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Mimesis and Surveillance Art

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To Giovanni, Margherita and Martina

and to my mother Alessandra

I love her more than the Universe and the "Metaverse"

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Introduction

Introduction

Recently, the debate on surveillance has become ever more topical and crucial. However, to understand this phenomenon, we need to analyse its history. The issue of surveillance precedes current methods of video monitoring and has its roots in classical civilizations or, even earlier, in primitive societies.

Our investigation begins with the duality between the mask and the face, and the appearances that these can acquire. As it is explained in the studies of the art historian Hans Belting, humans have always shown a strong interest in the use of masks for social, religious and psychological purposes. The two parties, the person and the mask, seem to mingle at times, and somehow the mask appears to be an essential feature since the birth of humanity.

To support this thesis, Frontisi-Ducroux's research is fundamental, as from these studies we can deduce that in ancient Greece, the two concepts, mask and person, were defined by a single word *prosōpon*. Subsequently, the Romans enclosed this complicated relationship into the word *persona*, which is not a mere Greek-Latin translation: the meaning of the word will undergo some changes. Thanks to Bettini's studies we know, in fact, that for the Romans there was a greater distinction between what is the mask and what instead is the individual. From this point on, to identify a person, his\her unique oratorical ability will also be considered.

Following these studies, it will be inevitable to run into the modern problem of portraits. How is it possible to capture the exact expressions of a real person, if it is defined by its physicality? Is it really a matter of expressiveness or instead is there some aura or dominant expression that defines that given person? In this sense, it will be useful to investigate not only the history of portraiture, its amazing evolution and the innovations that have been adopted in the artistic field, but also the concept of the caricature. The latter is seen as an important study of the human figure and the specific traits that describe that person. If only one of these particulars is not precisely portrayed by the

artist, the caricature can be considered a failure. However, when can these representations be called successful? What happens to a face when it is frozen into an image? Here we find ourselves again in the area of the masks. The artistic representation of a face, if it clearly refers to a true model, inevitably leads to the removal of the living figure from the world of temporality. Through artistic representation, the face is transformed into a mask. This is analogous to what happens nowadays in the media society we live in: the people who appear on our screens seem as if they are deprived of their physicality. The screens break the direct link between the person portrayed and the image that is offered to an audience.

Therefore, if the mask can distance the human figure from its true nature, it can be used for different purposes. As we will see, the role of the mask consists in either exposing or hiding the person who wears it. In the books of the anthropologist Caillois, this particular relationship will be analyzed. The research behind this dissertation will demonstrate how these two attitudes seem to be the opposite of each other, but they are actually two sides of the same coin. Furthermore, in this work we will analyse the techniques used by animals to camouflage. In fact, to find an answer to the ever-present dilemma of public surveillance, the most effective solutions are found in the animal world. In the second chapter of this thesis, numerous mimicry techniques will be exemplified, including *mimetism*, disguise and camouflage.

If animals seek a sort of "transparency" through the use of camouflage techniques, so does the contemporary man in relation to surveillance cameras. The artists of the so-called *artveillance* employ the strategies that are found in nature, in order to evade the omnipresent eyes of the "enemy". In fact, as theorized by Bentham and later by Foucault, our society implements a very precise model of surveillance: the panoptic model. Indeed, through this approach it is possible to monitor a very large number of people even with only one supervisor. The idea of the panopticon is present in public places, where surveillance cameras are hidden in the corners of streets or buildings; however, this form of "Big Brother" is also present in a more subtle way, for instance in our mobile devices.

The birth of this phenomenon can be set in 2001, the year of the attack on the Twin Towers. After this tragedy, the amount of devices designed to recognize people increased copiously. From a geopolitical point of view many things changed and surveillance systems became more and more present and effective. The constant change of regulations, the absence of laws necessary to protect citizens and the lack of a real public debate are at the basis of the phenomenon of surveillance art. The artists in question propose works that vehicle an important political message. It is a socially engaged and conscious form of art.

This dissertation deals with conceptual artists like Zach Blas and Sterling Crisping, because they effectively represent the sense of anxiety and concern that most people have about knowing how data is gathered and used by government agencies and private corporations. Furthermore, behind this choice there is also the aesthetic value that the works of art by these artists have. They are mainly masks that allow you to evade facial recognition or artificial intelligence monitoring systems. Thus, they have to be considered not only as creative achievements, but as actual useful objects. From an artistic point of view, these masks showcase the human side of the machines that control us, we will see how in some examples such as Blas' *Facial Weaponization Suite* which is an artistic representation of how artificial intelligence captures us.

Surveillance art therefore aims to combat this increasingly invasive tendency of the panopticon, and to achieve its mission, it often employs the language of nature and its camouflage techniques. This thesis proposes a new point of view to what is usually studied as a circumscribed concept. This work tries to capture the essential identity of Surveillance art by analysing all its different features through studies such as those on biology by Caillois, on art history by Belting, Gombrich and many others, as well as the fundamental research of Frontisi-Ducroux and Bettini. Moreover, throughout these pages it will be possible to understand how themes that at first sight may seem disconnected from each other, such as surveillance art, the mask and animal mimicry are actually part of the same discourse. The multidisciplinary nature of this topic will

undoubtedly pique the reader's interest, which will be supported by the presentation of key case studies that will provide a deeper understanding of the issue.

Chapter I: The mask and the face
1.1 The mask in the culture

Our work originates by investigating the word *prosōpon.* The word *prosōpon* (πρόσωπον) was coined in ancient Greece to refer to the actor's face during a show in theatre. On stage every feeling or expression was portrayed through a mask worn by the actor. Therefore, with time, the meaning of the term *prosōpon* evolved from the physical object of the mask to the theatrical character, the face behind the mask, or in other words, the actor himself.

In the Hellenic culture, the face was called *prosōpon,* and the power of sight was thought to be its most important value. The Greeks valorized the relationship between *seeing* and at the same time *being seen*. These two are completely different actions but they share the same "surface". Not surprisingly, the word "surface" comprehends in itself the connotation of the "face". Following the concept that the author Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux, ex deputy director of the Collège de France and expert in Hellenism and classical studies, investigates in his book *Du masque au visage: Aspects de l'identité en Grèce ancienne*. The intrinsic duality that characterizes the Greek word *prosōpon* which refers to the mask and at the same to the face. In other words, *prosōpon* identifies an entity under our visual perusal, either face or mask. This ambivalence could be explained by the fact that the mask was not meant to coverthe face of the actor, but rather it clarified the identity of the performer on stage. Through the mask the actors were able to portray the role of the dead or even the Gods.[1] In the Hellenic culture, the mask was also used for representing women in tragedy, the female roles were performed exclusively by men and it is probably that the performances were conceived solely for men as well.[2]

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[1] J. Schmitt, *For a History of the Face: Physiognomy, Pathognomy, Theory of Expression* (2012)*,* in "Kritische Berichte", 1, 2012 ("*EN FACE. Seven Essays on the Human Face*") pp. 7-20, here p. 8.

[2] B. Potter, *Was Ancient Greek Theater Only for Men?,* in " Classical Wisdom Weekly", 2018 (https://classicalwisdom.com/culture/theater/ancient-greek-theater-men/)

Furthermore, *prosōpon* could also express the idea of being "face to face"[3] with something or someone. The deeper meaning of this expression concerns an individual looking for hisown identity by molding him\herself on the relationships with others. This intimate process of self-definition is based on visual reciprocity. This concept could be misinterpreted in our modern times, as whenever we think about a mask in the middle of an interpersonal relationship, we are concerned about the interference this object may cause. In our mind,the mask interrupts the communication between people, but that is exactly the point: it does not put an end to the connection, rather it creates a new type of participation, a completely different one. This was clear in the Greeks' vision, in fact, *prosōpon* includes the mask and at the same time the face and the sight "before our eyes"[4]. The mask became the face of the actor who wore it. As it will be discussed in the further chapters, there is a very thin line that separates these two entities, sometimes the two appear indiscernible even if they have to be considered as distinct realities. In the first part of the thesis, I will investigate the differences that exist between these two apparently similar but substantially different identities.

Masks are artifacts fabricated as replicas of a face, to be worn over the face. In the prehistoric era, funerary cults made use of celebratory masks in order to replicate a lost face upon the corpse. As the facial features faded away and the departed could not be recognized, his face was restored with a mask in the funerary ritual. Another practice is found in Neolithic archeological sites. The dead are found with their skulls covered with a thin layer of fired lime and clay and their eyes filled with seashells (*Fig. 1*). This is something different from what we examined before: the face is not covered by a mask anymore, instead, the face becomes something new. In this case the skull is transformed into a permanent mask.

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[3] M. Bettini, *The ears of Hermes: communication, images, and identity in the classical world* (2011), tr. en. by W. M. Short, The Ohio State University Press, Columbus 2020, pp. 132-134.
[4] F. Frontisi-Ducroux, *Du masque au visage. Aspects de l'identité en Grèce ancienne* (1996), ed. by Flammarion, Paris 2012, here pp. 95-97.
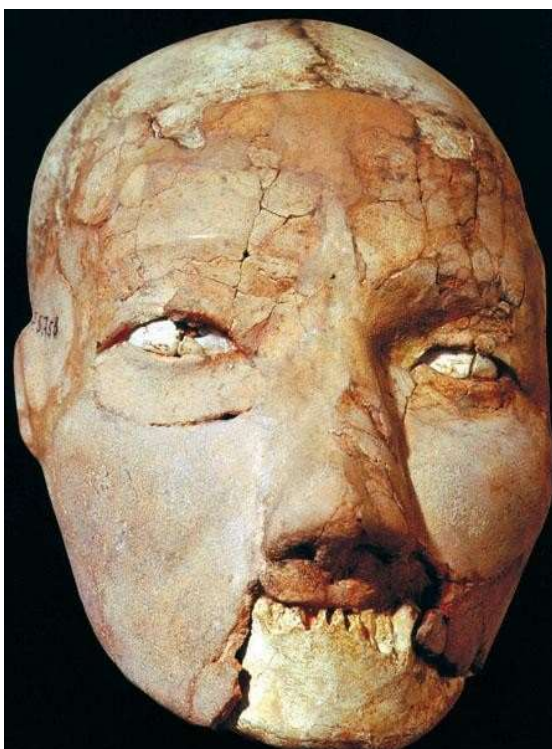
Figure 1 Skull of Jericho, ca. 7000 BC /Damascus, Archeological Museum.

The use of the mask differs from culture to culture. In Egypt, there is the most significant example that represents the continuation of the prehistoric death mask cult. The discovered specimens, like ceremonial rests of Ancient Egypt, witness the presence of a finished form of image-making already by the third century BC. In this case, mummies were covered by plaster masks, which were applied upon the cranium of the dead. The face was now reconstructed as an emblem of eternity. To better convey this idea of eternal existence, the face was completely gilded: it became an atemporal image of the person. Because the image substituted the face with a new mask, it was finally transformed into an icon. Thereafter, in the late period of Egyptian culture, when the country was occupied by Romans, a new and rare phenomenon developed among Egyptian culture: the so-called mummyportraits (*Fig. 2*). They were not simply portraits of the bandaged corpse, but actual wax portraits attached directly on the mummy. Those realistic masks were found in the necropolis at Cumae, near Naples. The studies revealed that the masks were molds of the head and their realistic features

served to emphasize the physical features of the dead person, in order to maintain the characters of the family resemblance.[5]

Figure 2 Portrait of a young woman, A.D. 110–20, Royal Museum of Scotland, National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh Courtesy of the Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland.

