

## **The Graphic Matrix as a Trace Carrier**

### **IMACLA IV**

#### Speakers

Dr Ruth Pelzer-Montada, The University of Edinburgh

Professor Annu Vertanen, University of the Arts Helsinki

Professor Theodor Barth, KHiO

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**KUNSTHØGSKOLEN I OSLO**

OSLO NATIONAL ACADEMY OF THE ARTS



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#### Speakers

**Dr Ruth Pelzer-Montada** holds a PhD in contemporary art practice and is a distinguished scholar in print media. She lectures visual culture and historical & critical studies. She supervises PhD research fellows at The University of Edinburgh and her writing appears in international peer-reviewed journals. Ruth was a keynote speaker in 'Printmaking in the Expanded Field' seminar held at Oslo National Academy of the Arts in 2015 and more recently edited *Perspectives of Contemporary Printmaking: Critical Writing since 1986* in 2018. We have benefited from her regular visits to Print and Drawing, to deliver lectures, tutorials and to participate in group activities.

**Annu Vertuen** is an artist with an internationally established printmaking practice specialising in both European and Japanese woodcut. She is Professor of Printmaking at University of Arts Helsinki and Vice Chair of the International Mokuhanga conference; to be held for the fourth time on the 18th November in Japan later this year. With the support of the Nordplus programme, we are fortunate to have Annu join us in Oslo. For the past two days Annu has been purposefully demonstrating Japanese hand craft skills as part of the IMACLA programme to our first year postgraduate students at KHiO and fellow students visiting from the Royal Academy of Antwerp and the University of Madrid.

**Dr Theodor Barth** is an anthropologist with a PhD in philosophy. He teaches theory and writing at Oslo National Academy for the Arts and supervises research fellows on the practice-based PhD programme in artistic development. He was one of our Chair speakers for the duration of 'Printmaking in the Expanded Field' seminar and a contributor to the publication edited by Professor Jan Petterson. Theodor is a regular guest to Print and Drawing's group tutorials and he joins us today after facilitating a serendipitous walk into the Norwegian landscape; enabling our International Master Class students to gather primary research material out in the field.

**Samoa Remy** obtained an MFA in Printmaking from The National Academy of Art and Design in Oslo in 2002. She assumed a PhD research fellowship at KHiO in 2018 and we are grateful for her commitment to participate in today's seminar; after recently returning from a field trip to CERN near Geneva, under the working title "Layers of Darkness and Light". Her artistic research focuses on transformation and she is particularly interested in creating elements with the capability to provoke a shifting perspective; by using materials that can make reciprocal imprints on each other.

#### Theme / Context

This one day international printmaking seminar takes place as part of the fourth International Master Class hosted by Oslo National Academy of the Arts. IMACLA is an Erasmus+ pilot programme run in partnership with three European universities that encompass printmaking at a post-graduate level.

"Traditional print techniques have once again risen to the fore in current artistic practice: in the age of the ever-present digitally printed image, as a political re-assertion of the artist's presence. Print implies a shift from the optical to the haptic, from a purely visual regime to the centrality of the physical act of transferring a trace by direct contact."<sup>1</sup>

