

## FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF M. MCLUHAN: THE SCREEN CULTURE IN THE CONTEXT OF INDUSTRIAL CIVILISATION

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### **Abstract:**

Several decades ago a Canadian professor, H. M. McLuhan, was the first to try to explain the nature of television – a new medium that was gaining popularity at that time. And in order to comprehend the nature of this new medium, he had to interpret the history of culture in terms of communication. Without doubt, it was his major contribution to the field of media studies and his discoveries influenced later studies on the subject. However, it is obvious today that the perspective on the historical development of communication outlined by McLuhan, which is both the background to and the history of virtual reality in its screen manifestations, requires a new interpretation in terms of virtuality studies. Basing his own analysis on the ideas of M. McLuhan, the author attempts to gain an insight into the forms of mass culture related to the screen culture as a unified whole.

**Keywords:** screen culture, industrial civilisation, new visuality, mosaic culture, print culture, post-industrial society, photography, cinema, television

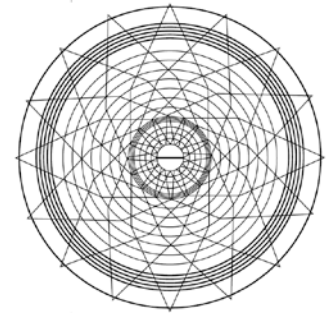
### **Introduction**

Today's screen and print culture is – to use M. McLuhan's terminology – the whole galaxy of or, to be precise, the background to and perhaps, already, the history of virtual reality. The studies in this sphere have been divided into different fields over time. Researchers single out particular aspects of this galaxy and concentrate on studying them. However sometimes it is useful to take a look at this galaxy as a whole and comprehend the stages of development it passed through, the issues arising during this process and which of them have or have not been resolved to this very day. Therefore, the aim of our research lies in capturing these stages of history. Our method lies in adopting the historical approach to studying screen culture following the pioneering notions of McLuhan's theory.

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## 1. Screen culture in the process of transition from industrial to post-industrial civilisation

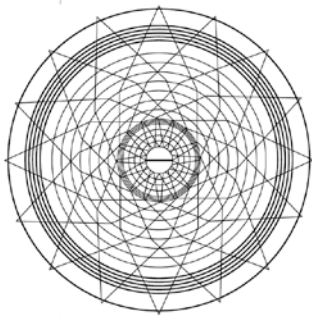
For a very long time now, humankind has lived in a post-industrial society, which has its own particular features. A general description of this type of civilisation, such as the one given by A. Toffler, already exists. It is important for us to extend this description by also adding the present subject of our research – the screen culture – the history of which started with an emergence of photography, i.e. from the inroads of technology into the domain of art. It seems that this transition to the post-industrial civilisation influenced changes to the structures, codes and languages of images.

For example, A. Rouille, the author of considerable work on photography, raises the issue of the crisis of the photographic discourse that is understood as a document. He links this crisis to the coming of the information or post-industrial society. A. Rouille states that this type of photography is not adequate for the demands and purpose of the emerging information society. He writes: 'Photography is still inextricably related to things, bodies and substances whose physical footprints it captures whereas today's world, reality and truth are tending towards the non-physical, informational, immaterial' (Ruye 2014: 188).

In other words, the image ceases to reproduce the objects; it does not refer to the material world. Rouille writes: 'The image doesn't refer back to the object in a direct and unambiguous way anymore; it fits into a pattern without an apparent source, it has already been lost in the infinite series of copies and copies of copies' (Ruye 2014: 189). But the relationship between two images – for example, between photographic and television image or television and cinematic image – betrays their simulative nature. These transformations of the image most obviously manifest themselves in propaganda programmes on television - for example, when famous politicians make public statements on the most pressing and contentious issues of the day referring to staged TV reports in which a civil war in Ukraine is shown through the images that are taken at a different time and in a different place.

## 2. Screen culture during the formative years of the industrial civilisation

However the peculiarities of separate periods in the history of screen culture can only be revealed in the context of the entire history of screen culture, when a later period is compared to the ones preceding it. In order to comprehend the realities of today's world, it is particularly important to observe the transitional period from the pre-industrial to the industrial civilisation when an array of technologies had permeated culture and it ceased to be the synonym of civilisation. It was well understood by O. Spengler, although we cannot agree with him on other points. It is a period when the screen culture has emerged as a result of technology making inroads into culture, and the emergence of new forms of art rooted in technology became a reality. All in all, the history of screen culture coincides with the history of industrial civilisation.



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For this reason, it is difficult to consider screen culture outside of the context of this civilisation. It embodies the principles of this civilisation, its spirit, rhythm, speed and mentality. There are significant downsides to all this, as well as upsides. The drawbacks are related to the disintegration of mental structures that were common to the humans of the pre-industrial culture and affected their perception of the world. This disintegration of the preceding forms of organisation of sensory experience and its interpretations, which had emerged during the Renaissance and had been firmly established during the Enlightenment, was noted as early as the 19th century. Therein lies another issue that is important for capturing the essence of this new visuality, namely the importance of the social context.

The consideration of this problem requires the help of sociology. The history of new visuality begins and passes through a number of stages in the context of the shift from the pre-industrial to the industrial society. This context leaves its mark on the history of new visuality. For example, the emergence and the dissemination of photography are linked to the rhythms, speeds and demands that became a reality in the industrial societies. The above mentioned A. Rouille thus relates the emergence and development of photography to the development of the industrial society, which allows him to more precisely highlight its social functions.

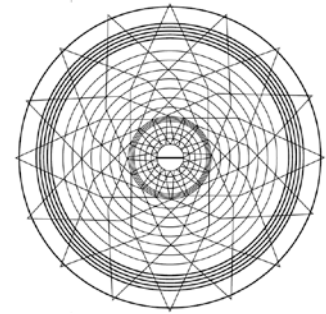
Photography fulfils the demands of the industrial society. It can document it, serve as a useful tool and actualise its values. A. Rouille directly relates the emergence and development of photography to the emergence and demands of the industrial society. He writes: 'Photography's modernity and the legitimacy of its documentary functions are based on the close links it retains with the most significant features of the industrial society: the flourishing of metropolitan areas and a monetary economy, industrialization, changes of our relationship to space and time, the drastic shift in communication and the development of democracy. These links along with the mechanical nature of photography makes it a means of the representation that is consistent with the industrial society. Photography documents it with maximum precision and effectiveness, serves as a tool and actualizes its core values. Industrial society, for its part, serves as a condition, the main object and the paradigm of photography' (Ruye 2014: 24).