Other significant examples of the influence of masks were illustrated by Claude Lévi-Strauss,a French ethnologist and anthropologist who significantly contributed to the development ofthe theories of structuralism and structural anthropology.[6] In his book *The way of the Masks* he reported the distribution and the influence that masks had in the different Indians societies in Northwest America. In those cases, the mask had a fundamental role in the creation of narratives, for them the mask could not exist by itself alone, but it needed tobe referred to other masks. In fact, for the native peoples, the myths derived from the existence of the mask. Moreover, they used masks for communicating, especially to express family relationships or to contact distant

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[5] H. Plessner, *Philosophical Anthropology Perspectives and Prospects* (1982), I ed. by Jos de Mul, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam 2014, p. 384.

[6] R . Briggs, J. Meyer, *Structuralism: Anthropological Theories: A Guide Prepared by Students for Students* in "Department of Anthropology", University of Alabama, 2015 (https://anthropology.ua.edu/theory/structuralism/)

relatives through symbolic and collective faces.[7]

As for the above example, it is clear how a mask cannot be explained only by its form, but it is necessary to individuate the cult ceremony which is referred to. The cult ceremony endows the object with life, it permeates it with voice, movements, dances and visual communication. Finally, the ceremony transforms the mask into a face. This is particularly identifiable in some African societies where, during a ritual, people wear masks while they dance ceaselessly. Those episodes are evidence of an even more complex approach to the mask. For the folk, the mask is related to the condition of possession, the body is occupied by another person and the medium through which this transposition is possible is the ceremony mask, because it invites and legitimizes the presence of the guest in the living body. For the indigenous people, this medium can also ensure protection to the whole community, by hiding the face of the host, it avoids the risk that spirits and ancestors are disturbed by the presence of spectators.

Masks as media are easily identifiable in other different cultures, for example in the Afikpo tribe, they created a mask called *Beke* (*Fig. 3*). It was used for a precise function, *Beke* only represented women or foreigners. So, in the Afikpo tribe *Beke* was an anthropomorphic mask, sometimes adorned with hair or teeth and it had a specific role in society.[8]

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[7] S. Melchior-Bonnet, *Histoire du Miroir* (1994), VII ed. tr. it. by M. Giovannini, ed. Dedalo, Bari 2002, pp.146 - 162.

[8] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History,* tr. en. by T. S. Hansen and A. J. Hansen, ed. Princeton University Press, Princeton 2017, pp. 23-25.

Figure 3 Njenje Parade Players, Ndibe Village, Igbo Peoples, Afikpo village group, Nigeria, 1959. Photo by S. Ottenberg. Eliot Elisofon Photographic Archives, National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.

Masks and faces are entwined in a strong relationship. This is particularly clear in colonial museums, when a collection of artifacts is exposed together in a silent atmosphere which deprives them of all meaning. In fact, without the body language of the wearer, they fall into silence.

The history of the mask starts with the history of the face, the two are almost indiscernible. As Jean-Claude Schmitt asserts in his survey, the starting point on this topic could be considered Greek culture; the common roots of both concepts are identifiable in the Greek word "*prosōpon*", as we already discussed. Perhaps because the death mask is absent from Hellenic culture, the Greek vision of the mask was more tied to the living society. In classical Latin society, the nuances of meaning of the same term are slightly different. The Roman mask was called *persona*, which refers to the act of speaking because it was associated with the verb *persono* which means "I speak through" or "I resound".[9] The action described by the verb is directly associated with the tool of the mask: it is through the mask that the voice comes out louder. *Persona* is, of course, the Latin equivalent of Greek *prosōpon*, which designates both "the face"

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[9] M. Bettini, *The ears of Hermes: communication, images, and identity in the classical world*, p. 138.

and "mask". This term goes directly on the stage of the theatre, and, on the contrary of Greeks, it did not reenact the face, but rather it hides its identity. In Rome, the *persona* or mask hid the actor's face, it was an instrument through which the voice was reproduced loudly: this is the actual meaning of *per-sonare*[10]. Still a common thread among the two cultures exists: in both cultures there is no connection between the theatre mask/character and death. While the Greeks did not use any masks during the funerary ceremonies, the Latin funeral ritual included a mask, however it was not the *persona,* but the *imago*.[11] Death masks, which were absent in the Hellenistic culture, represent a special case in the Roman one; they are definedn either as faces nor as mask, but rather as *images*.[12] There are examples where these masks were also worn by actors, not in the theater, but at funerals. In this case, the death mask function was to represent the natural face (*facies*) of the dead in a way that was completely different from the living face. This type of mask is something completely different from the theater mask (*persona*) discussed before, because this latter example, the imago, was realized as a memento of the dead person.

After having pointed out these commonalities between the two ancient cultures, it is important to identify the disparities among the two. In the Hellenistic system the mask had to be kept in motion in order to hold the audience's attention: it had to be supported by the constant manifestation of emotions by the actor.[13] The Romans, instead, adopted fixed types, masks for tragedy and comedy, which were clearly differentiated for the roles of good and evil. (*Fig. 4*)

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[10] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History*, pp.48-52.

[11] Another remarkable form of image is the *imago clipeata*, which belongs to funerary iconography.

[12] H. I. Flower*, Ancestor Masks and Aristocratic Power in Roman Culture* (1996)*,* Clarendon Press, Oxford 2000. See also H. Belting, *Bild-Anthropologie: Entwürfe für eine Bildwissenschaft*, p. 52.

[13] F. Frontisi-Ducroux, *Du masque au visage. Aspects de l'identité en Grèce ancienne*.

Figure 4 Mosaic Decorations with theatrical masks, flowers and fruits, from House of the Faun in Pompeii (Italy), II century B.C., National Archeological Museum of Naples

For this reason, the Roman theatre speaks through artificial masks (*prosopeion*), which differfrom the "real face" (*autoprosōpos*). For the Greeks, the mask—like the face— was a visual feature, while for the Romans it was something that had to be seen (*vultus*) but also heard (persona). As stated earlier, the Latin version of the mask "*persona*" also refers to the voice, in fact, its verb *persono* means "to resound'', which is specifically clear in its Italian translation as "*per sonare*". For this purpose, the phrases from Gavius Bassus are particularlyuseful, he designates the mask as «an apparel for the face makes the voice clearer and moresonorous, it is called persona»[14].

In those terms the voice is the crucial factor in recognizing a person, because voice produces identity. In ancient Rome, the voice and the mouth (-*os*) indicated the face[15]: not only because they refer to the language - as human capacity- but mostly because they evoke the "verbal quality" proper to that person. In order to identify a person, there is a combination of qualities: the voice, the facial expression, the posture, the gait, the verbal expression and so on. In this perspective, the comparison between the Romans and Greek culture reveals that the Hellenistic society identified visuality as a decisive factor in recognizing a person. In this regard, the face was expressed as *prosōpon*, while for the Latins the face was understood as "mouth" and its ability in producing speeches. The words from Pliny are useful to better understand this concept: «the voice plays an important part in the face».[16] The voice has a decisive

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[14] «*Indumentum illud oris clarescere et resonare vocem facit, ob eam causam persona dicta est*» in A. Gellio, *Noctes Atticae* (177), tr. it. by L. Rusca, Rizzoli, Milan 2001, 2 voll., p. 1498.

[15] M. Bettini, *The ears of Hermes: communication, images, and identity in the classical world*, p. 138.

[16] «*Vox in homine magnam vultus habet partem. agnoscimus ea prius quam cernamus non aliter quam*

role in recognizing a person, even when we are in a misleading situation. Maybe we are tricked by the appearance of a *double*, i.e., when someone maliciously assumes the identity of another person, but surely, the totality of the features will betray the actions of the deceiver. A human being is tremendous in its complexity, and the sound of the voice is one of the many features that characterize a person, as Vergil says about the God Venus: «*vera incessu patuit dea*»[17], this can be translated as "Venus was revealed by her way of walking".

Vultus, in fact, serves to express someone's identity. As Andromaches' words testifies: «*hos vultus meus / habuit Hector, talis incessu fuit, habituque talis*»[18] («this is the same face that my Hector had; this was his way of walking and his personality»)[19]. These words were pronounced by the princess of Thebes while she was looking at her son and at that precise moment, she recognized some distinctive features of her husband in the figure of her son Astyanax.[20]

The Latin word *Vultus* does not refer to the face, instead, it indicates the general *aspectus*[21] the appearance of a person. The literal meaning of the word *vultus* is "being looked at", it is a sort of a quality of the human being, which also belongs to the realm of all visible objects. However, the etymological root of the Italian world *viso* and the French *visage*, is *visus* and this directly suggests the idea that both Romans and Greeks privileged a visual culture. *Vultus* is also related to the inner world of a person, it is connected with personality and internal emotions. This concept will be discussed in the further chapters dedicated to the face as a surface for expressions.[22] Moreover, focusing on the Roman perception, the face refers to the identity of the person, but in these terms, they coined the term *vultus*, which is derived from the verb *volere*.

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oculis» Plin. 11.271. In Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia* (77-78), tr. it. by Francesco Maspero (2011), ed. Rizzoli, Milan 2011.

[17] Verg. Aen. 1.405. P. Vergilius Maro, *Eneide* (29-19 B.C.)*,* I book, tr. in prose by L. Vaini e V. Caselli (1822), VII ed. (1826) C. Mordacchini, Rome.

[18] Sen. Tro. 464 ss. Seneca, *Troades*, tr. it. by F. Stok, BUR Rizzoli, Milan 2019.

[19] M. Bettini, *The ears of Hermes: communication, images, and identity in the classical world,* p. 137.

[20] Ivi, p. 26.

[21] *Aspecuts* is related to *specio*, more precisely this word derived from *aspicio* ("to look") and has both the active sense of "look" or "gaze" and the passive sense of "appearance."

[22] M. Bettini, *The ears of Hermes: communication, images, and identity in the classical world,* p. 134.

Vultus emphasizes the manifestation of man's will that is commonly expressed through the gaze.

Some similarities between the Roman orator, the man designated for speaking in public events, and the actor are evident. The Roman orator addressed speeches to his listeners in the Forum, a similar scene as one of the actors standing upon the stage intervening. The facial gestures of the orator were supposed to show deep emotions and characters.[23] The same happens for actors who needed the external support of the mask, while the orator embedded the guise.

Unquestionably, the performance of the mask was always present in the history of theatre. Masks have appeared since the very origin of performing arts, this is because the presence of a recognizable mask supports the presence of a role on the stage. From this point of view, it is clear how indispensable the role of the mask is in the culture of theater. Further down the centuries, in the Medieval times, when theater developed under the ecclesiastical customs and was often inserted in the liturgy, something changed. During this period the major interest was to dramatize the Bible in order to strengthen the faith of the devotees.[24] Proceeding with history, in the Renaissance period, the theater evolved into its modern state of secularized spectacle. Thus, from the Modern age, the mask, as we know them from the bygone ancient societies, did not return to the stage anymore.[25] The result is that the actor in theatre plays different roles but he\she wears the same face he\she puts on in everyday life.

Since the Modern times, especially in the baroque era[26], the courts could be defined as «mask societies»[27] because faces were worn like masks. During that time, theatre

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[23] F. Frontisi-Ducroux, *Du masque au visage. Aspects de l'identité en Grèce ancienne*, with references to Cicero, *De Oratore*, III.221: "*Ut imago est animi vultus. sic indices oculi*". See also F. Dupont, *L'orateur sans visage. Essai sur l'acteur romain et son masque* (2000), in: "Revue des Études Anciennes", 2003, 1, vol. 105, pp. 305-306.