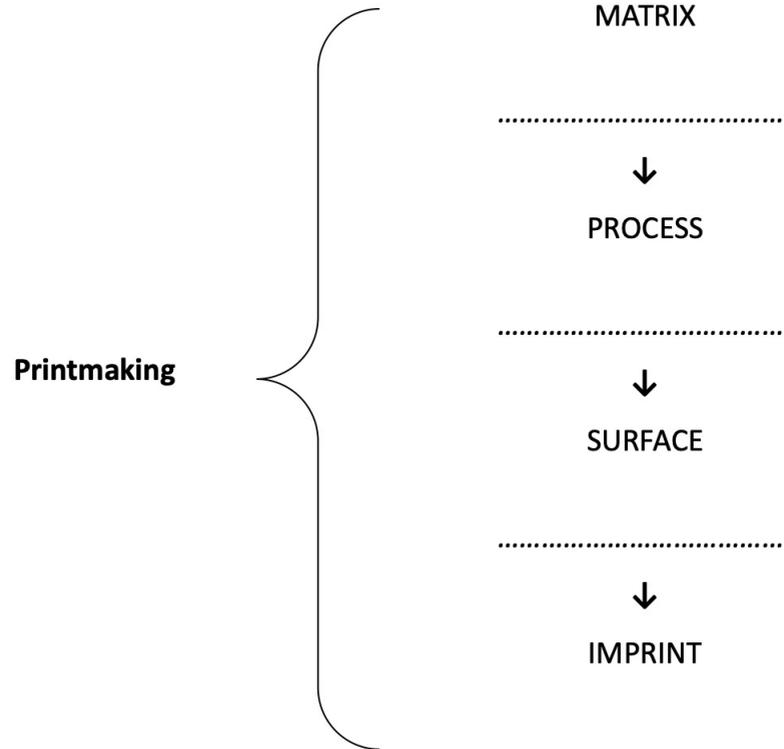
This re-framing of a discipline as a multi-sensual activity is alluded to in Andrzej Bednarczyk's essay *The Shape of Graphic Art* and his definition "the graphic matrix as a trace carrier... functions as a medium enabling imprinting the trace of a visual recording on the surface."<sup>2</sup> Originally written in 2010, it was recently re-published in 2018 as part of the acclaimed anthology, *Perspectives of Contemporary Printmaking: Critical Writing since 1986*.

In order to investigate Bednarczyk's theory further, one artistic research methodology is to present his proposition as a visual diagram; to transpose printmaking from the known into the unknown, from the traditional into the expanded field.

"Diagrams are defined as visual knowledge models, as they not only depict but also create relationships and convey insights and arguments through images. Gilles Deleuze's definition takes the diagram out of the context of illustration, and claims that its power lies both in its form and content: The diagram is no longer an auditory or visual archive but a map, a cartography... It is an abstract machine. It is defined by its informal functions and matter... If there are many diagrammatic functions and even matters, it is because every diagram is a spatio-temporal multiplicity."<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Ruth Pelzer-Montada, Professor Theodor Barth, Professor Annu Vertanen and research fellow Samoa Remy, all experts in print media, have been invited to consider Bednarczyk's essay and to deliver their own interpretation; either by magnifying or modifying, in support or rejection of this synoptic diagram. The speakers' presentations will further permeate into a non-hierarchical learning activity during the afternoon. Our IMACLA students' will be prompted to share their known firsthand experience of printmaking and through discursive debate, moving into an unknown expanded field of possibility; deliver their own diagrammatic translation of the graphic matrix as a trace carrier.

## The shape of graphic art\*



### Reasons

Today, we are discussing graphic art. Before we do that, we have to state clearly our motivations and aims, because the soundness of raising questions about graphic art is not obvious nowadays.

Among opponents to this question, there are essentially three distinct positions. First of all, there are claims that the question is redundant since everyone knows what graphic art is. It is not a new occurrence and many studies and analyses have been devoted to it, so its essence has already been thoroughly investigated. Secondly, there are claims that the question is redundant since it is not relevant. Discussing art as such is important, but without delving into its disciplines and techniques. Thirdly, the question is redundant since artistic categories in the post-industrial world have disappeared, liberating us from the necessity to categorize. But despite these doubts, we feel a pressing need to discuss the identity of graphic art.

Since this centuries-old discipline of art is demanding a re-examination of these issues, we have to acknowledge that we have ceased to know what graphic art is, and what we do know has proved to be insufficient. Indeed, following the phenomenon of graphic art makes it clear that the current

\* Andrzej Bednarczyk. 2010. 'The Shape of Graphic Art'. In: *im:print 2010: zustandsprotokolle aktueller druckgrafik / journal for the state of current printmaking*. Edited by Schneider, Michael, Maurer, Philipp and Lebzelter, Georg. Vienna: Springer Verlag, pp. 97–109. Reproduced by kind permission of the author and Springer Verlag. Translated from Polish to English by Urszula Humienik-Dworakowska (edited for publication).

Note from the editor of the original publication: Andrzej Bednarczyk does make use of a differentiation between the Polish word 'matrica' = English 'matrix' and the Polish word 'macierz' = English 'matrix'. The different forms of the plural of matrix (matrix – pl. matrices, matrixes) still give a hint to the different meanings that are expressed by this differentiation. Michael Schneider.

measures and models do not correspond to the described occurrence. Graphic art in its subsequent unveilings eludes them like a slippery fish.