It is known that despite the ongoing debate about whether photography should be seen as an art form or not, in the 19th century, it begins to spread and gain in popularity predominantly among the urban middle class. A. Rouille emphasises this as well, writing that in the second part of the 19th century, photography encountered immense success among the bourgeoisie helping them to fulfil their narcissistic tendencies. All members of that class wanted to have their own portraits – if not in painting, at least in photography (Ruye 2014: 359).

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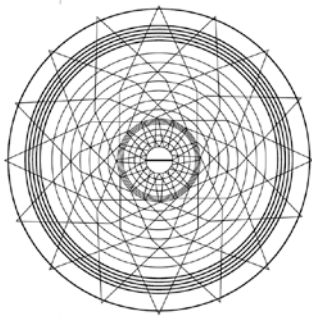
In A. Rouille's view, the link between photography and industrial society is of such importance that he even suggests that the flourishing of photography and its decline reflect the historical evolution of the industrial society. He writes that with the departure of the industrial society, an entire era in the history of photography came to an end – and such an important feature of that era as 'photography as a document' disappeared, giving way to some other, previously marginal trends. Therefore, the decline of the industrial society marks the beginning of a process 'leading from the objects that are created for the purpose of being looked at to the statements that have no definite material form and are created for the purpose of being thought about and inducing a certain attitude' (Ruye 2014: 17).

For A. Rouille, this shift defines the fate of photography in the last decades of the 20th century, leading to its drastic transition from a document to a means of expression, which means that photography is increasingly seen as an art form. With the emergence of the post-industrial society, a documentary aspect of the image loses its value since a space-time framework gets filled with many different types of imagery rivalling photography and better responding to the needs of the information society.

However, photography came to the fore in the middle of the 19th century owing to the crisis of 'truth', a loss of confidence in the traditional ways of representation which were prone to subjectivity. Photography received considerable attention because it had offered a new way of representation, which was free of subjectivity. The peculiarities that were inherent in its documentary nature were revealed in that period. Photography appears to be in tune with the industrial society because it reflects the shift from the transcendental to the immanent and profane which are the characteristics of the era of secularisation. Or as A. Rouille puts it: 'In other words, the photographic image disregards the transcendental, brings the sacred values down to earth, to the level of the trivial objects of the profane world: henceforth the cathedral is equated with the grain of sand' (Ruye 2014: 64). Photography remains neutral with regard to any hierarchy of values – according to its own logic, one thing is not more or less significant than the other. They are all equally worthy of being captured with the camera.

We are thus moving towards the very important conclusion concerning not only philosophy but also the entire new culture in which the new visuality begins to emerge. The dismantling of hierarchy, which manifests itself in the photographic discourse, turns out to be a sign of the dissolution of structural order and hierarchy of the pre-industrial culture itself. This subject was explored by M. McLuhan and A. Moles (Mol' 1973). A. Moles describes this new culture as a 'mosaic (or patchy) culture'. However, it was not until later that it was well understood that, being the first step in the emergence of the new chapter in the history of visuality, photography had already been a powerful means for establishing the mosaic/patchy culture. It has often been pointed out by modern academics and is becoming more obvious nowadays.

For example, it seems to S. Sontag as if photography was made in response to the needs of surrealists who could juxtapose the sewing machine and the umbrella. In her



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description of the nature of photography she describes the same ‘patchiness’, which for M. McLuhan is a very important feature of television: ‘In a world ruled by photographic images, all borders (“framing”) seem arbitrary. Anything can be separated, can be made discontinuous, from anything else: all that is necessary is to frame the subject differently. (Conversely, anything can be made adjacent to anything else.) Photography reinforces a nominalist view of social reality as consisting of small units of an apparently infinite number—as the number of photographs that can be taken of anything is unlimited. Through photographs, the world becomes a series of unrelated freestanding particles; and history, past and present, a set of anecdotes and faits divers’ (Sontag 2013: 37).

S. Sontag gives an even more poignant argument concerning photography as a means for institutionalising the mosaic/patchy consciousness. She likens the photographer to the collector. From her point of view, photography treats all visible objects in the world as equal and in that regard chimes with the precepts of Surrealism. ‘Like the collector, the photographer is animated by a passion that, even when it appears to be for the present, is linked to a sense of the past. But while traditional arts of historical consciousness attempt to put the past in order, distinguishing the innovative from the retrograde, the central from the marginal, the relevant from the irrelevant or merely interesting, the photographer’s approach—like that of the collector—is unsystematic, indeed anti-systematic. The photographer’s ardor for a subject has no essential relation to its content or value, that which makes a subject classifiable. It is, above all, an affirmation of the subject’s thereness; its rightness (the rightness of a look on a face, of the arrangement of a group of objects), which is the equivalent of the collector’s standard of genuineness; its quiddity—whatever qualities make it unique. The professional photographer’s preeminently wilful, avid gaze is one that not only resists the traditional classification and evaluation of subjects but seeks consciously to defy and subvert them’ (Sontag 2013: 107).

### **3. Patchy culture as a consequence of an emerging industrial civilization**

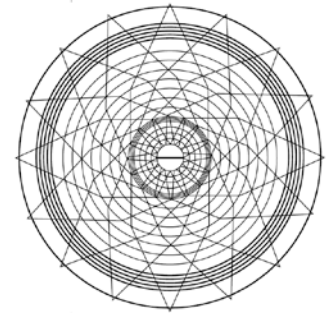
If, as A. Rouille suggests, the emergence and development of photography are consistent with the mentality of a man living in the industrial society, it leads us to the following conclusion. The development of industrial civilisation is linked to the development of a particular culture. However, this development is a part of the disintegration of culture that existed for several generations, which means the reality of patchiness reflects the dismantling of the hierarchical structure of values, which was inherent in a bygone pre-industrial civilisation.

Therefore, the patchiness is a consequence of a transitional period. In some of the responses to this process most of the attention is usually drawn to the negative implications of the transition, as was seen throughout the 19th century. The press rather than a new visuality was a starting point of this long process and it went hand in

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hand with the expansion of the journalistic field, the appearance of many newspapers and magazines and increasing circulation. It took some time for new visuality to arrive on the scene, but photography had already been there. Interestingly, many observers focused on the negative aspects of that process.