[24] J. Sawyer,*The Blackwell Companion to the Bible and Culture* (2006), ed. by J. Sawyer, ed. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, Oxford 2006, p. 338.

[25] H. Belting*, Face and mask: A Double History*, p. 8.

[26] J. Courtine and C. Haroche, *Histoire du visage: Exprimer et taire ses émotions.* (*XVIe- début XIXe siècle*) (1988), ed. Payot, Paris 2007, p. 237.

[27] M. Bettini, *The ears of Hermes: communication, images, and identity in the classical world*, p. 65.

and ordinary life blurred their bounds like in a game of mirrors. Thanks to this evolution, the thespian's face matured into the model of the social mask for the courts in civil societies and, consequently, the masks gradually disappeared from dramaturgy. We define this transition as the revolution of the «facial presence»[28]. In this way, natural expressions prevail on the fixed expressivity of the mask. There are different moments in which the transition from face to mask is evident: the first one occurs when the mask is just in a half that is, when it leaves a portion of the face visible. This demonstrates a smooth transition between the two. The second case, instead, appears when the ritual mask goes to amplify the wearer's exclusive role. In this case, the mask would inevitably represent a new entity that possessed the person with the mask. Here there are two examples of the use of the mask, the *excarnation* of the face: this implies the corporealness of the face. Instead, the second instance is called *incarnation*. It is about changing masks; thanks to face's expressivity it is possible to constantly adopt different gestures or diverse facial appearances.[29]

A significant passage of this transition could be identified in the Commedia dell'Arte, in which Harlequin, at the very beginning of the life of the character, wore a mask and subsequently the mask started to fall down. The result was that the character finally played without a mask on the face, it needed the whole body to perform his mask, intended here as its character. This was possible because the Harlequin is already more a stereotypical character than a real person.[30] This evolution led to a gradual transformation of the role, with the result that the mask is now played with the whole body, where even the voice participates to this alteration. This thesis was supported by Roger Caillois, who identified a gradual loss of the mask in human's activity, which permits a transformation of the self.[31] In other words, it can be said that the mask is supplanted by the real face or by the body activity, by which the mask is performed. From that time, the medium of transformation is embodied in the self being without the external support of an artificial object anymore.

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[28] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History*, p. 48.
[29] Ivi, p.19.
[30] H. Plessner, *Philosophical Anthropology Perspectives and Prospects*, p. 405.
[31] R. Caillois, *Les Jeux et les Hommes* (1958), tr. it. L. Guarino, II ed. Bompiani, Milan 2014, p. 205.

Most likely, however, our contemporary vision of the mask derives from the Enlightenment, during this period the mask was seen as a possibility to evade from a role instead of playing one. A mask was a way to achieve anonymity, useful for committing forbidden acts or transgressions. In this respect, masks fulfilled the desire to remain unrecognizable, and also, by wearing one of these surrogates, the social identity was temporarily suspended.[32]

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[32] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History*, pp. 62-63.

1.2 History of the face, from Icon to Portrait

In western societies, portraits find their origins in icons. It could be said that portraiture tradition derives from iconography praxis. Especially in these cultures, a strong axiom of similarity is evident in both icons and portraits. This axiom of similarity does not derive from every icon, but it has an exact source in a one Roman icon commonly accepted as the "image of all images". The picture in question is the so-called "Vera Icon", the first traces of itare dated around 1200. The name is a reference of "Vera Icona" translated as "true icon", it derives from the name of Saint Veronica.[33] (*Fig. 5*) It was considered the first authentic image of Christ; it derives from the legend that narrates the episode in which the face of Jesus was imprinted on Saint Veronica's garment which was handed by Christ along the way to Golgotha.

Figure 5 Hans Memling, *Saint Veronica and her Veil*, ca.1480, National Gallery of Art, Samuel H. Kress Collection, Washington.

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[33] S. Weigel, *Phantom Images: Face and Feeling in the Age of Brain Imaging*, ed. with J. Kohl, in "Kritische Berichte", 33-53, 2012, *(EN FACE: Seven Essays on the Human Face),* Marburg 2012. Here p. 33.

The impression (*impressio*) of the holy face, determines the blessed nature of the relic: it is a *trace* of the contact between the real existence and the divine entity of Christ. Hans Belting presents the image of Christ as a whole new way of representing a face, it is completely different from the image of death realized in primitive societies or the models known in Classical Antiquity. In this sense, the Vera Icon is completely separated from the customs of the funerary images, it is not a mere representation of a face (*imago*) detached by its body.[34]
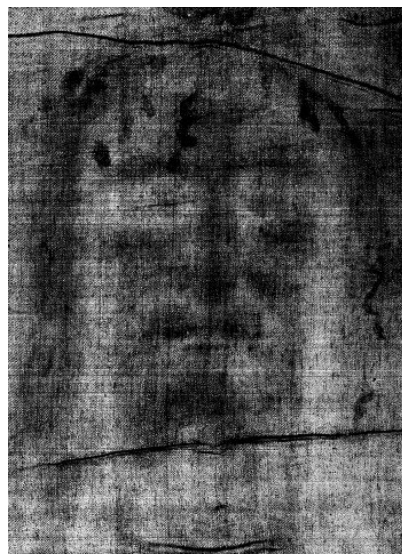

Figure 6 The Shroud of Turin, Royal Chapel, Turin Cathedral, photo by G. Enrie.

Again, this representation cannot be intended simply as a depiction of God, because it embodies the idea of a lifeless body, but, at the same time, its nature is supernatural and divine. The *sudarium* (*Fig. 6*) is the corporeal proof of God's presence. Furthermore, the *trace* from an ontological point of view consists in the materiality of the relic, basically it consists in an area of cloth from which the face remained impressed. Inevitably, from this "proof" it emerges a paradox: the trace and image

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[34] Ibidem.

merge their limits and notions, consequently they subvert each other. The answer for this question stays on the definition of something in between relic and icon. If the trace is considered as a relic, the Vera Icon should demonstrate the effective representation of the "Holy face". Indeed, if it is considered the concept the image represents, it instantaneously assumes the assessment of an icon. These two concepts may be reciprocal and mutual, in this regard, Belting and Marie-Madeleine Gauthier investigated the consequences of the «gradual assimilation of the Greek icon to the Latin reliquary»[35]. Marie-Madeleine Gauthier identified in 1204 the turning point in which the images gained a similar function of relics. Despite this change of vision, the Latins continued to improve their mimicry ability in the representation of images. So, the cult objects were included in the tradition of figurative representations.

Hans Belting's contributions on the topic are particularly interesting. He refers to the Vera Icon as a «trace of face»[35]. Belting's theory explicates the fundamental transition that occurs from portraiture to iconology: Christian iconography derives from the corporal remains of Jesus, from which will derive a flourishing tradition of paintings. For Belting, the peculiar dialectic of the image of Christ implies the presence of three different parameters: the *face*, the *trace* and the *grace*. This sort of trinity suggests that the fulcrum of the trace is the grace present in the image and consequently the divine trace is the appearance of the divine's face. Since when the concept of grace is presented, the images instantaneously are transformed into something different. The matter of similarity cannot fit anymore in to the discussion, because the image is derived *per gratiam* not *per naturam.*[36] This distinction legitimizes the Christianity to visualize the non-human entities as a legitimated gift of vision.[37]

From the perspective of art history, it would be futile to trace all the Veronica pictures that were produced along the history. The number of works of art that belong to this theme is almost infinite, because the Vera Icon can be reduced to the very origin of

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[35] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History*, p.226,

[36] E. H. Ernst, Kantorowicz, *Deus per Naturam, Deus per Gratiam. A Note on Mediaeval Political Theology* (1952), in "Havard Theological Review", vol. 45, Cambridge University, 2011, pp. 121- 137.

[37] H. Belting, *Reliquaires du XIIIe siècle entre le Proche Orient et l'occident Latin*, ed. it. by CLUEB, vol. 11, Bologna 1982, pp. 55-69.

the portrait as we know it today. This icon is present since the very first example of portrait paintings, it is also the case for the Flanders. But this is just one of many examples, because this clear reference is present in all the works of art from artists members of the current of the new realism. An example is the work by Hans Memling in which the face of Jesus is represented as a flowing head characterized by the usual long hair and bushy beard. The detachment of the head is immediately referable to the mask, this is due to the strong frontality of the face which suggests an idea of statical representation of the human being. In all of the examples identified as expressions of the vera icon, historians of art recognize the same frontal and flat expression of the face. The reason why this aspect is always present in pictures is because this method was used by artists to confer authenticity of the miraculous nature of the image of Christ. In other words, it is a way to prove veracity of the corporal presence of the son of God.[38]

This is the fundamental passage: the moment in which artists began to transform the icon into a portrait that represents the face of Christ in an iconic way starting from a legendary tale. The choice of representing Christ as a disembodied face perfectly conveys this idea of realistic representation of the divine. Therefore, things changed again, artists started to humanize the face more and more: it occurs as an ri-appropriation of the "blessed" model of representation. The first example of this tendency could be Jan Van Eyck's series of variations on the Vera Icon (*Fig. 7*). Artists like Van Eyck felt authorized to do this variation was probably derived by the fact that the Roman icon was now perceived as factually original and universally understood as such. From this conception the history of portraiture will change forever, there is the birth of what is defined as the modern portrait.

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[38] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History*, pp. 118-120.

Figure 7 Jan van Eyck, Portrait of a Christ Icon, 1438. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie.

From the perspective of the history of the art, researchers are more interested in the matter of depiction. The "Veronica" issue is analyzed primarily as a subject of depiction,[39] it is the representation of the picture of Christ. This orientation leads the experts to focus only on anaesthetic and theoretical aspect, which reduces the picture to the portrait genre, because it is easier to recognize. An example that must be considered to illustrate the western exemplification of this topic, is the famous self-portrait from Albrecht Dürer realized in 1500 (*Fig. 8*). The presence of the Vera Icon is evident; this is why the holy face of Christ is so clear in it. The innovative thing here is the way in which the artist appropriates the blessed image. The divine figure seems embodied in the physical features of the painter. Hans suggests thatthe geometrical perfection of the representation conveys the complete beauty of God into Dürer's

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[39] For the iconography of the in general see Albert Chastel, *La Veronique*, in: Revue de l'art, 1978, 40-41, pp. 71-82. See also H. Belting, *Bild und Kult. Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalterder Kunst* (1978), tr. by E. Jephcott, Chicago 1997, p. 430.

face: «Dürer painted an image of his face that he himself created after the image (*in imaginem*) of God".[40]

Figure 9 A. Dürer, *Self-Portrait, 1500,* Alte Pinakothek, Munich.

Figure 8 A. Dürer*, Self-Portrait,* 1498, National Museum El Prado, Madrid.

The gaze of the artist represented here is crucial, the frontality provoked by the Veronica model is not directed to the viewer, it is instead addressed to something beyond the observer, like the subject is watching himself reflected on a divine mirror.[41] In this self-portrait the gaze demonstrates the fundamental difference in the gaze, in fact, in the previous portrait realized in 1498 Dürer seems to look directly at us (*Fig. 9*). This differencein the look of the figure shows the absolute permanency of the character in the human's realm. Indeed, in the second example Dürer is still

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[40] H. Belting, *Das echte Bild. Bildfragen als Glaubensfragen* (2005), it. tr. A. Cinato, Bollati Boringhieri, Turin 2007, pp. 146-149.