I will describe the reasons for this state of affairs using the architectural structure of Krakow, where I live and work, as an example. The building of the Jan Matejko Academy of Fine Arts is adjacent to the Barbican and city walls with their St. Florian's Gate. These are medieval fortified constructions that outline city boundaries. What is so notable about these constructions? These fortifications, surrounding the city by design, are now located in its very center. Could it be the result of a former disaster of turning the city space onto the wrong side, so that the outskirts of the city converged in its center and the center scattered towards the periphery? The truth is not so colorful: the city simply passed its former borders. Krakow's suburban villages have been incorporated into it and something that never 'was' Krakow is now a part of its identity. No sane person will claim today that Krakow starts behind Florian's Gate. The need for the constant adjustment of borders and redefinition of identity is a sign of its life and development.

The same is true for graphic art, which in the course of its dynamic transformations has already passed its old borders. Our loss of knowledge about its identity is not a problem of graphic art itself, but rather a problem of describing it with inadequate or too arbitrarily adopted models. These problems can be easily avoided by complying with the modern model – experimental cognitive paradigm – which has been obeyed since Karl Popper's era, with the requirement of falsifiability. In it, a created model of reality is considered correct if it is consistent with the experiment's results. However, if the examined occurrence reveals something that does not fit or denies the model, this model is rejected as defective. Unfortunately during the study of culture, we often meet with dogmatic attitudes in which the model is defended rather than the facts.

The second attitude – the question of graphic art being unnecessary, because it is art *per se* that is important – is logically unsound. Art is a multi-dimensional occurrence, and like all occurrences and similar kinds of entities, it is subject to both synthetic examination and component analysis. Moreover, to achieve a synthesis, it is necessary to know its components. One cannot determine the identity of a three-dimensional block without distinguishing, analyzing and understanding what are width, length and height. No one will claim that for reaching knowledge about the human body as a whole it would be unnecessary to ask what is a hand? Of course, we know that man and art are important. However, we ask what is a hand, what is graphic art – as their components. We need this knowledge to understand the essence of things, especially today, when many artists in search of adequate means of expression go beyond media identity boundaries, compiling them, merging them into an indistinguishable whole or denying the established rules. We do not postulate a return to practicing art in its pure form. The thing is to exceed and not ignore, ensuring that

our wonderful artistic freedom is not based on ignorance and lack of understanding.

The third claim for a disappearance of categories in the post-industrial world seems to be the result of a misunderstanding of the *construction – deconstruction – reconstruction* principle, which is one of the cornerstones of postmodern thought. It constitutes an equivalent in the history of European philosophy to the revolution in physics achieved by Albert Einstein's general theory of relativity, taking away the peremptoriness from the dimensions of the space–time continuum. Also in this case, the categories – dimensions – do not disappear, only their understanding changes, and the conclusions obtained on the basis of reasoning and measurement depend on the contextual mutual influence between them as well as on the researcher. In the specific case of exploration of identity of an occurrence, the above method would take the following form: *definition – de-definition – redefinition*. In a collision with the artistic world, post-modernity experienced a misfortune similar to the vicissitudes of the achievements of psychoanalysis and depth psychology pervading into art. Both in the first and in the second case, the great discoveries and ideas provided an invigorating impetus and new perspectives for European culture. At the same time, they opened the gate for gibberish, intellectual laziness and spiritual languor. To creatively use these achievements, we must remember that the resignation from category kills the power of postmodern thought, and, following the words of Professor Barbara Skarga, deconstruction changes into destruction.

So we discuss graphic art to redefine its identity in the contemporary hypostasis.

### Searching for a method

Setting about to determine the definition of graphic art, we should begin with formulating a new method of research. It seems that the hitherto utilized methods have ceased to adequately describe and explain this occurrence. I find essentially three reasons why we are encountering difficulties in our reflection on the identity of graphic art. The first is the creation of the image of identity as a list of characteristics essential for a given work or creation to be deemed as graphic. This, however, makes it difficult to distinguish factors indispensably making up the identity of the form from individual features. Just as in a sequence of statements like: *John is a human. John is blond*. Although the two sentences may be true for John, they are not true for every human, ergo – hair color is not a determinant of the identity of the human species.