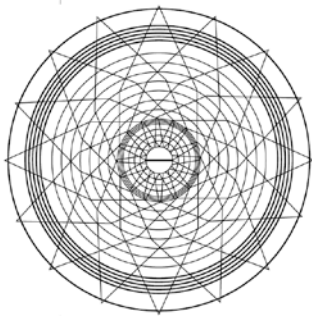
For example, in his second philosophical letter P. Chaadaev describes the increasing anxiety of life caused by daily news in the newspapers and shallow literature. 'Everywhere we meet people who have become incapable of serious thought or deep feeling, because they nourish themselves on these productions of the day, where one grabs everything without deepening anything, they promise everything without fulfilling anything, and everything takes on a doubtful or false tinge and leaves emptiness and indefiniteness behind it' (Chaadaev 1989: 59).

Judging by this assertion we can see how the press and journalism are able to influence our state of mind. P. Chaadaev's description supports M. McLuhan's argument about the roots and causes of patchiness, i.e. the press, which later transforms into a universal system of thinking and a way of looking at the world in general. A. Moles will share his thoughts on the emergence of this alternative culture and call it a mosaic/patchy culture.

But Chaadaev was not the only one to document the new phenomena that reflected the dismantling of traditional forms of organisation and functioning of thought.

As if picking up where Chaadaev left off, several decades later S. Bulgakov wrote: 'Modern humankind not just here, but also in the West witnessed the sort of get out of oneself into the external world, the abolition of inner self, the dominance of the external impressions and occasions, mainly political and social, in the life of the individual and hence the need of hustle and bustle, the external impressions. A modern man wants to live as if not having a moment alone with himself at home: the mind is full, but as soon as this Kaleidoscope of external impressions stops turning, it can be seen how barren and empty his life is as to its own substance' (Bulgakov 1997: 259).

Figures from the world of the art, namely theorists writing about the crisis of theatre in the beginning of the 20th century, could not help but notice this tendency. That is, for example, how V. Charsky describes the anxious life in the city and its influence on the perception of the art: 'A modern city dweller is in the hands of the commotion and bustle. There's no comparison between life fifty years ago and these days. We want to go over a literary satirical piece, to get news from abroad about trusts in America, a revolution in Persia, a car race; we're interested in the societal life in the country, a recently formed sect, a yesterday's monstrous crime. But gaining the abundance and variety of impressions, a modern man has lost their power, profundity and meaning; they're superficial and fragmentary; there are plenty of impressions, but they're transient, they skim the surface of the soul without leaving the deep trace. In the hustle and bustle of busy and stressful city life there's no room for self-absorption; feelings in the soul resemble a short chord rather than a broad wave: it dies down quickly and soon gives way to another, as short as the one that preceded it. These



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days an artist is more interested in a rapid change of events than in revealing the logical link between them' (Charskiy 1908: 136).

These processes were likewise pointed out by the Western thinkers, for example, F. Nietzsche. In his last unfinished work he writes: '...Newspapers (in place of daily prayers), railway, telegraph. Centralization of a tremendous number of different interests in a single soul, which for that reason must be very strong and protean' (Nitsche 2005: 63). In the same work he, continuing to reflect on the shift that happened in the 19th century, once again returns to roughly the same conclusion, drawing attention to the link between the new mode of thinking and the increasing expansion of the press: 'Sensibility immensely more irritable (--dressed up moralistically: the increase in pity; the abundance of disparate impressions greater than ever: cosmopolitanism in foods, literatures, newspapers, forms, tastes, even landscapes. The tempo of this influx prestissimo; the impressions erase each other; one instinctively resists taking in anything, taking anything deeply, to "digest" anything; a weakening of the power to digest results from this. A kind of adaptation to this flood of impressions takes place: men unlearn spontaneous action, they merely react to stimuli from outside. They spend their strength partly in assimilating things, partly in defense, partly in opposition. Profound weakening of spontaneity: the historian, critic, analyst, the interpreter, the observer, the collector, the reader--all of them reactive talents -- all science!' (Nitsche 2005: 65).

Humanity appears to be heading back to the situation that was predicted by Plato (Platon 1970: Vol. 2, 216). By responding to the invention of writing and reproaching a mathematician Theaetetus for teaching people false belief, Plato gives the first critical analysis of the inroads of technology into culture that must be picked and followed.

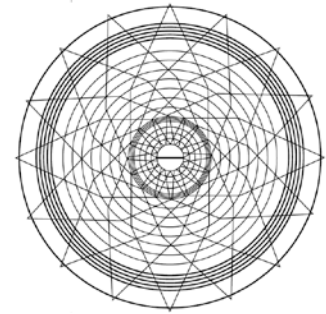
We gave a number of arguments, based on which it can be established that the process of the development of industrial society that went hand in hand with the expansion of the mass audience, led to the dismantling of those contemplative modes of perception that had already emerged under the influence of print culture among a numerically small and predominantly urban minority. S. Sontag does not fail to notice this transformation of perception when she begins her exploration of photography. She concludes, 'Photography weakened the perception of painting' (Sontag 2013: 194).

However the problem lies not only in the aesthetic aspect of perception but also in the deformation of personality and deviations from morality. 'But our ability to stomach this rising grotesqueness in images (moving and still) and in print has a stiff price. In the long run, it works out not as a liberation of but as a subtraction from the self: a pseudo-familiarity with the horrible reinforces alienation, making one less able to react in real life. What happens to people's feelings on first exposure to today's neighborhood pornographic film or to tonight's televised atrocity is not so different from what happens when they first look at Arbus's photographs' (Sontag 2013: 60). S. Sontag's thoughts thus lie in the same plane as those of other thinkers quoted above, starting with P. Chaadaev.

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This new mode of perception that is being established by the new visuality still preoccupies researchers who do not avoid making comparisons between photography and painting. A. Rouille is one of them. Writing about the period between two world wars, A. Rouille argues that images no longer require contemplation and, in his view, photography is the culprit. The newly acquired habits of perception subsequently advance into other, more traditional spheres of the art history. He writes: 'Given that photography inevitably establishes the physical contact between the object and its image, contemplation is no longer as necessary as it used to be in the case of painting. As a general rule, photography makes contemplation unnecessary' (Ruye 2014: 373).