[41] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History*, pp. 122-126.

looking at a mirror, but in this case, it is a physical one, not of a divine nature as the self-portrait of 1500.

In this famous self-portrait from Dürer the concept of *similarity* is essential, it is not limitedto a mere matter of physiognomy: the similarity of the long hair and the flowing beard are similar to the one's from the son of God. The key role of this likeness resides in something more substantial. In Fact, if we consider the first work from the same artist, he wears the same beard and hairstyles, but the correspondence seems to be broken. As Joseph Koerner pointed out, the real motivation behind this analogy is attributable to what we define as the"Veronica veil"[42] (Vera Icon again), it cannot be reduced to a physical appearance. In reality, the crucial difference resides in the gaze of the character and its consequent elevation to thesuper-natural image. The physical features of Jesus, reduced to a stereotypical image of him,are not sufficient to create an icon. Therefore, the first representation of the twenty-six-year old Dürer is simply labeled as a self-portrait while the latter masterpiece has a profound meaning.

In this second example, the importance of the Vera Icon is unforgettable. The analogy is strong and evident, this also permits the artist to convey a profound meaning to the entire work. When the resemblance with God is exemplified in such self-portraits, the mind instantly goes to the words of Cusanus. The philosopher identified the concept of *visus abstractus* to refer to the theological principle of the man created in God's image.[43] The strong point of this reasoning resides in the second passage of Genesis: if the man was created in God's resemblance, a man is endowed with similarity (*similitudinem*) with God. Consequently, Dürer did not represent himself as nothing more than a copy of God, but he ischaracterized by a more profound meaning: he elevated his image to a depiction of his creator. This is possible only through the transformation of the face into an icon, as portraiture did for Christ. Thanks to the brushstroke of the painter, the flow of time is suspended and so there is the threshold of death.

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[42] Ibidem.

[43] «*Ad imaginem Dei*»; Genesis l:27.

The history of portraiture did not start with the icon, but it represents the turning point for atransition to the individual depiction. The portraits painted before mostly represented faces in static profile views and the aim for this type of art was essentially to document the aristocratic genealogy of a rich family or a person. Clear examples of this style representation were the profiles engraved upon coins; the face could never gaze the viewer. Thanks to the presence of the icon and its depiction rules, an evolution in faciality took place: faces gained corporeality and the gaze was elevated at the same level ofthe viewer. For this reason, the icon is considered a fundamental passage for this transition and presence of a "real face" slowly became more important than similarity.[44]

Due to the fact that, in pictures, the existence of a face is more important than the mere memory of it, means that presence is now considered more important than similarity. Because the represented face is demanding its space in representation, the outcoming resultis an emancipation of the portrait from the picture plane. In this new facility, the gaze plays an important role, it is considered as the medium for the subject's depiction. Thanks to this powerful medium, the portrait finally loses its label of being considered as a mere objectand it acquires the presence of the real face.

A further step in this transition can be identified in Antonello da Messina's works. The Italian artist became acquainted with the long tradition of the Flemish artists and soon began to create portraits with this distinctive style (*Fig. 10*). With his art Messina went a step further, he was capable of exceeding the Netherlandish painters in the representation of faces. He introduced the lifelike facial expressions in his depicted subject and in doing so, he was able to free the image from the passive expression of the icon. In his paintings, the gaze acquired even more force, because the painter was capable of exploring the individuality of the sitter. Last but least, the gaze and the facial expressions enable a dialog with the viewer and the portrait. The legacy of the

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[44] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History,* p.120.

icon was finally shattered.

1.3 From faces to masks

The face is the most exposed part of the man's body; therefore, it can be easily masqueraded. The face is the place where all the central body senses are condensed in.[45] In fact, due to the multitude of ideas that flows on our animated surface, feelings and spontaneous expressions are difficult to control and even to decipher in other's *changes of face*. Face goes beyond the self, it can escape objectivity and triggers our logic.

Conversely to the mask, a person's face is per se a medium of communication, through expressions it conveys complex messages. Another intrinsic quality of the face is life, obviously. It is moved by a constant flux of expressions and consequently it shows an infinitevariety of changes. For that reason, the face was always considered as the most important part of the body, its substructure represented by the head, the skull, from which impressionshave their conception. What is interesting is the way in which the face could not be considered neither a thing, nor an object, nor an organ. Considering its complexity, humanity has adopted multiple approaches to investigate this compound entity: neurophysiology, but also, anthropology, philosophy of the body, psychology, cultural history, medicine, medieval history, and history of art. This interdisciplinary suggests the idea of a very vast and still open field.

It may be useful to take into consideration the etymology of the German word for *face.* In fact, *Gesicht* involves sight, and more precisely, it refers to the idea of being seen by a viewer. [46] This recalls the over-mentioned Greek concept of *prosōpon*. In this sense, the face is the entity perceived by the others. When we approach the other person, we want to see a face, we want to decipher the expressions and to understand his feelings. As a result, we base on an interpretation of people, we construct an image and it is the only thing we have, we accept it even if it is a deceptive image, the world sees us by this projected image: our face. Despite this action of the human being

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[45] J. Schmitt, *For a History of the Face: Physiognomy, Pathognomy,* p. 18.
[46] J. and W. Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (1854), ed. de. Deutscher Taschenbuch-Verlag (1984), vol. 4, see lemma "*Gesicht.*"

changing the way in which it is presented, it finally transforms the face into a mask. The trick with faces is that they suggest connectivity.The face possesses the most refined set of tools to structure and channel perception and transmit messages, particularly in regard to emotions. The face can be in the same way perceived and received. About this issue, Deleuze and Guattari delineated the face as the «primary childhood experience»[47], which sets a cultural code beyond organic reality: itbecomes a complex composition of perception and psychological mechanisms of projection.

This expressivity plays an important role in communication between people, the face can reveal the "inner self". But, at the same time, the opposite situation may occur, it may dissimulate this projection by offering a passive surface from which it is impossible to grasp the real intention of that person. This impassive face would be defined as "the face mask", because it is an impassive face that consists of a mask. As it says Belting, the mask-face is notalways related to this concept, it is also linked to the idea that a face can create its own maskwhen engaging with the other faces. Anyway, the mask is an artificial component that showsone single expression. In doing so, it saves the face from interpersonal interaction, in some way, it eludes the person from real participation in the social exchange with other faces.

It is important to emphasize that our face can convert into a mask at any time and in any situation. This talent is based on our ability to choose the appropriate expression for the moment, and we can even modify our voice to fit the context. Face and mask cannot be considered as interchangeable or antagonistic concepts for these reasons. In this sense, the matter of voice is fundamental: it may be influenced or determined by our physical bodies, which must be considered an intrinsic aspect of what we call a face. Face and mask are interchangeable in the same manner. The body, the face, and the mask are not mutually exclusive: they are all subject to unexplainable forces that respond to the rule of expression.

Portraiture offers a special sample to explore the correlation between face and mask:

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[47] G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis**,** 1980.

the portrait is the perfect surface that can elevate a real object to a symbolic image. The interaction consists in a matter of physicality, in the portrait the face is understood in its presence, whereas in different cultures the masks were invoked as a solution for the absence of that face. Especially during certain rites or ceremonies, masks were used to create a sort of presence.[48]

Portraiture, and then photography, are the true cornerstones of the transformation from face to mask. The history of the face as a mask began with portraiture, and it explains how the individual is seen in and by society. The contradiction between moral identity and social mask is brilliantly captured in portraits. The premise of this analogy is that portraiture congeals the face into a picture, and therefore into a mask. This transformation is achieved because the painted image freezes the expressions of a face in a static image, thus stopping the passage of time. The difficulty of presenting a live image on an inanimate surface, which is a question of interpretation for the painter, is the major obstacle of portraiture. In current European culture, portraits occupy the same space as masks did in ancient cultures.[49]

The asymmetry between mask and face are evident, faces in portraits are not allowed to get old. The best example of this idea is certainly the story of the most famous novel by Oscar Wilde: *The Picture of Dorian Grey*. The paradox is strong, but it perfectly conveys the idea: Gray sacrificed his image for immortality as part of a deal with the devil, and there will be serious consequences. The image becomes the central figure in the story, and it is through it that Dorian is able to confront the reality; as a result, the object takes on the connotation of an unworn mask. This is a story about a portrait that contains life, or more accurately, death. The mask tradition, on the other hand, clearly illustrates that they symbolize faces but are not faces. A face is born, grows old, and dies; nonetheless, the idea of this research is to capture the spark of life that lives in everyone's face.

From now, it is evident the difference between face and mask, we could simplify this

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[48]H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History,* p. 105.
[49] Ivi, p. 77.

concept by assuming: the first presupposes life while the second does not. But what does this condition indicate when the face is that of a deceased person? When a person is lifeless, his face unavoidably enters the region of immobility, and they are unable to turn back to face the person. Durs Grünbein used the terminology «*facies interrupta*» to describe a violent fracture in these terms.[50]. Despite the presence of death into a face, the latter maintain some peculiar characteristics, which fade only due to the passing of time.

 «*Characteristics much more sharply than on living or sleeping people. Whatever made them falter in their lives is forever fixed in death*».[51]

J. C. Lavater is referring to physiognomy in these terms. He refers to a certain physiognomy that has been frozen by time, allowing the actual face of man to be revealed, much like a mirror of eternity. Even if it is turned into its representation, the phenomena of the face becoming an image of a death mask is possible in retrospect. Finally, people turn to the depiction of a dead face to fill the void left by absence. The death mask allows for a nostalgic cult of the deceased, which is made possible by the totemic object, which allows for a timeless portrayal of that face. The mask has long been associated with the face; it was used not only to reproduce the features of a face, but also to alter its interpretations. Death masks were not merely items meant to be plain replicas of a deceased person's face; they were also representations of a more profound concept.

The self-portrait by Caravaggio is an excellent illustration of the disembodiment of the face from a dead corpse (*Fig. 10*). It is an interesting case, probably without any precedents in art history: perhaps it is the first time that a painter did a self-portrait representing himself as dead.

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[50] Ibidem.

[51] J. K. Lavater, *Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und* Menschenliebe (1775-1778), tr. it. by M. Di Pasquale, Theoria, Rome 1989.

Figure 10 Caravaggio, detail of the Self-Portrait as the *Head of Goliath in David,* c. 1607. Galleria Borghese, Rome*.*

The decapitation is here a metaphor for painting through which the artist realizes a mirror image of the represented person. The painted image operates a transformation: it tends to turn faces into masks.[52]

Another significant work of art that demonstrates this tendency in transforming face into mask is offered by the death mask of Lorenzo de' Medici who died in 1492. This piece of art served as a model for several succeeding casts (*Fig. 11*). Portraiture was clearly a privilege reserved for famed and important persons, and it sent a clear message that confides in saving the person's face from the transience of life. This is a noteworthy example because the portrayal does not depict the Florentine statesman as a living person, but rather after his death. This isn't just a picture of a famous person; it has a deeper meaning. The face, realized in gypsum, is contextualized by an inscription which grieves the «cruel death» (*morte crudele*) as written in these lines attributed to Poliziano:

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[52] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History*, pp.142-143.

