

## **From Cut and Paste to CTRL+C and CTRL+V: Tracing montage in contemporary digital art**

*Márcia Arbex-Enrico, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais - UFMG/CNPq, Brazil*

### **Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to connect contemporary digital productions and shared experiences on networks to the archaeological layers of media, thereby making a comparison between visual creation techniques from the past and the present, specifically referring to the transition from physical methods, such as cut and paste, to digital tools. This approach seeks to contemplate the processes inherent in gestures like cutting-pasting and dismantling-assembling-reassembling – a montage of visual elements – that underlie much of these cultural productions, particularly collages and tableaux vivants, considered here as highly intermedial phenomena. The impacts of the industrial era on artistic production were notably pronounced in literature and the arts, as technical reproducibility propelled the cut-paste process, prevalent throughout the European avant-garde in forms like photomontage, or cinematic montage. The subversive potential of these shifts is evident: concepts such as authenticity and originality are challenged; utilized materials, fragments, and remnants are reconfigured in productions characterized by hybridity and impurity. With the transition from the industrial to the digital era, we witness the widespread continuation of this art of montage due to new technologies: ready-made, assemblage, combined paintings, environments, collage-poems and object-poems, concrete and sonic poetry, cut-up, remix, sample, mash-up – processes associated with the digital condition yet not confined to it. To illustrate this proposition, we will explore digital montage experiences, such as photomontage and tableaux vivants produced for social networks, comprised of image cut-outs from the European tradition where the artist intervenes critically and incisively, bearing the same subversive potential as the ancient cut-paste gesture. The intricate intermedial relationship emerging from both instances can thus be examined through delving into the archaeological layers of the media involved, questioning how this ancient technique is revived in contemporary digital art.

## **Keywords**

Digital Collage, Photomontage, *Tableaux vivants*, Media Archaeology

## **Bio**

**Márcia Arbex-Enrico** is a Full Professor at Faculdade de Letras of Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais – UFMG, Brazil, and CNPq Researcher. Member of the research association and groups: IAWIS/AIERTI, CRIalt, CEEI, *Intermídia*. PhD Thesis in French Literature by Université Paris 3- Sorbonne Nouvelle, his research focuses on text-image relationships, theme of several of his scientific articles, e.g.: "Collage as a Creative Act" (*The Palgrave Handbook of Intermediality*, 2023); "Contemporary *tableaux d'auteurs* in Michel Houellebecq's and Michel Tournier's Novels" (*Text – Image – Music: Crossing the Borders*, 2021); "Images littéraires de l'atelier de l'artiste" (*Dialogues between Media*, 2021, co-author).

She's the author of the books *Sobrevivências da imagem na escrita: Michel Butor e as artes* (2020), *Alain Robbe-Grillet e a pintura: jogos especulares* (2013); has coedited the volumes *Escrita e imagem. Ensaios de Anne-Marie Christin* (2023), *Escrita, som, imagem*, vol. 1 and 2 (2019 and 2020), *Espaços de criação: do ateliê do pintor à mesa do escritor* (2015), *Universo Butor* (2012), *Interartes* (2010) *Poéticas do visível: ensaios sobre a escrita e a imagem* (2006); and translated from French books and articles of G. Didi-Huberman, Liliane Louvel and Anne-Marie Christin. Responsible for organising the 13th International IAWIS/AIERTI Conference *Sedimentation: Towards an archaeology of word and image*, Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

## **ORCID-ID/Websites**

Web site: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/0642418673482397>

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8690-6900>

[arbex@ufmg.br](mailto:arbex@ufmg.br)