That had not been the case in the 19th century, but with the development of photography this tendency became more pronounced. 'The decline of contemplation', A. Rouille writes, 'was becoming more prominent in the period between the two world wars with the expansion of the journalistic and amateur photography that resulted in a growing trivialization of the image. It seems that the rapid rise in numbers of the images can't be separated from the light-minded attitude towards them that is both the reason and the consequence of this growth' (Ruye 2014: 373).

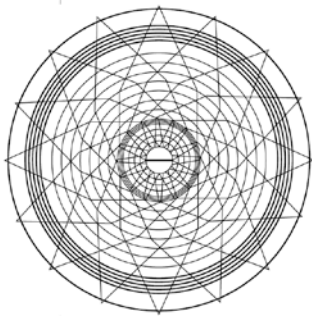
A. Rouille applies the same conclusion to painting. In his view, the era of contemplation along with painting as a representative form belonging to the traditional history of visuality is coming to an end. Based on that, we can argue that it marks the end of the history of art as well – at least the one that developed based on the principle of mimesis.

This crisis of perception (and not only the one of the perception of the image), which had already been the reality of life in the 19th century, was more profoundly explored by W. Benjamin.

He argues that the works of art, including painting, had preserved their link to ritual before the emergence of arts that were dependent on the new technology. Benjamin considers the evolution of painting more broadly than H. Wölfflin, for whom the history of art is linked to the gradual decline in manifestations of tactility, which M. McLuhan writes about in detail with regard to television, and the increasing significance of the optical as opposed to tactile perception (Wölfflin 1930). Benjamin allocates more importance to the weakening link between art and ritual, including the relationship between painting and ritual, which results in the decay of the aura as the focal point of the history of art in its traditional sense. Wölfflin simply argues that the optical aspect of painting becomes more pronounced – to illustrate this point he gives an example of baroque. On the other hand, Benjamin draws attention to the increasing importance of the exhibition aspect. The weaker the link between painting and ritual, the more emphasis is placed on the exhibition value of the work of art. Benjamin even writes about entirely new functions of art.

For Benjamin, the revolution in art happens with the emergence of photography because for the first time it brings to the fore the exhibition function of the work of art.





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Interestingly, turning his attention from photography to film, Benjamin highlights the compensatory function of the latter, without which it is impossible to comprehend its nature. The mechanical reproduction, he argues, leads to the loss of the aura of the work of art that was very important for painting. The loss of the aura brought with it a decline of cult. However, the film brings both of them to life once again. For example, the need for the cult aspect in cinema manifests itself in the star system, which takes the act of aesthetic perception beyond the plots that are shown on the screen and the film itself – into the realm of the actors' private lives that are seen as the stories of pagan gods.

However, it is not just about the changing functions that manifest themselves when we look at the way cinema is perceived. We also have to look at the relationship between individual and mass perception. The crisis of perception, which we tried to trace using various sources, had already been evident in the perception of painting in the 19th century. It is a consequence of transformation of individual perception and its absorption by mass perception. In this instance, the influence exerted by the precepts that originate in industrial or mass societies over the art life becomes evident. In this new situation, art was forced to come into contact with the mass audience that had grown at a very fast rate throughout the 19th century. The reproduction of art is a result of the increasing role that the mass audience plays in the art life. The interaction with art that had been made possible with the help of galleries and art societies could no longer fulfil the demands of the mass audience.

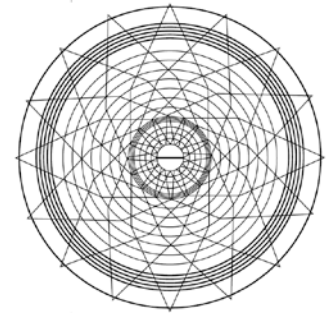
However, according to Benjamin, exhibition and recreational aspects of both photography and film bring to life the tactile mode of perception that in its turn leads to a crisis of contemplation. In Benjamin's view, a significant difference between film and painting and, consequently, between the traditional history of art and the history of images in the new era, emerges as a result of the more archaic mode of perception. This is how Benjamin sees it. The optical image in the film has a tactile quality. The work of art therefore fuels 'a demand for the film, the distracting element of which is also primarily tactile, being based on changes of place and focus which periodically assail the spectator. Let us compare the screen on which a film unfolds with the canvas of a painting. The painting invites the spectator to contemplation; before it the spectator can abandon himself to his associations' (Ben'yamin 1996: 57).

Benjamin argues that it is impossible in the case of the movie frame. It changes so rapidly that one does not have enough time to grasp a scene. This particular circumstance, i.e. the transformation of an individual perception, makes Benjamin conclude that the perception of film is similar to the perception of architecture which, according to Hegel's theory, is the basic aesthetic form at the symbolic stage in the development of the spirit. The perception of architecture does not require concentration and takes on collective forms. Being predominant at the symbolic stage in the development of the spirit, this mode of perception persisted at the classical and the romantic stage. The perception of architecture consists of two levels – the tactile and the optical.

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According to Wölfflin, the evolution of the history of art unfolds within the boundaries of the relationship between these two points. At the optical level of the perception of architecture, contemplation and the concentration of attention that had been nurtured by painting throughout its entire history are not impossible. Painting shifted this balance between the optical and the tactile in favour of the optical. However, architecture as the most ancient type of art is representative of the symbolic stage and preserves the tactile, i.e. the distracted mode of perception as reflected in the way in which architecture is perceived by the tourists. In Benjamin's view, this mode of perception, defining as regards to architecture and more tactile than optical, finds its revival in film in the case of which the optical mode of perception is absorbed by the tactile one.

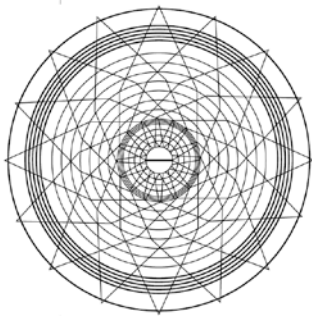
Furthermore, the philosopher suggests that a film not only borrows this mode of perception from architecture, but carries it over to the other forms of art. Benjamin writes: 'Reception in a state of distraction, which is increasing noticeably in all fields of art and is symptomatic of profound changes in apperception, finds in the film its true means of exercise'. He thus draws a line under quite a long process of inquiry as to a crisis which had arisen in the history of image.