The second reason could be a not concise enough differentiation of the graphic technique from graphic art, which prevents us from determining their interrelationship. In the case of this discipline this seems to be extremely

important, following Marshall McLuhan's statement: *the medium is the message*. We are moving in an expanse between technique and art, where we are stating that not every composition made using the graphic technique is a work of art and not every work of art is graphic art. Modeling the identity of graphic art exclusively on the basis of technique causes constant difficulties for emerging new techniques, and their dynamic development makes the method outright useless.

This last sentence leads us to the third reason, which seems to be the utilization of models that are too stationary, namely those that do not contain the factor of time and the changes in the subsequent hypostases of identity. The issue of time in contemporary graphic art is an indispensable factor. The emergence of new techniques and related forms of artistic articulation formerly took place within the rhythm of many generations, and now, especially since computers have entered into the graphic studio, this has accelerated to single years or even months. Sometimes I joke that I love my computer, it is the only thing in my house that ages faster than me. This dizzying pace of technological change makes the graphic art situation specific and different from the other disciplines of art. Above all, it is necessary to examine the identity of evolving occurrences by studying its states in a dynamic continuum of changes. Statements about unchangeability should be placed in the archives of history of human thought along with the Ptolemaic cosmological model of a stationary world.

Our intention is to unearth the geometry of the bubbling magma of graphic art.

## Method

In thinking over the identity of graphic arts, we will use three methods hoping that they will let us avoid the above-mentioned imperfections. These are: (1) spatial modeling, in which factors are treated as dimensions; (2) examining the attained factors in relation to the graphic technique, graphic art and graphic work; and (3) examining the attained results in the perspective of time.

Customarily, a description of a studied occurrence or thing is presented in the form of a list of constitutive characteristics arranged 'side by side', heeding to include what is indispensable and sufficient. In the case of a description of identity, the better method seems to be spatial modeling, since the interrelationships that occur among factors/dimensions are significant. This is because identity is a nonlinear structure. It is thus a whole, which isn't a mere sum of its parts, but forms a value exceeding this sum. This value is not present in any individual part but is everywhere.

To outline the principles of this method, we will use an example from geometry. To determine the state of a changing point in time in

three-dimensional space (3D + T), we need six spatial points of reference and two temporal. To describe any freely moving or changing object, we need to know its height, width, length, speed and type of changes between the boundary conditions of the experiment. This method, taken from the field of science, has demonstrated its usefulness not only in determining the shape and location, but it also enables one to interpolate the past and the future of an object with good accuracy depending on the degree of its determination. When dealing with a dynamic entity (occurrence), which is naturally open to the influence of an external action, we find it to be subject to fluctuation. In this case, only an exact distinction between individual and arbitrary characteristics from the constitutive characteristics of type enables outlining the shape of its identity, even though it appears in different hypostases. This is particularly important if we want our model of identity of a dynamically evolving art discipline to keep its merits regardless of the passage of time.

In spatial modeling of identity, the examined object is treated as a block in space with the number of dimensions equal to the number of indispensable and sufficient constitutive factors. If we manage to achieve this compliance, we can acquire knowledge about the identity of an object, what it is, how it looked in the past and how it will appear in the next hypostases, as well as its functioning. If this compatibility does not occur, we cannot say anything meaningful about the object, just as we cannot meaningfully talk about the essence and nature of a cube while excluding one of the three dimensions. The action and hypostasis of the object carry within themselves all the features of its identity.

Graphic art, as one of the disciplines of art, has been differentiated on the basis of technique, but graphic art is not identical with its technique. Firstly, because as I mentioned previously, not every composition realized using its means is a work of art. Secondly, because their common characteristics, considered from the perspective of technique and art, reveal or acquire a different meaning, which I will demonstrate later on. Graphic art and graphic technique are connected through the aspect ratio, which means that they are interconnected and form a plane where graphic artistic objects take place. Outside of this plane, the object is neither artistic nor graphic.

In this plane, we will now build a six-dimensional block of graphic art and we will examine its individual constitutive characteristics/dimensions from three perspectives: technical, artistic discipline, and graphic work.

