 5, 1948: 'And in this hall tonight, we can say without ridicule: "You who are here, you are the first generation to inherit all of earth"' (Malraux, 1989: 273). [10] All of earth can be included in the family album and we can all be the first descendants of that arche-generation.

Profanation**

68 Didi-Huberman accuses Malraux of re-sacralising the decontextualised artefact and praises Warburg for his archival vertigo, 'a movement demanding all the anthropological aspects of being and time' (Didi-Huberman, 2004: 13). Maurice Blanchot captures re-sacralisation quite well in one of his essays on the Musée imaginaire:

69 > [W]ho looks at Gothic statues? We do; the others invoked them. The consequence of the disappearance of prayer was to make monuments and works of art appear, to make painting an art within reach of our eyes (Blanchot, 1997: 15).

70 We no longer invoke, we look, study and appreciate, and according to Malraux this gaze gives access to a universal essence of the human instead of a more Warburgian problematisation of time and being. The problematising temporal dynamism of Warburg's project is clearly expressed in his description of the Pathosformeln as 'disconnected dynamograms', where images cut off from their original constellations of meaning 'reacquire their efficacy every time they encounter the artist (or the scholar)' (Agamben, 2009c: 57).

71 As is not unexpected from an accusation of re-sacralisation, Didi-Huberman finds salvation in a gesture of profanation. At more or less the same time as Malraux was being photographed at home surrounded by photographic reproductions for his Musée imaginaire, Chris Marker and Alain Resnais presented a short film entitled *Les Statues Meurent Aussi* (1953). [11] In a style reminiscent of Malraux's photographic reproductions, Marker and Resnais show various African artefacts, scenes from African and western culture and various western appropriations of African culture.

72 > When men die, they enter history. When statues die, they enter the realm of art. This botany of death is what we call culture. [...] An object is dead when the living gaze which rested on it has

> disappeared. And when we have disappeared, our objects go where we send those of the negrés : the museum (Marker, 1961: 11).

73 The museum is a sacralising mausoleum that wrenches the cult object from its origins and forces it into the history of art [12]:

74 > Classified, labeled, preserved in the glass showcases and in collections, they enter the history of art. Paradise of forms where the most mysterious kinships are established: we recognise Greece in a more than 2000 year old African head, Japan in a mask from the Ogooué, or India, the Sumerian idols, Roman figures of Christ or our modern art (Marker, 1961: 20).

75 The kinships of the museum unhindered by geographical or cultural distance supposedly allow for the identification of any individual with the universal human. In the specific temporal conjunction of past and present in the museum, humans recognise only themselves.

76 The film stresses the problem that this universalising celebration of culture glosses over: the very real oppression, exploitation and estrangement behind the accumulation of artefacts. A black woman is shown in front of a shop window displaying African statues and shortly thereafter a white man is shown teaching a young black man how to make cheap reproductions of African art objects. In spite of the hopes of Benjamin, the loss of cult-value has not challenged the ruling class or private property. It has only reinforced white hegemony and black estrangement.

77 The end of the film affirms the possibility of the black artist to say No! Whether in the boxing ring or on the concert stage, the black artist tries to literally strike back, to 'give back the punches his brothers receive in the street' (Marker, 1961: 24). The movie shows a black man with a camera aimed directly at the screen:

78 > He even dares to take a camera to create for himself the historicity of his struggles or the state of our own cultures, thus partaking in the mastering of reproducibility and the possibility of looking at us, in all the meanings of the word (Didi-Huberman, 2013: 166, € 167).

79 Didi-Huberman clearly sees in the recapture of the means of mechanical reproduction a possibility for a challenging of the universal time of the Album, that is, a temporal dispute otherwise disavowed by the projection of universal time by the discourse of cultural heritage. [13]

80 Didi-Huberman thus presents the challenging of universal time in *Les Statues meurent aussi* as a mode of profanation akin to Warburg's Atlas, € the only resolution to a conflict which he describes by referencing Walter Benjamin. The conflict between universal and singular time is described by Benjamin's distinction between a universal history whose 'method is additive; it musters a mass of data to fill the homogeneous, empty time' (Benjamin, 1968b: 262) and Benjamin's materialistic historiography which locates 'a configuration pregnant with tensions' (Benjamin, 1968b: 262) enabling the constellation of a specific now with a specific past in an emancipatory break with the steady flow of progress (Didi-Huberman, 2013: 171).