#### **4. The history of visuality after the history of art**

Being the witnesses to this transitional phase from the industrial to the post-industrial civilisation, we must comprehend what changes are happening nowadays and how the screen culture fits into the new civilisation. Without the definition and description of screen culture, as it appeared in the industrial civilisation we will not be able to highlight the qualities that are unique to it in the new age. Therefore it is important to look at the historical context of the processes in the modern screen culture. We could outline a number of situations in the history of screen culture, which would allow us to reveal the most problematic aspect of that history.

We have so far revealed only two such situations that allow us to comprehend the sociological context of the screen culture history, i.e. two transition situations as Toffler had described them – the shift from the pre-industrial to the industrial civilisation and from the industrial to the post-industrial one. However, the history of screen culture is not limited to these two situations. The emergence and development of the industrial culture brings to life both screen culture and new visuality or a new type of visuality, which appears as the logical result of the technological progress. That is why it is different from that type of visuality, which belonged to the industrial culture and the history of art until the 19th century, i.e. before the appearance of the technological types of art.

At the very beginning of the history of the industrial civilisation, there must have been a clash between the traditional type of visuality as reflected in the 19th century painting and the new visuality. We have to look at this from an aesthetic rather than a



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sociological perspective. One of the important aims of this research is to highlight the main peculiarities of the traditional type of visibility. It is evident that the emergence of photography in the 19th century brought with it a new type of visibility. But why should we consider the visibility of the industrial civilisation to be a fundamental change compared to a type of visibility that preceded it? To what extent it will be possible to say that a new visibility is a logical continuation of the traditional one or the one that took place in the history of art? Is it possible to argue that a particular phenomenon that would manifest itself in the various forms of new visibility had originated in the traditional forms of visibility?

In any case, we should include in our analysis the shifts that took place in the history of art. Art historians usually regard these shifts as the changes between art styles. Besides, it is important to comprehend the consequences of the emergence of new visibility for the continuing history of art, whether it continued to develop in accordance with the notions that existed at the preceding stages of the history of art or it fundamentally changed after the emergence of new visibility. The latter point of view was expressed, for example, by A. Bazin (Bazin 1972).

While before the emergence of new visibility painting had had to be in accordance with what the ancients called mimesis, a new type of visibility liberated painting from this necessity and it became freer in the expression of what Hegel called the spirit. Hegel's concept was picked up by some art historians including M. Dvořák (Dvorzhak 2001). It is known that the late period in the history of art represents the stage which was called romantic by Hegel. At this stage, the spirit could finally distance itself from the forms of sensuality and physicality, such as were implied in the aesthetic principle of mimesis. New visibility thus emerges in painting itself. Painting becomes more abstract in its expression. It seemed like the very geometrical style, which could be found in the early periods in the history of art had appeared again (Vipper 1972).

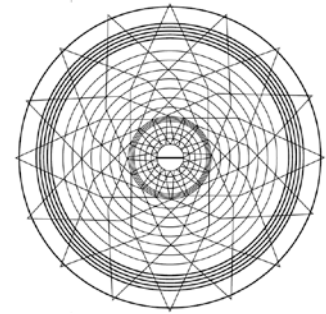
The development of new visual culture in the 20th century is linked to the constant going back to the early stages in this development, i.e. the emergence of photography. Naturally, the emergence of photography caused the same level of shock as, for example, Duchamp's works exhibited in museums that were the extractions from a physical and sensual reality in a rough form. In the beginning, photography was considered to be a mechanical reproduction of reality and have no relationship to the art or the history of art. However, there were constant attempts to write photography into that history and thus perceive and analyse it in accordance with the traditional discourse already formed within existing painting styles. There was a loose attempt to regard it as a type of graphic art.

However, there was something in photography that contradicted these comparisons. The traditional discourse drastically differed from photography. What was preventing photography from being included in the traditional discourse of the history of art? R. Krauss attempted to answer this question in her book on photography using the semiotic approach. She writes that photography and painting belong to radically

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different semiotic systems: 'Semiological conditions of photography are drastically different from those which determine the existence of other forms of visual productions included under the term "icon"' (Krauss 2014: 16).

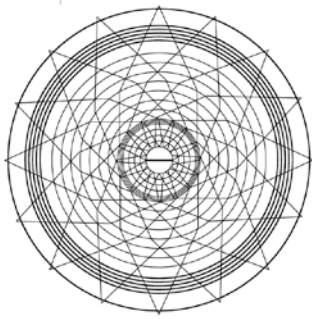
So how does R. Krauss define a sign that exists in photography? Based on the definition given by C. Peirce, Krauss argues that with regard to photography we should talk about a sign 'index' rather than a sign 'icon' ('Since photograph belongs to the group of signs retaining the relationship to their referents that implies the physical connection, it belongs to the same class as the impressions, symptoms, traces, objects' (Krauss 2014: 105).

Based on semiotics, Krauss highlights the difference between the images in painting and photography. The specificity of photography is born out of it retaining the relationship to its referents whereas paintings, drawings and other images do not have such relationships. 'Whereas a painting can be drawn from memory or imagination, a photograph as a photo-chemical imprint can only be taken under the condition of retaining the initial relationship to its material referent' (Krauss 2014: 16).

In order to better imagine the type of sign actualised by photography, which was defined by C. Peirce as an 'index', it is noteworthy to look at Peirce's own words on photography: 'Photographs, especially instantaneous photographs, are very instructive because we know that they are in certain respects exactly like the objects that they represent. But this resemblance is due to the photographs having been produced under such circumstances that they were physically forced to correspond point by point to nature. In that aspect, then, they belong to the second class of signs [the index], those by physical connection' (Pirs 2000: 203).

Highlighting the differences between the ways in which semiosis is realised in painting and photography, R. Krauss concludes that photography should be viewed not through the prism of the traditional visual discourse manifesting itself in painting and its particular styles, such as surrealism, but as a fundamentally independent and specific semiotic system, which establishes a particular relationship to reality. Furthermore, photography gives rise to a particular photographic or specifically visual discourse that corresponds to the nature of the sign and in the light of which there can be new ways of approaching all the preceding periods both in the history of images and in the history of art. In effect, it is a radically new way of approaching the entire history of art up to the age of photography and screen culture.