«morte crudele che/

n questo chorpo venne/

che dopo morte el mondo andò sozopramentre chei vise/

tutto in pace 'l tenne».[53]

"Sozopra" (upside down) stands for the situation in which the author was writing: the political environment was no longer tranquil after Lorenzo's death. He ensured peace in the Florentine state during his lifetime. As a result, this masterwork has a political connotation, which explains why the artist chose to depict Lorenzo's dead face rather than a living pose as was customary.
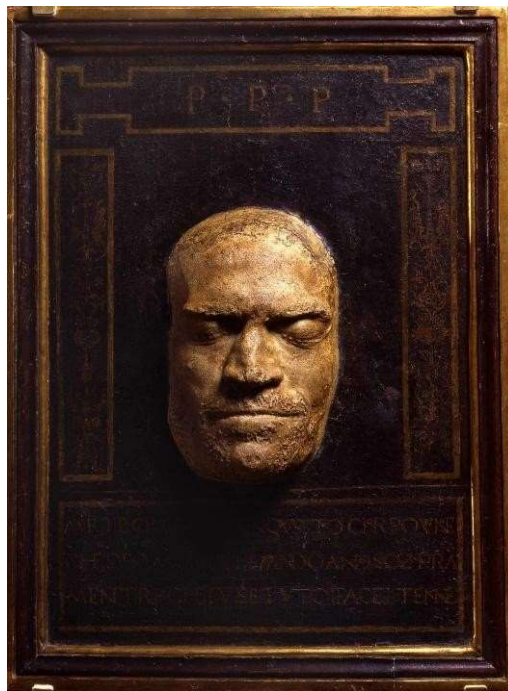

Figure 11 Lorenzo De' Medici's face, O. Benintendi and G.A. Sogliani, 1492, Florence, Pitti Palace, Silver Museum.

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[53] A. Poliziano (?), *In morte al Magnifico Lorenzo de' Medici* (In commemoration of Lorenzo De' Medici), c. 1942.

Obtaining a cast from the face is another technique to turn it into an object. Casts of faces are a subcategory of portraiture in this regard. These artifacts are modeled after sculptures, and plaster molds are used to recreate the real face of a person. It is a sort of replica, which ensures authenticity by maintaining the same proportions as the real body and, as a result, maintaining physical touch. Those particular death masks must be regarded as *mementos*, as the artist's goal is to immortalize a face. The mask crystallizes the natural face of a living person and can also transmit the social role that distinguished the deceased individual.

From the moment in which the camera was invented, artists and portrait painters demonstrated their perplexity about this new tool of representation. The polaroid brought in itself an apparent solution to the problem of similarity in representations. The paradox of the idea that a live subject might perfectly fit in a plane surface is the source of the problematic nature of photography.[54] What appeared as an insurmountable problem to painters, finally seemed to have found a solution with the camera: the expressions, the exact features of a person can now be immortalized. Since that moment, it seems that an instance can be frozen forever. In any case, a dilemma arises sooner or later, and artists, including photographers, acknowledge the problematic character of this technology: photos can only generate masks.[55] Even if the camera accurately reproduces what we see in real life, the method by which the camera creates the image is essentially symbolic, and the final image is created from shadows. Photographs, despite their alienating effect, belong to a different era since they always reflect something that no longer exists. A photograph strives to capture ephemeral existence, but it will always be locked in the moment it was shot. Because death masks reflect an unrepeatable moment, it is inevitable that we will come across them in a photographic archive. The case of the so-called *Innocue de la Seine*, a woman found dead who became legendary until our time, is an example of the death mask.

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[54] E. H. Gombrich, J. Hochberg And M. Black, *Art, Perception, and Reality*, (1972), tr. it. by L. Fontana, Einaudi, 1978, p. 22.

[55] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History*, p. 158.

The Unknown Woman of the Seine[56] is a clear example of a death mask, it may be positioned halfway between death photography, mask and casts. (*Fig. 12*) Someone stole her head from the Paris mortuary after she died, and many pictures and plaster molds of her face were created and sold. This move turned the dead woman's physique into an image: despite her lack of a name, she became a timeless beauty. In the poem "Face of a Young Drowned Woman", Rainer Maria Rilke give his opinion about the theft of the woman's head and the subsequently creation of the cast in this way: it had been taken «because it was beautiful, because it smiled so deceptively, as though it knew»,[57]

Figure 12 L'Inconnue de la Seine, photography of a cast, c. 1900.

[56] Barton J. D., '*L'Inconnue de la Seine' and Nabokov's Naiads,* in "Comparative Literature", 44, 225-248, University of Oregon, Oregon 1992 (https://www.jstor.org/stable/1770855?seq=1)
[57] R. M. Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (1910), tr. en. S. Mitchell, Random House, New York 1983, p. 94.

«*The activity of the artists involved that they frozed the face of the woman into photographs and casts like a rigid mask, reducing the figure to a formal frontality, through which they stepout of time*»[58].

More recently, especially after the period consequent the World Wars there was a moment in which the individual and collective typologies of representations were questioned. With the rise of National Socialism, there was the birth of a narration by pictures, by portraits and photographs of the social types. This demonstrates that the desire for individual portraiture began with the upper class and evolved into a new path as a result of the abolition of these old conventions. This means that the mask was reintroduced into European society in a new form: pictures, casts, and portraits.

More recently, after the dreadful episode of World War I, a new cult of death masks emerged. This catastrophe left behind a trail of deaths, innumerable anonymous dead, and emerged the necessity of identifying the ideal of the lost men. The necessity of contemplating the ideal dead was a necessity for people. In modern societies this new cult of the death mask arose, in fact: the nostalgia of unknown deceased people enjoyed a great popularity in picture books. Products of this tendency were casts of masks, which were made of the real face of a dead person by contact with the body: this had the effect of copies of an original. During the casting of the mask, the source face had receded into its final image, which had the value of an artifact from a vanished age.

In order to realize death masks, a phase of idealization of the facies necessary and the flourishing tendency of that period denotes a common cult: photography books were filled with faces. Consequently, all of these faces by being captured into photographs show their rigidity as being transformed into objects. But masks also confer objectivity, in fact Axel Eggebrecht was able to individuate the «proletarian face»[59] from Erich Retzlaff photographs. This idea is even more evident in the project from August Sander, who rejected the close-up photography focused only on the faces. He rather preferred a larger cut of the photograph in order to better express the

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[58] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History,* p. 84.
[59] Ivi, p. 82.

complexity of the portrayed character. In his work *Face of our Time*[60], he concentrated people in social types, this allowed him to draw the attention not on the individual character, but on the collective role he\she played in the society. (*Fig. 13 and 14*)

Figure 13 A. Sander*, Handlanger (Bricklayer / Handyman)* 1928. August Sander Archiv, Köln.

Figure 14 A. Sander*, Pastry Cook (Konditor),* 1928. August Sander Archiv Köln/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

Erna Lendvai-Dircksen, on the other hand, was more interested in the faces of ordinary people than Sander's "social types." She joined the Nazi party, and the state commissioned her a massive photographic documentation project. Faces of workers and rural residents who contributed to the state's infrastructure development were

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[60] Original title "*Antlitz der Zeit*" published in 1929 by A. Sander.

used to create this project. Her conviction was that the landscape was inevitably reflected on people's faces, in fact, she used the expression «*landscape of the face*».[61]

To clarify, not only can a mask depict a face, but the face itself can likewise transform into a mask. This is the unavoidable parallel that exists between the two. Clearly, the cult of the face influenced the trend of turning the face into symbols, or masks, as seen by pictures and casts. Furthermore, the closer the camera is to the face, the more the sense of wearing a mask is created, because the face is viewed as a separate form from the body to which it belongs. As a result, a new trend emerged: photography portraits were no longer just for the privileged; regular people desired a timeless picture of themselves as well.

Finally, due of the advent of journalism, contemporary society began to challenge the portrait, and people began to expect more authenticity from human representations. The ability to bear witness to events, which is based on the veracity of reporters and journalists, appears to be able to overcome the mask's problematic nature. However, because the mask cannot be distinguished from the face, this contemporary phenomenon can be reduced to the notion that we are living in a portraiture crisis.

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[61] F. Blask and T. Friedrich, *Menschenbild und Volksgesicht: Positionen zur Porträtfotografie* (2005), ed. Aufl, Münster 2005.

Chapter 2: The crisis of the face
2.1 Mimicry and Resemblance

Disguise is not an incredibly useful expedient invented by humans, on the contrary, it is a solution that comes from the natural world. Camouflage is widely used in all habitats, and it may be found in a wide range of plant and animal species. Many interesting examples may be given, but the main goal of this chapter is to investigate why plants, animals, and people have such different attitudes about camouflage. Anthropomorphism must be avoided from the discussion during this examination, particularly when it comes to the interaction between the natural world and disguise. In the work from Caillois, the author illustrates the principal feature of mimicry: through this technique living creatures aim to resemble inorganic materials. Caillois warns the reader about the risks of anthropomorphism in the first chapter of his work: the reconstruction of a natural phenomenon using the logic of human behaviour, which inevitably leads to erroneous conclusions. Because this propensity entails projecting human behaviours, desires, failures, and ambitions onto animals and plants, it is unavoidably misleading. Anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism, on the other hand, assert that humanity is excluded from the investigation. In doing so, considering these two attitudes, humans are exempted from the universe and its legislation.

The first erroneous assumption, according to Caillois, is to think of mimicry as a utilitarian strategy, which suggests that it is motivated by the species' continued existence. According to this belief, humans are the only privileged creatures capable of operating for pure pleasure, enjoyment, or the creation of artistic works. In other words, men are the only ones who can use their actions to transcend the utilitarian mindset. On the contrary, the author claims that animals' mimetic actions are similar to humans' attention to arts and enjoyment. Artworks are created by animals in the same manner that paintings and artifacts are created by humans.[1] Despite this similarity, there is a

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[1] R. Caillois, *Méduse et Cie* (1960), ed. tr. it. G. Leghissa, Cortina, Milan 1998, pp. XI-XIII.

significant distinction to be demonstrated: butterflies do not make the patterns on their wings on their own; they produce the drawing as a result of the inevitable evolution flux. Of course, the greatest source of human empowerment is free will, which might be taken as the true definition of humanity in the end.

In addition, mimicry can be explored as a point of contact between species, including our own, and it does not have to be viewed as a barrier between people and animals. In such case, the insect's mask must be imagined as a heavy piece of cartilage carried on his back for camouflage purposes.[2] The insect in this circumstance does not wear a mask; rather, it owns one. Because the animal's constructed apparatus serves no functional purpose, these aimless impulses are similar to the processes that lead civilizations to develop false faces, masks, dramas, and stories. In this respect, these productions are addressed to an audience that is fully aware of the fake nature of the character on the set, but despite that they are entertained or moved by what they are seeing.

 Caillois establishes three different typologies of dissimulation: the disguise (*travesti*), mimicry (*mimétisme*) and intimidation (*intimidation*). At the basis of mimicry, there is a communication between two individuals: the one which assumes the camouflage techniques, which is the prey, and the predator, that is the animal that got confused by this signal. There are two types of mimicry: the *cryptic* and the *aposematic*. The cryptic tendency, in order to escape from menacing eyes, is about assuming shapes and colours of the natural background, it is also known as Batesian mimicry. This strategy could be adopted by both sides of the hierarchical scale: predators can hide from their targets and vice versa. Indeed, the Mullerian mimicry, which is defined *aposematic*, occurs when the toxicity of an animal or a plant is flagged by flashy colours or shapes. In this case the warning is followed by an effective harmfulness, which is the secretion of toxic substances or a horrible taste.

