

## **Challenges in intermedial thinking: Contemplating the database as an expression of the world**

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### **Abstract**

The database has been described by Lev Manovich as a key form of cultural expression of the digital present, even as a "symbolic form". It is a way of organizing data, but at the same time this conceptual metaphor encompasses a way of understanding the world or structuring experience. This metaphor also includes issues of memory, its storage and archiving - or rather, in digital media, its persistent degeneration and regeneration, in a preservation that consists in "frequent rereading, erasure and rewriting of the content" (W. Hui Kyiong Chun, P. DeMarinis).

Similar inquiries can be directed towards the oeuvre of contemporary Czech artist Zbyněk Baladrán. Employing an approach akin to that of a "media archaeologist", he delves into the archive or database as both source material and subject of investigation. wherein he scrutinizes diverse cultural records such as fragments of paintings, texts, and films. (Perhaps more than archaeology it's media "anarchaeology"; S. Zielinsky.) Furthermore, Baladrán probes techniques and manipulative potential inherent in various media forms, embracing montage and assemblage as fundamental principles of engagement.

While these inquiries may initially appear confined to the contemporary art, intermedial thinking is always interested in "old media" as well. Aware of this tradition, I am interested in whether such inquires might "illuminate" forms and practices from before the digital present. For instance, one might consider the collages of Jiří Kolář and his contemporaries from the mid-20th century as manifestations of information sorting, organizational strategies, and reality comprehension. How, then, does the practice of (intermedial) assemblage, alongside the metaphor of the database of the digital present, recalibrate our understanding of such historical precedents?

### **Keywords**

Cultural memory, media archaeology, intermedial relations, assemblage and montage

**Bio**

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