Given the emergence of technical arts that followed, especially film and television that continue to develop the potential lying in photography, there is a real opportunity, as R. Krauss puts it, of new reading of the history of art. In that respect, it seems quite paradoxical to suggest, as Krauss does, that we can only understand such a cultural movement in the history of the 20th century as surrealism, seeming very far away from photography, if we also comprehend the photographic discourse or the discourse of new visibility. After all, in R. Krauss's view, such a characteristically photographic technique as an automatic recording, much lauded by surrealists, is precisely an element of photographic discourse.



### **5. Screen culture from the perspective of the cyclical view of culture**

Now we come to the necessity of enlarging the historical field of research. Without the analysis of the shift from the pre-industrial to the industrial society it is impossible to consider the tendencies of a more relevant transition towards the post-industrial society. And without a definition of the traditional visuality, which overlaps with the history of art we would never comprehend the new visuality. If the history of traditional visuality entirely coincides with the history of art, new visuality has a particular history of its own. However, the peculiarities of this new history can only be revealed by comparison with the history of art. We thus come to the main purpose of our research.

Our main interest lies in the history of images after the history of art. But in order to comprehend this particular history we will have to compare its quality attributes with the ones that had been in the history of art. However, our historical approach to culture research is not limited only to the above-mentioned history of new and traditional visualities.

So far, with respect to the history of the development of new visuality and its comparison with the traditional visuality we have been thinking about historical processes in the context of the linear view of history. Since we linked the history of screen culture to the history of industrial society it thus became necessary to use both the historical and sociological approaches to screen culture research. But it is not enough. The logic of screen culture development suggests that we should analyse it in accordance not only with the linear, but also with the cyclical principle.

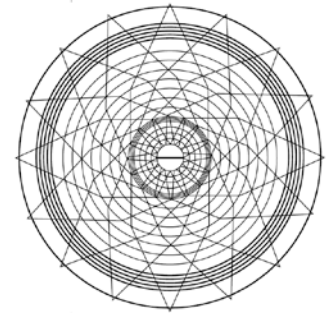
The point is that the new type of visuality not just transcends the traditional type of visuality in its later manifestations. It goes hand in hand with images' return to their origins, to the starting point of their functioning. We can also find in a new principle of visuality all that was previously said about the new principles of painting that had appeared after the emergence of new visuality in the history of art, i.e. about painting's return to the abstract, geometrical forms. Embodying the new aspect of image, screen culture at the same time brings to life its most archaic structures and functions.

For example, the decreasing importance of an artistic element and images' return to a ritual function, although in the political rather than in the religious sense, are the key characteristics of this new visuality. The entire history of art testifies to the growing separation between art and ritual. While the entire history of art in its traditional sense appears to be an institutionalisation of subjectivity, a new history of images suggests otherwise. It brings humanity back to the pre-individual state of communication. This, it may be said that the preceding history of art as the history of institutionalisation of subjectivity appears to have entered into a phase of radical transformation or even to have come to an end. This history can be represented as one long cycle.

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In accordance with the cyclical view, when one cycle that includes particular phases has come to an end, in order to begin a new cycle, history reverts to its starting point. This seems to be a course of the history of new visibility. Its development is linked to a return to the most archaic stages in its history. With regard to the analogy made earlier between the era of the functioning of the images and their functioning before the history of art we can refer to the conclusions of S. Eisenstein. Based on various psychological schools, including Gestalt psychology and psychoanalysis, he came to a conclusion about 'regress' in the history of art related to findings on the nature of film communication and language.

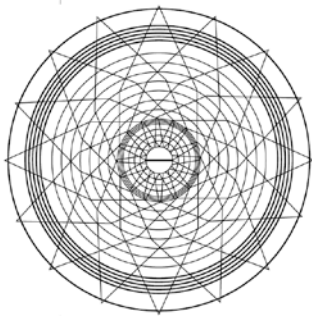
S. Eisenstein in effect anticipated the conclusions about photography later made by R. Krauss. He expressed the notion about art's return after its long history to the primeval archaic stages when it had not yet attained autonomy. This was the very symbolic stage in the development of the spirit that had been earlier described by Hegel and constituted a considerable part of his aesthetic project. However, Hegel did not predict that humanity would ever go back to this stage. Rather, it can be concluded from his project that there will be the crisis or even 'the death' of art.

In Eisenstein's view, this return to a starting point, to Hegel's 'symbolic stage', will manifest itself in cinematic forms. Furthermore, it is not accidental that Eisenstein allows himself an excursion into the future of cinema, or in other words an excursion into the past. In his opinion, cinema begins the history of art all over again. He writes: 'All arts seem to stretch through the centuries all the way to cinema. And by looking back at them cinema to a large extent helps to comprehend their method' (Eyzenshteyn 2002: Vol. 1, 38).

In essence, this notion expressed by Eisenstein anticipates the retrospective logic of the history of art. According to Eisenstein, a return to the earlier forms of language manifests itself above all in documentary cinema. For example, implying that a newsreel belongs to the early stages in the history of fictional film, Eisenstein compares it with both cave paintings and ornament as belonging to the early period of the history of art: 'Newsreel is a period of cave paintings and ornament in the history of fictional film' (Eyzenshteyn 2002: Vol. 2, 449).

He divides the history of newsreel itself into two phases – the cave painting phase and the ornamental one. At this early stage in the history of film, there is an automatic recording of physical and sensual reality. For example, considering ornament to be the first stage in the development of artistic thinking, S. Eisenstein argues that 'at the first, ornamental stage there's no visibility at all. Instead of an image there's an object per se: a string of bear claws or sea fish teeth, drilled shells, dried berries or eggshells' (Eyzenshteyn 2002: Vol. 1, 228).

The first phase is equivalent to the pre-artistic, cave painting stage in the history of art. It is, as he puts it, 'the contour drawing stage' or, according to H. Wölfflin, the earliest, tactile one. It is dominated by a line, the drawing of which, as Eisenstein describes it,



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dancing, 'rises out of the bosom of the single impulse' (Eyzenshteyn 2002: Vol. 2, 125). At this stage, a line still retains a link to a hand, i.e. the tactile features of the image. The second stage in the evolution of the image is the ornamental phase which manifests itself in documentary cinema, in D. Vertov's 'Cinema-Eye' and 'Kino-Pravda'. Finally, there is a third phase, i.e. fictional cinema, which operates by means of imagery as opposed to the recorded footprints of the physical reality as it happens in a newsreel. It is quite clear that, going back to the origins of the image, S. Eisenstein in effect recreates the situation that is similar to what Hegel means by the symbolic stage in the development of the spirit.