## Matrix

The matrix is an idea more encompassing than graphic art, so let's first consider what the matrix is in general. We can speak of a mathematical matrix, a genetic matrix, a sound matrix, an algorithmic matrix, a mold

matrix, a graphic matrix and others. The identity of the matrix is revealed in three factors. These are: the function of the trace carrier, the function of the intermediate form, and the automatism of marking. Everything that has the features indispensable for potential marking in the receiving area can be the medium of the trace. The material from which the matrix is made is negligible, as long as its structure permits making an impression. Moreover, the matrix does not have to be material; it may be a mathematical or a conceptual structure. The carrier of the trace can be anything that has a fixed shape/order not subject to essential or accidental changes during marking. The method of making the matrix or whether it was made at all is irrelevant. I can find an item bearing the features necessary to mark, and by my decision it becomes a matrix. If, for example, I was to strike sheets of paper with a slab of fatty beef so that they leave a trace or mark, then at this point it functions as a matrix. I'm not postulating the creation of *beefography*, I just want to show that neither materiality, nor the type of shape, nor how it is made or if it was made at all have an effect on whether a matrix is a matrix.

The matrix functions as an intermediate form. It is not a final product or a tool enabling its creation. What distinguishes it from a tool is the final content inscribed in it and the passive giving of the content to the original. A tool, on the other hand, although its structure affects the product is beyond the content and active by its nature. What connects the tool with the matrix is involvement in the process and the requirement of adequacy of their use for the intended purposes. Therefore, even the most sophisticated waving of a piece of printing block in the air will not create a graphic print.

This leads us to the third factor of the identity of the matrix – automatic marking. This means that the order contained within the matrix can be reproduced. In this case, the matrix is related to a vessel. Loose or liquid material automatically takes its shape without the conscious interference of the person doing the filling. Also in the case of the matrix, the compatibility of the end result with the pattern stems from the characteristics contained within it and the person only has to retain the adequacy of the procedure.

Each type of matrix is characterized by a specific set of features, distinguishing it from the others. So for example, an audio matrix allows tracing a sound recording at the area of a sound wave, and a sculptural matrix enables creating a trace in three-dimensional space.

The graphic matrix, which is of particular interest to us presently, functions as a medium enabling imprinting the trace of a visual recording on the surface. It contains all the features of the broadly defined matrix, and what distinguishes it from others is an inseparable combination: the visuality of the recording and a surface receiving the imprint (the screen), with the reservation that this surface is not necessarily flat.

In traditional graphic art, the matrix existed exclusively in the form of a surface material mechanically or chemically treated. The advent of digital recording, light-sensitive and electrostatic matrices did not introduce any significant changes in the understanding of the identity of the matrix. From the perspective of a graphic technique, the matrix is one of the fundamental determinants of its identity.

In graphic art, the matrix has not yet been performed, in other words it has not been a work of art. In modern practice, it is sometimes directly or indirectly present in a work by inclusion in the scope of artistic expression of the act of marking, such as in the work by Zbigniew Salaj entitled *Translator* (2002), in which a brayer coated with a pattern imprints a paper tape in front of the viewer. Its presence may therefore be one of the characteristics of a work, but is not required and, as such, it is often an individual characteristic, but does not fall within the characteristics of graphic art.

### **Automatic recording methods**

Using a matrix means that the record made with it is an automatic process, in which external interference is unnecessary and unacceptable. The mechanical method of recording, in its essence, is a faithful transfer of the order contained within the matrix to the target area. However, this transfer must take the form of a translation from the language of the matrix into the language of the final product. If there was no translation, the result would be an identical clone of the matrix. Then the matrix would be multiplied rather than giving birth to the trace, so it would lose the status of a matrix. The term 'translation' is etymologically equal to transfer (Latin: *translatio* stemming from *transferre*, where *trans* means 'to the other side', and *ferre* means 'to carry', 'to rearrange'). Translation occurs when the target product retains the order of the original, but differs in at least one of the factors. For example, in mathematics an isometric translation in expanse changes the position of the figure in relation to the other figures; in genetics it is an ultimate translation of information for a specific protein structure; this text, originally written in Polish was translated into a different language; and the raised surfaces of the wood block are transformed into a set of printing ink stains on the surface.

The final product of an automatic recording method is shaped by a set of three components of the process: the type of matrix, the recording method and the type of area of the recording, and it is possible by the mutual relevance of the three.