A coming community of memory

81 Both Warburg's Atlas and Malraux's Album have been seen as forerunners for contemporary digital archives and Mitchell correctly locates their unification in something like the T_Visionarium, the interface of which (large curved screens from floor to ceiling) can visually change display types from grid to vortex by the push of a button. For what is the digital archive but the zone of indistinction where grid and vortex coincide? Even beyond the interface, at a very material level, digital memory and storage, from the Williams Tube over spinning Hard Drives to current Solid State Drives, have always been characterised by a grid either flickering, fading or in rapid motion (Chun, 2008).

82 The digital archive is, in its modes of preservation as in its modes of access, a grid in movement and it seems that this digital whirling of the grid inspires new archival hopes in both the powers of re-sacralisation and the emancipatory efforts of profanation. 'We had better get used to vertigo', Mitchell said. But when the digital grid's vortical movement is the condition of possibility of the universal history of cultural heritage, can it then truly be said that 'if organised in a specific way' images or cultural artefacts still offer us 'the possibility, € or, rather, the undepletable resource, € for a rereading of the world' (Didi-Huberman, 2011: 20)?

83 Is it indeed possible to attribute inherent aesthetic, epistemic or political characteristics to a specific organisation of cultural artefacts? And is the black artist's ability to strike back by

'partaking in the mastering of reproducibility', to 'create for himself the historicity of his struggles or the state of our own cultures', not also a partaking in the reproduction of Malraux's pose at home where the grid only whirls at the feet of the organising mastermind? Is not the T_Visionarium as the 'means to capture and re-present televisual information, allowing viewers to explore and actively edit a multitude of stories in three dimensions' exactly the present day culmination of Malraux's re-sacralisation where any vertiginous rearrangement of the provisional assemblage is re-inscribed in the Album of the database?

84 It is necessary here to insist again on the question of attributing inherent epistemological, existential, empirical and geopolitical force to a given technological archival order (grid/vortex, album/atlas) and the consequent constructions of the contemporary as, respectively, universal and singular time. In a digital age, Warburg's Atlas is not inherently a good a model for materialistic historiography. It can most certainly be considered a tool for such a historiography, a trace of its maker's singular practice. Yet we should be wary of generalising its historiographical qualities beyond that specific instance, especially as an adoptable mode of profanation. This will just snap the vortex back to the grid.

85 Claiming a specific archival distribution as the presupposition for a specific construction of the contemporary must be abandoned as pure mimicry of the discourse of cultural heritage. We should remember that the latter desires nothing but the archive as the 'undepletable resource for a rereading of the world' which Didi-Huberman saw in Warburg's Atlas. Indeed, in spite of his tendency to attribute inherent emancipatory powers to the Warburgian image array, Didi-Huberman does seem to acknowledge some of the problems involved. A crucial aspect of this is the need for a radical rejection of a claimed causality between archival distribution and construction of the contemporary. Didi-Huberman writes: 'Since the LumiÃ¨re brothers filmed their Sortie d'usine, it has become easy to film regular people. The whole question is knowing how' (Didi-Huberman, 2012: 198).

86 The question is not one of arrays or archival order nor of recapturing mechanical reproduction to master one's own story. In the age of digital reproduction, that has become easy. The question is 'knowing how' to profane: 'Profanation is the counter-apparatus that restores to common use what sacrifice had separated and divided' (Agamben, 2009b: 19). Profanation is neither the destruction of the sacralising apparatus of cultural heritage discourse nor is it the 'correct' use of its archive (Agamben, 2009b: 15). Rather, profanation brings the past out of its role as standing reserve or eternally present use-value. Profanation seeks to render the discourse of cultural heritage inoperable by freeing the past from its necessary re-inscription along the three strategic axes and to establish the possibility for new use which is not premised on a presupposed use-value. This can only be done via a problematisation of the unified temporal conjunction of the contemporary to which the discourse of cultural heritage contributes.

87 In this respect, Mitchell establishes a dialectical spectrum, a zone whose articulations remain too indistinct. Didi-Huberman, on the other hand, sometimes loses his way in the zone of indistinction and sees profanation in vortexes already too close to the grid. The indistinction between presupposed use-value and the potential for common use not amenable to re-sacralisation must be clarified by a reengagement with a notion of 'the contemporary', similar to the one Deleuze located in the critical diagnostics of Foucault's archaeology. We need an archaeology of the discourse of cultural heritage to provoke an experimentum monumenti, € an experience of the conflicting presents of the past, the heterochronicity of monuments and the shared temporality of community as irreconcilable with the eternal presence of the past and the universal essence of the human. Only such an archaeological experience and its ensuing diagnosis of the contemporary will enable us to be 'for our time', act counter to our time, on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come.