This retrospective tendency can be found not only in the technical arts, but in culture as a whole. As was pointed out earlier, if we take a look at 20th century painting, we will see that by means of its abstract experiments it brings us back to the geometrical style of classical antiquity. The possibility of comprehending the processes of screen culture throughout the long periods of history allows us to conclude that such a view of screen culture requires a combination of historical approach, sociology and culturology, as well. In other words, from this perspective, history is viewed not only in the context of the development of industrial society, but also in the context of the history of culture passing through various phases, periods and cycles.

Cyclical time stretches a long way and it is a stretch of time that belongs to culture. Thus, screen culture can only be understood by delving into history, at the level of the cyclical unfolding of historical time. Although its development has been unfolding for the last two centuries, nevertheless, the space of the entire history of the development of the spirit, as Hegel would put it, is needed in order to comprehend its nature. In the 20th century, the era of screen culture, bringing us back to the origins of visibility, exhibits the simultaneity of all stages that the spirit had passed through – the symbolic, the classical and the romantic.

Therefore, despite its short history, screen culture in its inherent manifestations belonging to culture can only be comprehended in the context of a long cultural time-frame. In order to reveal its nature, it is necessary to comprehend all stages in the history of images, including the one preceding the history of art since a new history that appeared on the basis of technology has brought us back to the pre-history of art. Therefore, we have to look beyond screen culture itself, relating it to what has happened in the history of art before the emergence of screen culture and in parallel with it. And it is important to establish what humankind has gained and lost with the emergence of screen culture.

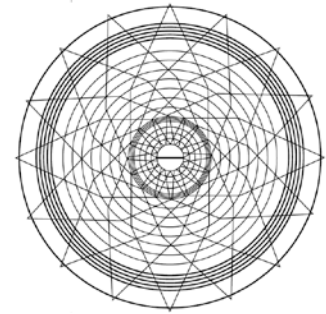
### **6. Stages in the history of new visibility**

It goes without saying that noting the existence of various stages of the functioning of images, which the history of screen culture is a special sphere of, we are aware that the entire length of visibility, both traditional and new, can be divided into particular stages or phases. For example, art scholars turn to the history of visibility, which has

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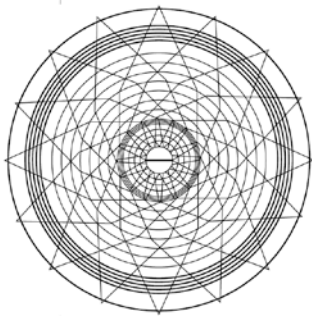
unfolded within the history of art, to trace the development of the large art movements and, for example, they identify the Gothic period, the era of Renaissance, classicism, baroque and so on. The history of the development of new visuality can itself be divided into different stages. The first stage coincides with the emergence and development of photography. The second stage begins with the emergence of cinema. And the next stage coincides with the emergence of television.

Each of these stages was a product of a large number of studies and intellectual work related to this subject. Naturally, among this array of texts it is possible to find ideas and notions concerning every technological type of art and screen culture as a whole, which manifests itself in each particular type of art that emerged on the basis of technology. For example, there were attempts to apply the conclusions derived from observations on cinema to other visual forms of art and make generalisations concerning not only cinema, but screen culture as a whole.

For example, the attempts to theorise cinema constantly brought researchers back to photography, to comparing the common features of photography and cinema (Bazin, Krakauer, Michalcovitch et al.). One of the first studies in which photography, cinema and television are considered as a single process, as the development of screen culture as a whole, is V. Michalcovitch's 'The visual language of mass media' (Mikhalkovich 1986). Such a level of generalisation can be traced back as far as to S. Eisenstein. His is the single instance when the generalisations made in the sphere of cinema went beyond a comparison with writing, semiotic systems, various cultures. The analysis involved the application of psychology, philosophy, semiotics, linguistics and aesthetics. For this reason, it is only natural that film scholars found it difficult to understand the works of Eisenstein. This job was undertaken by humanitarian scientist, generalist, linguist, semiotician and historian V. V. Ivanov, who considered Eisenstein's work to be a forerunner of semiotics (Ivanov 1998). Eisenstein can also be considered as a culturologist, which was especially evident in the texts written when he worked on a film about Mexico.

Although now it can be said that a major contribution to a theoretical understanding of screen culture was made by the researchers who seemed to have written solely about photography. For many decades, photography had been studied predominantly by the photographers themselves at the empirical level. They understood technology and knew the history of photograph very well but could not make broad generalisations. In the second half of the 20th century, this subject was explored by philosophers and art scholars that had a good understanding of different spheres (S. Sontag, R. Krauss, A. Rouille, R. Barthes et al.). They managed to express fundamentally new ideas concerning photography itself. Delving into the issue of photography allowed them to reveal, as was shown above, some general features of screen culture. And of course there is V. Benjamin, who even before that had made important conclusions concerning both photography and the functioning of art that operates by means of technology and in accordance with the traditional types of the visual art.





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As regards the theory of television, there is a large number of studies on this subject as well. Nevertheless, M. McLuhan remained unrivalled with respect to the generalisations in this field. Concentrating on television as the core subject of his research, he was nonetheless forced to reconstruct an entire chain of means of communication that ever took place throughout history (Maklyuen 2003). The results of his research are relevant to the later studies on mass communication rather than screen culture but he offered new ideas on the continuity between the printed book and cinema, cinema and television, television and media in general. He was one of the first to understand the appearance of mosaic structures in culture. He traced the origins of these structures back to the press that started to gain in importance in the early modern period. But how do we define the early modern period if we look at it from the perspective of J. Habermas rather than in the context of the arts? If we try to look at it through the prism of sociology, this appears to be the very era of development of industrial society.

In conclusion, we would like to raise the question of data systemisation within the subject of screen culture, no matter whether it is a study on photography, cinema or television. When systemising the data, the closeness of a particular idea on screen culture to a particular area of research or a scientific discipline should be taken into account. A major contribution to visual culture research is being made in the field of art studies. However, as was indicated earlier, new visibility goes beyond that type of art that has been in existence for centuries of art history.