Graphic work is created by using automated methods of visual recording and it is the basic factor of the identity of the graphic technique. These methods fall within the scope of graphic art's identity in that they limit the spectrum of artistic articulation to automatically recordable procedures and

languages, and since the medium is the message, they strongly affect its shape. The printing process of traditional graphic art, let's call it 'pressura', occurred by physical and mechanical transfer of printing ink from the matrix onto paper under pressure. Just as in the discussion of the identity of the matrix, we find that the emergence of digital, light and electrostatic mediums made no significant changes in the nature of the imprinting process, but expanded it so that it passes into the broadly defined projection, which also contains pressura as its special case. The Latin etymology of the term 'projection': *proicere* – *throw in front*, used to describe the process of transferring the image onto the surface receiving it empowers us to integrate all of its methods into a single category.

The printing process in traditional graphic art was not present in the work; we only saw it *post factum* through its physical effects. Currently, in the case of graphic art that is not in material form and is intended solely for projection before our eyes, the process of projection falls within the scope of graphic artwork.

### **Two-dimensionality of the composition**

The prerequisite to making a projection of a matrix is the existence of a receiving area, and in the specific case of graphic projection, the surface receiving it. Such a surface becomes a screen. The essence of the surface being the screen is its function and a set of features enabling its reception. The screen is a barrier located in the path of a projection so that it stops on itself the order of the matrix. For this to happen, the screen cannot be parallel to the direction of the projection and must possess a structure enabling its visualization and retention in the time necessary for the reception, adequate to the nature of the matrix and the projection process. Therefore, passing a CD with digitally recorded graphics through a printing press with the intention of imprinting it on spilled water does not make sense.

What the screen is made of is irrelevant. It may be a sheet of paper, a pane of glass, the wall of a building, as in the case of the projection on the facade of the Whitney Museum of American Art by Krzysztof Wodiczko (1989), or even a cloud of water vapor like in the work of Ksawery Kaliski titled *against nothingness – entirety and infinity* (2005/6). This last example shows that the surface of the screen does neither have to be homogeneous nor in one plane. A pane of glass used as a screen is an interesting case, which demonstrates the essence of compliance, required for the existence of the projection. The projection of printing ink on a pane of glass makes recording possible due to the ability to hold paint. The projection of light does not give the ability of stopping the image as the light needs screen clarity below one hundred percent.

A specific and necessary case to discuss at this point is holography. Regardless of the many techniques of creation, we must divide them into two groups. Those that give the illusion of a three-dimensional image on the collective of closely located surfaces with a phase flow satisfy the requirement for a screen, and as such could be included in graphic art. By contrast, a hologram, in which a three-dimensional image is formed by an interference of light on the diffraction grid, is a method of spatial modeling and is a kind of light sculpture.

From the above findings, we come to the obvious conclusion that the graphic screen is always two-dimensional. So we could jump to the conclusion that a constitutive feature of the graphic work is its flatness. But there is no logically legitimate reason why the surface should be flat. Mathematical spatial modeling treats the flat surface as one specific case out of a great number of possibilities. This truth also applies to graphic work. The factor of its identity is two-dimensionality, and flatness is one of the possible cases, and as such is an individual characteristic. However, if we agree with the postulate of distinguishing two-dimensionality from flatness, we must remember that the surface can be bent in such a way that we obtain a finite surface without edges. An excellent example of such a surface is a sphere, which has a finite area, but we cannot determine any boundary point on it. When this happens in graphic art, we obtain a three-dimensional object. It remains a work of graphic art, while its surface maintains the function of a screen subordinate to the projection.

The end result of the projection process is always the resultant of the features of the matrix, the projection and the screen. A sheet of paper acting as a screen, as well as a computer monitor, is neutral in content. Although their type has some influence on the final expression of the graphic work, the difference is negligible in this context. However, there are cases where the screen is semantically important and enters rightfully within the scope of artistic expression. Such a case occurs when the bend of the surface takes on significant shapes. This happened, for example, in the work of Zbigniew Bajek titled: *Tattoo – Face* (1998), and *Tattoo – Female and Male* (1998), in which the artist produces a slide projection on his own face and models' bodies. In the case of a graphic composition projection onto a non-graphic composition, for example a picture, sculpture or architectural structure, we are dealing with interdisciplinary work, in which the graphic art is one of the factors of a broader identity. Belonging to one of the disciplines is still possible, as long as one of its components is the dominant expression.