Complementary to this theoretical clarification, the identification of different categories of mimicry proposed by Alfred Giard is particularly useful. The biologist differentiates camouflage into different categories: the *offensive mimicry*, through which the animal

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[2] Ivi, pp. 111-114.

aims to surprise its prey, the *defense mimicry* designed to guarantee an escape from possible predators by intimidation (mimicry of terrification) or by not being seen (mimicry of dissimulation). Then, there are two distinct types of mimicry which are: the direct and the indirect mimicry. The first of the two strategies consists in assuming an external disguise and the second one is about imitating a more dangerous species than the one the animal belongs to.[3]

Camouflage in animals is an outstanding celebration of colours and forms. The little crab *Libinia dubia,* also known as the decorator crab, is famous for its creations: in order to escape the capture by predators, the animal realizes an incredible armour made of algae found on the seafloor. The reference with the camouflaged soldiers on the battlefield is remarkable. (*Fig. 15 and 16*)

Figure 15 Specimen of *Libinia Dubia* disguising from marine predators.

Figure 16 Example of disguised soldier for military purposes.

These are examples of disguise, because both are forced to immobility and inaction.[4] The gestaltic relationship between the figure and the natural surroundings is the focus of the mimetic action.[5] Because visual evanescence is the key to avoid predators, this

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[3] A. Giard, *Sur le mimétisme et la ressemblance protectrice* (1872), II ed. (1972), in "Arch. de Zool. exp. et gén. and Bulletin Scientifique, de la France et de la Belgique", voll. XX, 1988.

[4] R. Caillois, *Méduse et* Cie, p. 59.

[5] A. Portmann, *Tarnung im Tierreich*, ed. Springer Verlag, Berlin 1956, pp. 7 -8.

behaviour leads to invisibility, the person seems to have disappeared thanks to the camouflage activity.

The term camouflage was coined in the sixteenth century to describe the act of blowing smoke in the face of an enemy.[6] The adversary becomes confused and obfuscated as a result of this move. Similarly, warriors and animals benefit from their camouflage operations because they force enemies to become confused. A master in camouflage is the *Phyllopteryx taeniolatus,* mostly known as *common seadragon* or *weedy seadragon*, it appears as a jumble of twigs and seaweeds. (*Fig. 17*) This deception has a double benefit: the little shrimps, plankton and tiny crustaceans get fascinated by this strange presence and they go near to the animal to better understand what it is, inevitably they are suckered by the hidden pipe mouth of the dragon. At the same time, big creatures such as sharks are not intrigued in this unusual shape and leave the animal undisturbed.

Figure 17 Adult specimen of *Phyllopteryx taeniolatus*.

Plants present other fascinating examples of deception; in some cases, they use imitation solutions to avoid being detected by predators. *Lithops* have the unique ability to blend in with their surroundings, they adopt the appearance of the structure they grow over. *Lithops* may change their appearance, colour, and even texture to blend in

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[6] H. R. Shell, *Ni vu Ni Connu: Le camouflage au regard de l'objectif*, tr. fr. By J.-F. Caro, ed. Zones Sensibles, Peris 2014. *See also* C. Casarin and D. Fornari, *Strategie del camuflage*, ed. by P. Fabbri, ed. Et al., Milan 2010, pp. 8-20.

with their inorganic surroundings. As a result, they appear to merge in with the rest of the inedible support.[7]

An interesting contribution to the issue was given by Handerson Thayer. The painter is sometimes called the «father of camouflage»[8], even though he did not achieve any scientific discovery on the topic, he spent a lot of his lifetime studying coloration in the animal kingdom. Despite that, his theories on disruptive patterning are widely accepted.[9] Notwithstanding his positive contributions, unfortunately he became obsessed with the idea that all animals are camouflaged. Anyway, he was interested in the mimic abilities of the natural world because his idea was that «nature has realized pieces of art upon the body of animals, and only an artist can read it».[10]

For Abbott Thayer camouflage is the art of disappearance, his idea was that the natural invisibility, and so the *transparency*, was at the very basis of every camouflage technique. The 4th November of 1896 he intervened during the annual congress of the *Association of American Ornithologists* at Harvard University. In this event he gave the so-called speech «The Law which underlies protective coloration»[11] in which he discussed the *omocromy[12]* in animals. Thayer's argument was based on the idea that nature follows the same rules that humans do when creating works of art. The animals wear natural masks, and their mission is to disrupt their shape by exhibiting disruptive qualities. In animal camouflage, Thayer proposed two different modalities: disruptive figures and counter-shadowing strategies. About the first example, he proposed the painting *Copperhead snake on dead leaves* (*Fig. 18*), the represented animal is

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[7] S. Barrett, *Le mimétisme chez les plantes* (1987), in "Pour la Science", 26, 2000, pp. 94-100.

[8] J. Bouvet, *La stratégie du caméléon: de la simulation dans le monde vivant* (2000), tr. it. by M. Gregorio, Cortina, Milan 2001, pp. 36- 41.

[9] This strategy is particularly common in birds and aquatic creatures, the mackerel is one of those. This animal is characterized by double shades of the back and of the abdominal part: the first is darker while the latter is almost white. This is due to a tactic that permits the mimicry with the black bottom sea and the lighter surface of the water. *See* R. Caillois, *Méduse et Cie.*

[10] S. J. Gould, *Bully for brontosaurus. Reflections in natural history* (1991), tr. it. by L. Sosio, II ed. (1992), Feltrinelli, Milan 1992, p.225.

[11] A. H. Thayer and G. H. Thayer, *Concealing Coloration in the Animal* Kingdom (1909), Andesite Press, New York 2015. *See also* R. R. Behrens, *The Theories of Abbott H. Thayer: Father of Camouflage*, in "Leonardo", vol. XXI, 3, 1988.

[12] *Omocromy* is the camouflage by colours, it is frequent in aquatic animals, but is also the technique adopted by chameleon.

characterized by an ornamental decoration which blurs its shape. The resulting effect is traceable to the Gestaltic perception of the image: it responds to the law of continuity[13] of the figure.
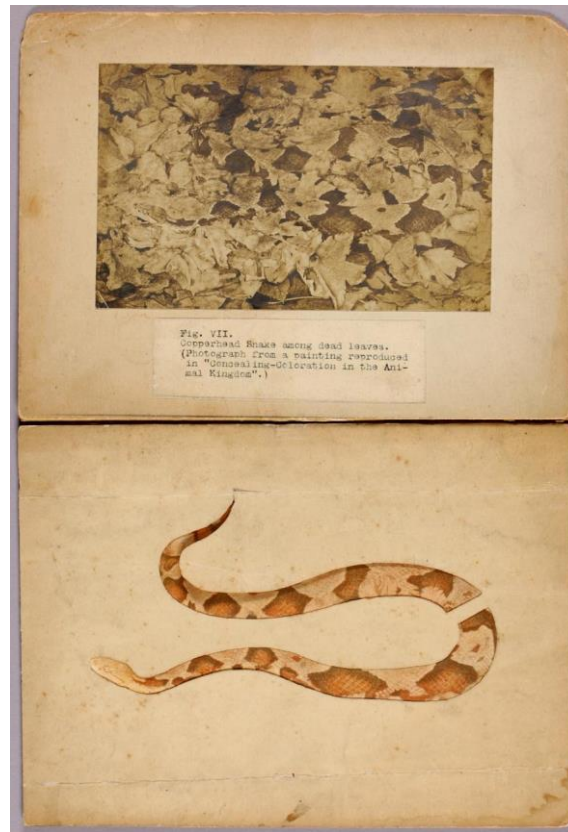

Figure 18 Fig. VII Copperhead Snake Among Dead Leaves, Study Folder for the Book Concealing Coloration In The Animal Kingdom By Abbott Handerson Thayer, ca. 1090-1915.

Through this high-difference camouflage or discontinuous patterns[14], the object's outlines are broken up, as in the case of tigers and zebras (*Fig. 19*). Abbott Thayer was one of the first to study animal mimetic patterns, and his work earned him a position counselling the army during the Spanish-American War in 1989. He was also involved in World War I, and during this time he imagined a warship with dazzle camouflage (*Fig. 20*), which was later realized by British artist Norman Wilkinson. This concept is derived directly from Thayer's theory of disruptive patterns examined on animals; the reference

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[13] M. Wertheimer, *Untersuchungen zur Lehre von der Gestalt II*, in "Psychologische Forschung", 301-350, 1923, tr. en. by W. Ellis, ed. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London 1938, here pp 71-88.
[14] R. Caillois, *Méduse et* Cie, pp. 78-81.

is remarkable because at the time, he referred to these decorations as "razzle dazzle". This illusion is achieved through the use of a colour exchange between the shaded and brighter regions of the zebra's mantle.

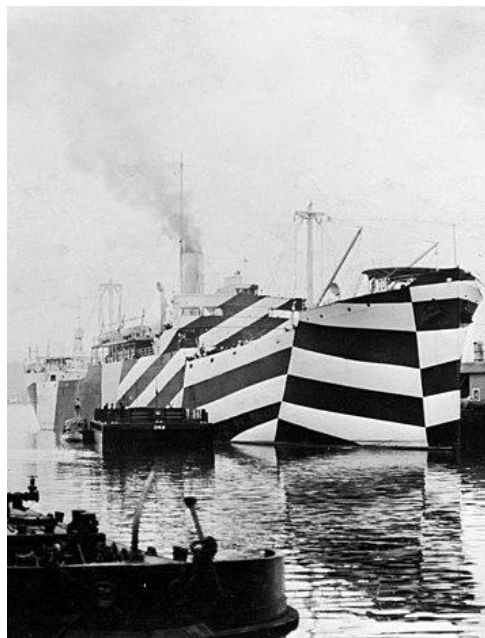*Figure 19* Dazzle razzle effect identified by Thayer on zebras.

Figure 20 An example of dazzle camouflage, SS West Mahomet in dazzle camouflage, 1918.

The last-mentioned inquiry is about the direct and indirect mimicry. When an inoffensive species is protected by likeness to a more dangerous one, we are referring to the Bates' mimicry. This phenomenon occurs with nettle and *Lamium album*, commonly known as the white nettle[15], the first specimen is a famous stinging plant while the second is innocuous. As a result, the *Lamium* is protected by the similarity with its more unpleasant cousin. The same occurs between the Monarch and the Viceroy butterflies (*Fig. 21*). Concerning this topic, the Batesian mimicry is a parasitic relationship between an inedible and an edible species.[16] The first is the model and it is threatened by the second: its imitator. This is a parasitic relationship because the impostor could decrease the reliability of the model and so its survival. In fact, «the more the imitator is common, the more the strategy of the original species becomes ineffective».[17] This implies a proper conflict of interests between mimes and their models.[18] Typical examples of this phenomenon are provided by vespids which are the model for other innocuous species like the *Chrysotoxum festivum* or the *Aegeria apiformis*[19] (*Fig. 22*). The reproduction of the same pattern of the wasps is an *apo-sematic* similarity and the individuals of the mimic species constantly look for this achievement, it depends on evolution.[20] It means that Batesian mimicry is based on a continuous change day by day.

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[15] "*Lamium album*" from USDA, Agricultural Research Service, National Plant Germplasm System. 2022. Germplasm Resources Information Network (GRIN Taxonomy). National Germplasm Resources Laboratory, Beltsville, Maryland (https://npgsweb.ars-grin.gov/gringlobal/taxon/taxonomydetail?id=314991).