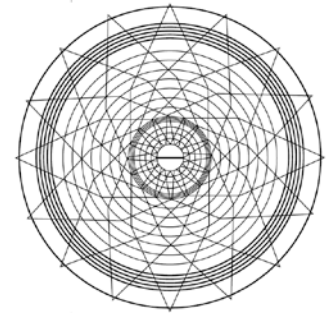
In this regard, it is particularly telling that some manifestations of screen culture have returned to their origins, when images had no artistic value at all. Thus, in order to highlight the specificity of this new visibility, we will need assistance of other scientific disciplines, such as history, sociology, semiotics, the theory and history of culture and, finally, philosophy, as was shown by our recourse to Hegel. If it is necessary, we can use tools from any of these disciplines. We could make progress towards building a general theory of screen culture history, if we managed to reveal, describe and systemise two kinds of sources based on which it could be possible to illustrate a history of understanding the specificity of nature and functioning of screen culture.

First of all, we would need sources which would help us understand the nature of traditional images in the history of art. The history of painting is also needed to determine why the institutionalisation of subjectivity which, according to R. Barthes, is a fundamental function of literature and, as we would add, of art as well, does not continue throughout the entire history of culture, the latter constantly diverging towards the institutionalisation of mass mentality. In fact, this divergence contributed to an explosive situation that is linked to an emergence of new visibility, which was made possible by the advances in technology. Such a divergence existed during the early stages of culture, but it is also a reality of industrial society. The history of culture appears to alternate between these two periods of institutionalisation. From the aspect of culturology, these two types of institutionalisation represent two separate

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types of culture that P. Sorokin called the culture of the sensual type and the culture of the ideological-national type.

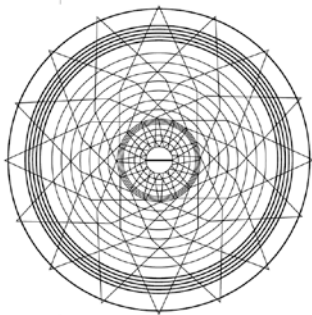
And secondly, we would need sources demonstrating awareness of a breakthrough in the revealing of the nature of new visibility. This breakthrough has been unfolding in the process of reflection on the emergence of each type of new visibility. H. Wölfflin's approach was the closest to revealing the fundamental features of visual art. As we know, he attempted to rehabilitate Baroque art that had been for some time criticised and considered to be decadent. In order to defend and raise the status of Baroque art, H. Wölfflin compared it with the classical, Renaissance style and described it as the next major period of artistic style when it was not even seen as one. But as in the case of V. Michalcovitch, in an attempt to reveal the specificity of each style, H. Wölfflin was forced to analyse them in the context of the universal evolution in the history of visual art.

The logic of this evolution is related to the decline of the most ancient way of perception, i.e. the tactile perception, which at the later stages of history with the emergence of the optical perception represented by light and colour preserves itself in a line. Therefore, in H. Wölfflin's work the history of art is presented as a change in the modes of vision, which manifests itself in the history of painting. For H. Wölfflin, the history of art is a history of the emergence, development and decline of the different modes of vision and, in a sense, the history of new visibility also appears to be that way. However, new visibility does not fit entirely into the logic outlined by H. Wölfflin. Apparently, screen culture in the forms of cinema brings us back to the origins of plastic arts.

However, screen culture history and the history of new forms of visibility could be explored in accordance with Wölfflin's suggestion to observe and capture different modes of vision and how they replace one another in the course of history. It is also necessary to reflect on the sources that provide a breakthrough insight into a new reality of images – for example, S. Eisenstein who took a big step forward in the understanding of how the development of the language of cinema was bringing humanity back to the symbolic stage – the first stage in the development of the spirit. Thus, in an attempt to reveal the main parts of the potential project to understand the logic of the development of screen culture, we have led the reader to a conclusion that in order to study this logic we would need to consider not only the history of images that operate after the history of art, but those periods in their history that precede the history of art and were described by H. Belting (Bel'ting 2002). Needless to say, this project belongs to the history of art. In this sense, this project seeking to recreate the history of images will from part of what we mean by the history of culture.

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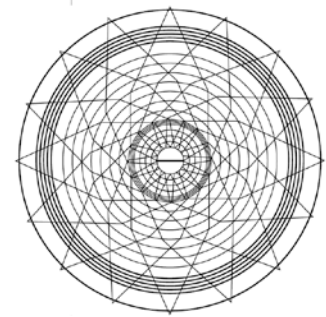
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# СЛЕДУЯ ПУТЯМИ, ПРОЛОЖЕННЫМИ Г. М. МАКЛЮЭНОМ: ЭКРАННАЯ КУЛЬТУРА В КОНТЕКСТЕ ИНДУСТРИАЛЬНОЙ ЦИВИЛИЗАЦИИ

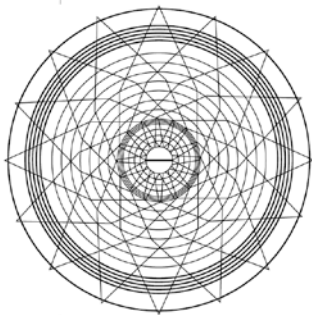
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### Аннотация:

Несколько десятилетий назад канадский ученый Г. М. Маклюэн впервые объяснил природу распространяющегося тогда нового средства коммуникации – телевидения. Но чтобы эту природу понять, ему пришлось опять же впервые дать истолкование истории культуры в коммуникативном ключе. Это был, несомненно, его весьма значимый вклад в изучение медиа. Его открытия повлияли на последующее изучение средств массовой коммуникации. Однако сегодня очевидно, что прочерченная ученым логика исторического становления коммуникации является одновременно и предысторией, и историей виртуальной реальности в экранных формах, которая требует нового истолкования истории культуры уже в плане виртуалистики. Основывая свои суждения на идеях Г. М. Маклюэна, автор пытается понять экранные формы массовой коммуникации как единую систему.

**Ключевые слова:** экранная культура, индустриальная цивилизация, постиндустриальная цивилизация, секуляризация, новая визуальность. Тактильно-осознательный способ восприятия, оптический способ восприятия, мозаичная культура, пресса, печатная культура, созерцательный способ восприятия, тактильность, ритуал, кризис созерцания, фотография, кинематограф, телевидение, циклическая логика истории



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