### **Potential multipliability**

Potential multipliability results from a fusion of the constitutive characteristics of the matrix and any automated recording procedures as well as the

medium receiving the projection. Two types of collectives may occur in the process of projection while maintaining these characteristics: the series\* and the edition.

In the case of the series, individual pieces that are a part of it differ from each other in individual characteristics and the place occupied in the physical or conceptual space, and the exhibited features integrate them into a collective provided that the differences do not exceed the principles of type similarities. A series is formed when between the constitutive characteristics of the three process components there is some kind of 'algorithm of the variation'. Thus the projection process can affect the transformation of the matrix so that each subsequent time it will project slightly differently. An algorithm of transformation can be inscribed into the process of projection regardless of the constancy of the matrix and the receiving medium may be subject to fluctuations in quality, so that each successive projection will lead to a slightly different, but not random, change in accordance with an algorithm.

In the case of the edition, the units are similar and differ only in the place occupied in space, and other differences between them are negligible. Of course, the condition of creation of the edition is the absolute stability of the three components of the projection process.

Potential series and edition quantities are the matter of wear on the material matrix. When we are dealing with intangible matrices (mathematical and conceptual), this figure is potentially infinite.

All of the above rules apply in graphic art and technique. A graphic work of art is potentially duplicable, that is, it may exist as an original in more than one copy, which while they are not identical remain identical as a unit or a type. The number of prints actually made is of no importance. We must remember that graphic art made in only one copy for any reason is still graphic art. What is more, most of the time we present and see it as an individual, and the edition is an assumption. We can therefore conclude that the actual multiplicity of impressions does not fall within the scope of the identity of a graphic work of art. However, although not required, the fact of repetition might enter the scope of a work's means of expression. This happens when the same composition uses repetition of a motif, and this repetition is semantically significant.

Let's take the example of verbal language. In the phrase: *I'm walking, I'm walking, I'm walking, I'm walking*, repetition can express the length and the arduousness of the hike, and in Shakespeare's famous phrase: *words, words, words*, repetition can be interpreted as an emphasis of the

\* Editor's note: The translation from Polish uses 'population' – 'series' appears to be the more appropriate term in this context.

shallowness of chatter versus actions. The same may occur in a graphic work of art; although the reasons for the use of repetition are different, it is consistent with the nature of the medium. Importantly, the possibility of mechanical repetition, belonging to the matrix-based techniques, distinguishes the repetitive disciplines from those based on the use of tools. Indeed, regardless of whether the potential repeatability shall be indicated in the work, the technical feasibility of the marks determines the spectrum of the available means of expression of the discipline.

As in the discussion of the issues of two-dimensionality and flatness of a graphic work and the use of semantically significant screens, we are saying that in the case of combining techniques and graphic means of expression within other work, it is the fact of superiority that decides to which discipline such a work of art belongs. In the absence of a distinguishing feature, meaning that all the means are equivalent, we have an interdisciplinary work.

The potential to create an edition or series of visual records on the surface is a constitutive characteristic of graphic art. It can be shown – but does not need to be – in a graphic composition and sometimes is an individual characteristic of the works. As such, it is not a factor of the identity of graphic art.

## The original

The potential multipliability discussed above, resulting from the nature of the matrix and the automatic method of visual recording, makes it necessary to consider the issue of originality of the graphic work of art. We place this question in the context of works which were created with the use of tools and exist as originals in only one unit, and all, even the most faithful, must be regarded as a copy of the original. In this case, originality is synonymous with the existing artifact individually, and uniqueness is one of the factors of their identity. In graphic art these rules do not apply, since here the equivalence of originality with the individual existence of the work is suspended. But what is the original? It etymologically stems from the Latin *originalis* – the original, and this term from *origio* – the beginning, *oriri* – to be born. So, original is what has no predecessor, the source. It is the opposite of a copy or replica, which are understood as the exact repetition of a previously created work of art. Then, we have a prototype and a replica created in its likeness. However, the first copy of an edition of graphic images is not the prototype for the next. Their identity or similarity is derived from the fact that they are created as a result of an automatic projection process of an order stored within the matrix, and as such have the status of equivalence. An original of a graphic art is the edition with all the

prints actually realized as a part of it. The potential quantity is limited by the capacity of the matrix, which, however, in the case of digital matrices, which do not wear down, loses any importance. In the latter case quantity is actually the result of a social contract.