[16] H. W. Bates, C*ontributions to an Insect Fauna of the Amazon Valley: Lepidoptera: Heliconidae* (1862), ed. en. Franklin Classic Trade Press, Minneapolis 2018, pp. 495–556.

[17] R.G Lea. And J.R.G Turner, *Experiments on mimicry II: The effect of a Batesian mimic on its model*, in "Behaviour" 38, 131–151, 1972.

[18] L.P. Brower and J. V. Z. Brower, 1972 *Parallelism, convergence, divergence, and the new concept of advertence in the evolution of mimicry*, in "Ecological essays in honour of G. Evelyn Hutchinson", vol. 44, pp. 59–67, 1972.

[19] P. Pesson, *Le monde des insects*, ed. it. S.A.I.E., Turin 1958, p. 51.

[20] A. W. F. Edwards, The Genetical theory of natural selection (1930), in "Genetics", vol. 154, 1419-1426, 2000 (https://doi.org/10.1093/genetics/154.4.1419). *See also* J.R.G. Turner, *The evolutionary dynamics of Batesian and Müllerian mimicry: similarities and differences*, in "Ecological Entomology", 81-95, 1987 (https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2311.1987.tb00987.x)

Figure 21 On the left a picture of a specimen of the Monarch butterfly, toxic species which serve as a model for the *Viceroy* butterfly. This second example is the edible mime of the Monarch, it is the image on the right.

Figure 22 In the first picture there is represented a common wasp *(Vespula maculiformis)*, while in the second example there is a specimen of a hoverfly *(Chrysotoxum festivum),* which is an innocuous insect.

To further emphasize the point, nature is actually capable of much more than mere copying between individuals of different species. In reality, several animal specimens that use defensive mimicry methods can also mirror their models' attitudes. This method leads to a more comprehensive and functional mimicry; success is nearly guaranteed by adopting the imitated individual's precise behaviour.[21] An example of this phenomenon is performed by the female specimens of the *Papilio dardanus* which can imitate a wide

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[21] R. Caillois, *Méduse et Cie*, pp. 84-92.

variety of other species, such as the *Nymphalidae Danainae* or the *Heliconiinae*. This phenomenon was discovered by Roland Trimen in 1869.[22] Another clear demonstration mimicry, but more oriented to be confused with vegetal surroundings, is represented by the *Meticulodes spongiata* butterflies. This insect can roll up its wings and is capable of giving the impression of being a wrapped leaf. [23] (*Fig. 23*)

Figure 23 An example of *Meticulodes spongiata*.

In this last example of the *Meticulodes spongiata*, the animal aspires to be confused with the natural scenery by which is surrounded. In this example of extreme mimicry, the animal's camouflage activity involves the full body of the animal, as well as its posture and attitude. This is because the subject is engaged in the natural surroundings and thus avoids the observer's focus, it is no longer a case of disguise.[24]

On the other hand, when a species tries the camouflage in the opposite way: by imitating a more appealing individual, this effect is known as *pseudo-epi-sematic.*[25] The animal's approach is mistaken for the source of food by another specimen and, as a result, it tries to substitute to it. Finally, the *epi-gamic* method is a type of camouflage in which the colors of the livery change during the mating phase. In this occasion, the animal changes

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[22] R. Trimen, *On some remarkable mimetic analogies among African butterflies*, in "Transactions of the Linnean Society of London", vol. 26, pp. 497–522, 1869.
[23] R. Caillois, *Méduse et Cie*, pp. 84-92.
[24] Ivi, pp. 63-75.
[25] Ibidem.

its appearance to attract the attention of the potential partner. This ostentation cannot be classified as a mimicking method in the strict sense because it is just a temporary phenomenon.[26]

Contrary, a typology of temporary, or better seasonal, true mimicry is identified by Caillois in the *Nemoria Arizonaria.* In this case the *Nemoria Arizonaria* is a butterfly that lives in the United States of America. This small butterfly's mimicking methods change with the seasons. Caterpillars are born in the winter and have a color that resembles the catkins that are abundant at that time of year on the trees. Rather, in the summer, the new-borns are the same color as the plant's green leaves, which are characteristic of the plant on hot days.

Camouflage, on the other hand, necessitates a certain amount of inventiveness. Imitator species must improve their inertia: movements must be restricted to a bare minimum in order to better achieve the goal.[27] In this instance Bate's concept of "transparency" is more clearly conveyed. In fact, the predator has the impression of being in front of an empty space. That is the perfectly showed in the painting *Peacock in the Woods* (1907) realized by Abbott Thayer. (*Fig. 24*)

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[26] Ibidem.
[27] Ivi, p. 59.

Figure 24 Peacock in the Woods, Abbott Handerson Thayer, 1907, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C., U.S.

The concept of imitation, camouflage, and disguise all depend upon the idea of resemblance. The term resemblance is a problematic one, because apart from always being in nature, it also refers to the history of portraiture and it is difficult to define. Resemblance can be defined as a set of elements combined in a way that gives the proper idea of an object or of a person.[28]

«*Resemblance is therefore obtained by the sum of a certain number of small details, each of which has nothing exceptional about it and can be found isolated in neighbouring species, but whose combination produces an extraordinary imitation of a dry leaf, more or less successful depending on individuals, which quite notably differ among themselves*» [29]

Again, the idea of "*air*", or general expression, in the natural world has slightly different connotations, but what is important is the effort that does the creature in order to

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[28] R. Caillois and J. Shepley, *Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia*, in "The MIT Press", 16-32, 1984 (https://www.jstor.org/stable/778354)
[29] L. Cuénot, *La Genèse des Espèces Animales*, ed. F. Alcan, Paris 1911, pp. 522-523.

represent the totality of something or someone else.[30]

The similarity of an individual is particularly interesting in regard to the mask issue. Discovering a double of the self, it instantly reminds the idea of the doppelgänger, which is a duplicate of the «bodily appearance».[31] This concept is perfectly expressed in Plautus' *Amphitruo*, the Latin author describes the moment in which Sosia bumps into his double. The double was a deception made by Mercury, who stole Sosia's figure and identity. In this passage the thoughts of the Roman are revelatory:

«*Certe edepol, cum illum contemplo et formam cognosco meam, quem ad modum ego sum—saepe in speculum inspexi—nimis similest mei*».[32] (The reality appears as he [Mercury] stole my form, the way I am. It was like I had been looking in the mirror, he is entirely similar to me.)[33]

As a result, the reflection of Sosia's identity in the physical world creates a particular fictitious impression. The apparent mimesis of the self in a double that is a pure image: an *imago.*[34]

When distinct imitator species individuate the same model for their mimetic techniques, an interesting feature about Batesian mimicry emerges. In fact, radically distinct evolutionary processes can have the same result. To put it another way, it is similar to what happens in human society: it is something along the lines of a trend or style. This phenomenon has some clear links to people's behaviour, and it may be classified as a fashion trend. In any case, in this instance, we are discussing about a slower fashion[35]: variations occur throughout millennia, not simply with seasons, as it is in our circumstance.[36] Humanity, according to Caillois' work, must be considered on the same level as the rest of the planet's species. When it comes to camouflage, humans and animals both play the same game, but they have different tools at their disposal. In

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[30] Something stay for natural background, while someone is for another species, as in the case for aposematic strategies.

[31] M. Bettini, *The ears of Hermes: communication, images, and identity in the classical world*, pp. 152-153.

[32] 149. Plaut. Am. 441f. T. M. Plauto, *Amphitryon*, tr. it. by M. Scàndola, VII ed. Rizzoli, Milan 2002.

[33] M. Bettini, *The ears of Hermes: communication, images, and identity in the classical world*, pp. 166- 167.

[34] Ibidem.

[35] H. Eltringham, *African Mimetic Butterflies,* Oxford Press, Oxford 1910.

[36] R. Caillois, *Méduse et Cie*, pp. 72-73.

this regard, humans start off at a disadvantage, but evolution has shown a remarkable transformation of the situation. This topic will be the focus of the discussion in the following chapter: how our species' use of mimicry, camouflage, and disguise strategies. Humans have always used these methods to better fit into society, and they evolve imitation tactics on a regular basis.

2.2 The Mask as a medium of metamorphosis

In human behaviour, the concept of imitation is connected to the notion of facial expression. Johann Engel examined this topic in his book *Ideas on the Mimic Art*, published in 1785, in which he linked mimicry to the sphere of theatre. He proved the link between drama and facial emotions in this study. Furthermore, the phrase used by Engel in the French version was rendered as *geste* and *action*, conveying the impression that imitation is a physical activity that may be performed with bodily movements.

Invisibility fascinates humans, just as it fascinates animals. In times of conflict, camouflage is especially useful; during battles, men seek survival through the usage of camouflage patterns. They have also developed sophisticated technology and novel mimicking techniques that are much more effective than those used by animals. The same distracting ornaments that Thayer found on the *copper-snake head* are useful for disrupting the subject's shape. Armies have used these designs to disguise soldiers and equipment on the battlefield, as we have seen. As a result, the snake and the guy blend perfectly with the foliage. (*Fig. 25*)

Figure 25 A photo of a camouflaged soldier in the woods.

In human activities, camouflage, imitation, and disguise all have distinct meanings and

techniques of application. Men frequently employ these tactics to conceal themselves from others or to be mistaken for someone else: for example, disguise is employed to imitate someone else's look or to conceal anything or someone from their persecutors. These behaviours, like those of animals and plants, can be both for defensive and threatening purposes.[37]

There are various myths about metamorphosis, and most of them revolve around the idea of invisibility hats and cloaks (*mimicry*), or when a character takes on the physical traits of another person or transforms into an item (*camouflage*). There are also several cases of disguise (*travesti*). These are all dimensions of *mimétisme*, and each of them has a corresponding feature in human behavior.[38] These strategies are based on animal behavior; as a result, when these techniques are used, a person is quickly turned into a non-human entity.

Folk tales about transformation and masquerades tell stories about invisibility rather than just mimicking. Fairy characters use invisibility in a variety of ways, from the terrifying appearance of a monster creature to the superstition of the evil-eye.[39] The panic provoked by these magical figures is related to the fear for the jinx (*malocchio*), for Calliois this terror is the same fear experienced by animals when they see the ocellus. It is not a surprise that the Amazonian Caligo butterfly (*Fig. 26*) was identified with special powers in ancient societies because of its circular ornaments on the wings. These animals were raised to the status of spiritual creatures in these communities. In recent years, the tribes have admitted that these butterflies have once again been converted into a symbol, this time as a metaphor for force. Indeed, western men have encapsulated this complex issue of the evil eye in the mythological figure of Medusa, who can immobilize, paralyze, and even kill people with her glance.[40]

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[37] R. Caillois, *Méduse et Cie*, pp. 58-59.
[38] Ivi, pp. 18-19.
[39] Ivi, pp. 87-88.
[40] Ivi, pp. 18-19.

Figure 26 An example of the Caligo Prometheus.

Caillois in his book *The mask of Medusa*[41] connects the ocellus with the human's myths of terrible creatures, he analysed the frequency in which these symbols appear in many different cultures. The author associates these circular features with the mythological figure of Medusa: the monster's eyes can impact in the same way that the eyespots do. When Perseus beat Medusa, he used a mirror to resist the creature's terrifying gaze; he also saved the creature's head for a second time: the magical head had to be used later as a devastating weapon. This story is reminiscent of initiation ceremonies, in which the initiate is banned to wear a disguise during the first phase of the procedure. After the young adept has overcome the task, the girl or the boy is finally transformed into an adult, with the ability to wear the mask. In this regard, the similarity between animal and human is the key: the first acts through evolution to get the mask depicted on the body; the second, on the other hand, generates the mask artificially. At the end, the outcomes are the same; both are geared toward survival.

