



Parasophia Conversations 01

Thinking about the Morphology of Image Traffic in the 21st Century

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Today images surround us and move across screens, media and continents with lightning speed. The power of these images has grown immensely, and we are desperately trying to understand how our relationship to them has changed. There are many different contemporary attempts to understand how images engage us in increasingly affecting ways.

Images have traditionally often been characterized as superficial, as simulations, as a weak substitutes for real presence. More recently W.J.T. Mitchell claims that images have appetites, desires, and demands, much like living entities. Henri Lefebvre and Raymond Williams have focused on the question of flow and rhythm, showing how moving images structure our daily lives and the very frameworks we use to make sense of the world. Both as visual stimuli and moving, mobile, and rhythmic flows images affect us.

In this discussion, Kitano Keisuke and Alexander Zahlten will think with the attendees about how global image traffic creates a specific framework for our understanding of the world and our relationship to media. Images move and engage us, they interact with us, physically, emotionally and intellectually. How has the global mobility of images changed that interaction? Do images have a life of their own when they roam throughout the world and across media? What changes when we all become producers, manipulators, and distributors of images, like hosts to a proliferating virus? These are some of the questions the discussion will attempt to address.

One central point of this issue is the immense degree to which we now participate in the production and distribution of images. The discussion will therefore address that question by exchanging images with the audience/participants. The event will be a meeting point to discuss the different affordances of images and the patterns their global movement show us.



This event is therefore meant as an encounter. “Curation” is a term that has recently become part of the rhetoric of corporations from the IT business to the music industry. This event will discuss the problems with the current rhetoric of curating images. At the same time, the event itself tries to go beyond curation and stay open to changes, challenges and questions from all participants.

What is at stake is a sort of ambiguity, or, one could say, fluctuation that the word “image” potentially harbors. It could even have a disruptive quality. Either “映像” (*eizō*) in Japanese or “image” in English, this word means a variety of things; from still images to movies, from something audible to something tactile, from what is in the mind to what is embodied. Its signification is essentially fluctuating. Given this, while it seems to be simple enough in everyday usage, the pair of words “Curate” and “Image” potentially emit intellectual and artistic tremors. These vibrations and tremors one may find in this word is what this project attempts to call for.

We would like to therefore ask the audience to bring images with them to the event, to send them in, and to present them. Images and their movements speak a specific language that we will also attempt to participate in.

Select any images you think are relevant, that raise questions and push us all to a reaction. They can be self-produced, stolen, borrowed, or found. Include the question the image raises. In the tension between the image speaking “for itself” and our speaking of it, we will attempt to grasp some of the force of the global image traffic.