The question of originality is somewhat more complicated in the case of graphic art that does not have a material form and exists only in virtual space, such as works intended for light projection as well as works existing on the Internet. Such work does not exist permanently in physical space and its realization is equivalent to every presentation. According to the property law understood as an unlimited right of use, the data carrier is the original. But from the perspective of the identity of graphic art, the original is the act of projection. Also in this case, between multiple projections of the same composition, there is an equivalence relation. Then, the edition size is flexible and may be subject to similar limiting social agreements.

Finally, it should be noted that regardless of whether we have an existing material graphic work of art or virtual, it is a visual composition of the surface and multiplied as an original.

### **The graphic character of the composition**

Graphic art, like any artistic discipline and the related techniques and tools, utilizes the scope of its means of expression. These, in turn, determine the possible methods of conduct and shape, but do not ultimately determine the verbal layer of a work of art. Knowing these dependencies, we use terms such as graphic, painterly, sculptural, in order to verbally describe the nature of the composition. To achieve our goal, we use them metaphorically, because if used literally they describe the method of creation and not the nature of the composition. Interestingly, in the description of the work of one discipline, we use terms drawn from the others. We do not talk about the picturesque of a painting, the sculptural quality of a sculpture, the graphic quality of a print, the pastel quality of a pastel, the photographic likeness of a photograph, or the drawing quality of a drawing. That would sound nonsensical. However, we often discuss the painterly mark in lithography, the sculptural character of a drawing, the graphic quality of a painting, the pastel-like tones of a photograph, and the photographic precision of details. Although very useful in describing artwork, these metaphors are not suitable for the determination of boundaries of identity of graphic art and graphic technique, because they are a description of individual characteristics and not the discipline.

The only determinant of the nature of the graphic composition is the spectrum of means of expression available within the triad: matrix – projection – screen, with all the above-described conditions.

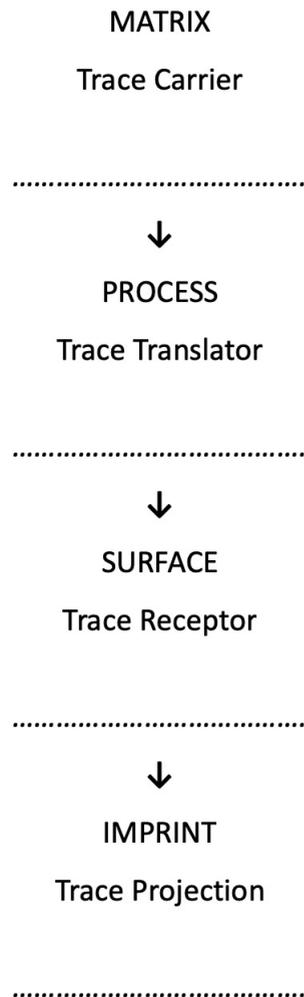
### **Dimensions**

As I mentioned in the introduction, the factors of the identity of graphic art: the matrix, the projection, the screen, the repetitiveness and originality, are subject to fluctuation over time, and are treated as dimensions. So, in this model, it is a six-dimensional complex considered from three perspectives of study as a technique, as an artistic discipline and as a work of art. This means that each of the constitutive characteristics is inextricably linked with the others, and only makes sense in this combination. The resignation from even one dimension makes it impossible to know and determine the shape and boundaries of the identity of graphic art.

### **Definition**

Graphic art is a repeatable technique as an original visual projection of a matrix on a surface. It is a discipline of expression of artistic content through a repetitive visual projection of a matrix on a surface as an original. It is repeatable as an original work of art in the form of a visual projection of a matrix on a surface.

Quod erat demonstrandum.



**Projecting**

**Footnotes**

1. José Roca, *The graphic unconscious or the how and why of a print triennial*, 2011, p100 as cited in Susana Gallego Cuesta, *Esthetique de l'emprunte*, La Vie des idées, 2008
2. Andrzej Bednarczyk, *The shape of graphic art*, 2010, p87 as cited in *im:print* journal for the state of current printmaking 2010.
3. Vytautas Michelkevičius, *Mapping Artistic Research Towards Diagrammatic Knowing*, p.269 as cited in Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, University of Minnesota Press, 1986

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