Biographical Note

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Notes

– [1] All non-english references are translated by the author.

– [2] In 2003, UNESCO included 'intangible cultural heritage' and thus included heritage beyond physical artefacts.

– [3] With regards to an accelerated succession of 'generations' it would be interesting to question the current status of Jan Assmann's distinction between 'communicative memory' as a non-institutional, disembodied memory reaching 'no farther back than eighty years, the time span of three interacting generations' (Assmann, 2010: 111) and 'cultural memory', institutionalised and guarded by specialists, reaching 'back into the past only so far as the past can be reclaimed as "ours"' (Assmann, 2010: 111). Such an analysis does not, however, fall within the scope of the present article.

– [4] Nietzsche's formulation of the untimely as quoted above played a central role in Deleuzian philosophy from the earliest works to the late readings of Foucault, c.f. in Difference and Repetition: '[…] philosophy is neither a philosophy of history, nor a philosophy of the eternal, but untimely, always and only untimely – that is to say, "acting counter to our time and thereby, acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come"' (Deleuze, 1994: xxi). It should be noted, however, that 'intempestif' only becomes synonymous with 'actuel' in the later works. In his 1962 book on Nietzsche, 'intempestif' is on the contrary synonymous with 'inactuel', cf. (Deleuze, 1962: 122), due to the French translation of Nietzsche's UnzeitgemÃ¤Ã e Betrachtungen as Considérations inactuelles.

– [5] '[…] almost every major museum claimed and still claims that its Web site is André Malraux's museum without walls'. (Chun, 2006: 23) and '[…] digitization has been trumpeted as a way for libraries finally to fulfil their mission: to accumulate and provide access to human knowledge. Digital archives are allegedly H. G. Wells's "World Brain" and André Malraux' s museum without walls, among other dreams, come true' (Chun, 2011: 137). 'In other words, similarly as the photographic and new image cultures in the early part of the twentieth century forced not only a rethinking of perception but also of collection, memory, and organisation as was evident for example in Aby Warburg's work […], now software cultures demand a rethinking of similar extent' (Parikka, 2012: 90). See also Berry et al, (2013).

– [6] Mitchell's lecture is studied here in two versions, one in Berlin on April 10 2014 and one in Copenhagen on April 23 2014. The Copenhagen edition was experienced in person while the Berlin edition was watched on the website of the conference Image Operations: https://www.ici-berlin.org/event/571/. Quotes from the Copenhagen edition are taken from an unpublished handout of the lecture's manuscript.

– [7] Mitchell quoting (Didi-Huberman, 2004: 13). The passage can also be found in French in (Didi-Huberman, 2013: 115).

– [8] Didi-Huberman is mainly critical of the Malraux of the Musée imaginaire and on. He sees in Malraux's earlier writings from the 1930s a 'bien pensé' emancipatory challenging of the past, whereas the later Malraux turns into a 'bien pensant' mainly interested in preserving his own position as organising mastermind. A critical rereading of the earlier Malraux as a challenge of the 'bien pensé' description would be valuable but surpasses the scope of the present article.

– [9] Malraux was familiar with such wrenching from his youth when in December 1923, after an unfortunate investment in the Mexican mining industry, he sought to alleviate his financial ruin by stealing devata statues from the Cambodian ruins of Banteay Srei.

– [10] Cf. also (Malraux, 1974, 46).

– [11] Parts of the movie were censured until 1963, that is, including during Malraux's tenure as minister for cultural affairs from
1959. Incidentally, Resnais married Malraux's daughter, Florence, the
year of his resignation from the ministry in 1969.

– [12] For a recent criticism of UNESCO's 'World Heritage' listing as the transformation of a city into a mausoleum cf. (D'Eramo, 2014). For Agamben's description of the sacralising function of the museum and the 'World Heritage' listing as well as the need for profanation cf. (Agamben, 2007: 83, € 85).

– [13] Malraux is here taken as protagonist of the discourse of cultural heritage. And not without reason. Both before, during and after his tenure as minister for cultural affairs from 1959 to 1969, Malraux had a profound influence on UNESCO, e.g. via numerous speeches from 1936 even until twenty years after his death where UNESCO played a recording of a 1960 speech of his in his honour. UNESCO states: 'Mr Malraux, who praised the "act by which man snatches something from death," formulated for the first time the concept of the universality of cultural heritage, which thereafter would stand at the heart of UNESCO's actions in the field of culture'. https://www.unesco.org/bpi/eng/unescopress/96–210e.htm.

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