The ocellus discussed earlier are circle-shaped ornaments on animals that can confuse or even immobilize predators. Insects like butterflies and caterpillars have these graphical representations, but they are not the only ones. Humans have adopted this method, and certain masks and make-ups have features with ocellus shapes for the same reason. (*Fig. 27*) Indeed, the presence of these decorations in human civilization is mostly due to the fact that they have the same meaning as in the animal world: to mesmerize, disorient, and immobilize the spectator.

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[41] Original title "*Méduse et Cie*" published in 1960.

The mask expresses mystery; men introduced the mask into their cultures because they needed to replace their faces in a variety of ways. This second face has the power to transform, it can be used as a weapon of protection or intimidation, it can transmit a political statement, or it can signify a direct touch with a god or a goddess. The mask is nearly always present in ethnographic studies; it is considered as an effective method of communication as well as to produce trance, hypnosis, or panic. In fact, when cultures remove the mask, they achieve a new status; by abandoning the object's ritualistic purpose, the society has truly begun the civilization process.[42]

Figure 27 An example of ocellus make-up decoration. Photo of a member of the Bororo's tribe in North America.

The make-up, even if it is rudimental or non-professional, has in itself a dualistic nature. It can enhance human's features, but it can also hide them. The make-up has the ability to enhance as well as conceal human traits. The boundary between exhibition and dissimulation is a thin line that runs through this intricate relationship. Dissimulation is about concealing who we are, and ostentation is about displaying who we are not but we aspire to be. In this sense, exhibition is similar to simulation in that it involves

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[42] R. Caillois, *Méduse et Cie*, pp. 100-115.

revealing a different self than one's genuine self.[43] All these messages can be conveyed with make-ups and, of course, with masks. Because the pictorial signs can transform the facial physiognomy, they have to be considered as powerful as masks. In the same way, Caillois recognized the double use of the mask, it serves not only as a form of camouflage, but it can also permit a spectacular exhibition of the person who wears it.[44] Demonstration and occultism are two sides of the same coin; both are visual communication tactics that work in opposite directions. These different methods are based on the same transformation of an individual's look; the first is about a true and honest manifestation of the ego, while the second is about deception and sensationalism. The main parts of this illusion work by distorting the impression of proper individuality that is presented. It can sometimes imply a genuine change in the person's personality. In any case, these two approaches are aimed toward the self's survival in society.[45] Concerning this issue, Erasmus of Rotterdam wrote about disguise in these terms:

«*And what is all this life but a kind of comedy, wherein men walk up and down in one another's disguises and, act their respective parts, till the property-man brings 'em back to the tiring house. And yet he often orders a different dress, and makes him that came but just now off in the robes of a king put on the rags of a beggar. Thus are all things represented by counterfeit, and yet without this there was no living*»[46]

For Erasmus everything on the stage is a lie, and the comedy of life operates in the same way. Everyone, according to the humanist, wears a disguise that allows them to maintain their specific position in a complex community.

In the same manner that animals use disguise or mimicry, humans do so as well. These deceptions can be aimed in two directions: a pleasing resemblance to desired traits, or

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[43] J. Bouvet, *La stratégie du caméléon: de la simulation dans le monde vivant*, pp. 109-122.
[44] R. Caillois, *Méduse et Cie*, pp. XV-XVI.
[45] M. Trabalon, *L'utilisation du mimétisme dans le cadre de la communication animale*, in "Revue d'esthétique", 41, pp. 143-149, 2002. *See also* C. Casarin and D. Fornari, *Strategie del camuflage*, ed. by P. Fabbri, ed. Et al., Milan 2010, pp. 8-20.
[46] D. Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly* (1509), tr. en. by John Wilson 1668, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1913, pp. 53-54.

a transformation into a monstrous shape for defensive purposes.[47] The sole distinction between animals and people is that animals are threatened by other species, whereas humans are endangered only by themselves, particularly due to wars and violence.[48] Camouflage and mimicry, in this context, are techniques aimed at survival only, but they also take on a more profound meaning for the contemporary man. In modern societies, these techniques can be elaborated as forms of art.

The idea of dissimulation, by means of camouflage techniques, is perfectly expressed in the tale written by Moravia *The conformist* (*Il Conformista*). This story is about how Marcello, a hero (or, more accurately, an anti-hero) who hides among the crowd. The main character uses the strength of the mob to hide his non-conformist mentality. Marcello is able to hide his latent homosexuality and depressed temperament thanks to conformism. Marcello wears a mask throughout the story because it protects him.[49] In a society that clearly hates diversity and self-expression, mimicking ensures his survival. In this instance, the mask is a metamorphic medium that allows for the preservation of individual integrity in modern societies.

Furthermore, in today's world, the masks are lacking of their objective presence. Our contemporary society is defined as a society of comprehensive communication and, paradoxically, dissimulation plays a fundamental role.[50] The traditional interaction between humans and masks has been disrupted by high-tech devices. Nowadays, we are mainly talking about fictitious masks, difficult to grasp, to individuate, but also difficult to be taken off.

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[47] J. Bouvet, *La stratégie du caméléon: de la simulation dans le monde vivant*, pp. 29-32.
[48] Ivi, p. 150.
[49] Ivi, p. 29.
[50] Ivi, p. 63.

Chapter 3: Masks as the quintessence of emotions
3.1 The face as a surface for expressions

Face is a complex system, for the artists the real difficulty is to catch the exact expression of a person. According to the definition of *vultus* in Roman culture, it is clear that it has an ever-changing nature. In fact, for the Latins *vultus* was something related to the inner part of the human's soul. It cannot be specified as a static "picture" because it is linked to a person's changing expressions, therefore it has to be variable by definition. In this way, these words pronounced by Servius are revealying: «the *vultus* . . . is the face assumed according to the motions of the soul»[1]. Even more precise is the intervention by an anonymous Latin: «diligence is being able to perceive all expressions [*vultus*], which generally reveals the feelings of the soul»[2]. In this sentence the topic is the ability to interpret the inner movements that stir the face of a person or in a more comprehensive meaning, which is identified by its *vultus.*

In those terms, *vultus* is not simply reducible to *look* (*re-spicere*), but it is something more arduous: it implies the difficulty of the perceiver in order to truly *understand* (*per-spicere*) the other's feelings and emotions.[3] This prefix causes a significant problem because it implies that a person's face cannot be understood at first glance; rather, it is more about the "inner sight." As a result, a face is more than just an image to study; it necessitates a deeper understanding of its surface. Again, the crucial point is the difference between the Greek *prosōpon*, which is strictly related to visual perception, and the Latin *vultus*[4], which is a more comprehensive concept.

For our analysis, *vultus* is a precious word because it demonstrates how, since the ancient Roman period, the face was considered as an emblem in demonstrating inner emotions and personality traits. *Vultus* can be considered as the baseline for interpersonal communication. The variables deriving from the inner movements

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[1] Eugraph. in Ter. Andr. 119 from M. Bettini, *The ears of Hermes: communication, images, and identity in the classical world*, p. 140.
[2] Anonymus Latinus, in G. Raina, *De Physiognomonia* (IV sec.), tr. it. by G. Raina, Rizzoli, Milan 1993, p. 50.
[3] M. Bettini, *The ears of Hermes: communication, images, and identity in the classical world*, pp. 139-143
[4] Ibidem.

produced by the soul, are identifiable and decipherable thanks to a true and proper "language". Physiognomy is a language with rules and regulations that can decode these small but fundamental motions. *Vultus* operates in a specific context, and even in Latin culture, the *voluntas* (willingness) was considered the starting point of this tumultuous surface. Physiognomy can also voice the emotions of a soul[5] and at the same time, it can help us to understand the complexity of the face expressions.

For these reasons the emotions are a fundamental aspect for the painter. In order to realize a good portrait, physical characteristics are certainly important but they are not enough; it is also necessary to grasp the exact expressions of the face. Roger de Piles' theory is about the portrait techniques used in this regard. He recommends to study the expression of the subject, because it may convey the exact «air of truth» (air de vérité[6]) of the sitter. De Piles differentiates between passions and emotions, the passions are movements provoked by the soul, which in turn, cause body gestures and facial traits. It is the painter's responsibility to show the person's exact passion (*variété d'expression*). Only a few portrait artists are capable of depicting the entire human face, while the bulk still blend mournful eyes with flushed cheeks or warm smiles, resulting in a contradictory outcome. De Piles recommends paying close attention to some key aspects, such as the actual anatomy of the eyes, lips, and other essential and tiny components of the face. This point is particularly evident when someone smiles, the angles of the mouth rise and at the same time eyes close and the cheeks swell up. [7] A simple smile, one of man's most natural expressions, involves a complex series of little activities.

For Paul Ekman every emotion is expected to emerge, in a way or another: it may occur with face's expressions, or through gestures, or even through the tonality of the voice. In any case, he claims that these motions are more easily discernible on the face's surface, and that they are particularly visible in the top region of the eyes, i.e., the eyebrows and forehead. This is because the face reveals the human being's inner sphere. Our brain has less control over those regions of the face; therefore, they are frequently

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[5] «*vultus vero dictus, eo quod per eum animi voluntas ostenditur*» Isid. Etym. 11.34. Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae, De homine et portentis*, vol. XI, tr. it. by A. Valastro Canale, 2 voll., Utet, Milan 2014, vol. 1.
[6] R. De Piles, *Cours de Peinture par Principes*, pp. 161 – 177.
[7] Ivi, pp. 61-62.

changed by our uncontrollable emotions.[8]

Physiognomy was initially intended to be the language of the face, the art of deciphering its basic characteristics. Physiognomy has been used to compare the traits of a human face to those of animals since ancient times. For example, the prominent nose of a person was defined as aquiline, this is because the belief was that a person with that precise feature would be the bearer of the believed noble soul of the animal too. Similarly, a face like that of a cow would invariably convey a calm attitude. (*Fig. 28 and 29*). These comparisons were illustrated for the first time in the XVI century in the illustrated book written by Giovanni Battista Della Porta[9] which will strongly influence the further caricatural portraits in the following years. These descriptions of the human's characters were widely used in caricatures portraits because they exemplified the typical aspect of a person by identifying the most evident and fundamental physical characteristics of individuals. [10]

Figure 28 Illustration of an example of aquiline feature of a man, from *De humana Physiognomia* (1586) written by G. B. Della Porta.

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[8] P. Ekman, interviewed by N. Journet, *La langage naturel des émotions*, in "Sciences Humaines", 96, 1999, (https://www.scienceshumaines.com/rencontre-avec-paul-ekman-le-langage-naturel-des-emotions_fr_10961.html)

[9] G. B. Della Porta, *De humana Physiognomia* (1586), II ed. Bibliothèque de Palais des Arts, Paris 1660.
[10] E. H. Gombrich, J. Hochberg and M. Black, *Art, Perception, and Reality*, p. 40.

Figure 29 Comparison of a bovine and a man, illustration from *De humana Physiognomia* (1586) written by G. B. Della Porta.

In simpler terms, the Latin Aulus Gellius described physiognomy as the speciality that «[physiognomy] detects the temperament and the nature of a person, based on the expressions and of features of the face, from posture of the body physical appearance of a person»[11] (*mores naturasque hominum coniectatione quadam, de oris et vultus ingenio, deque totius corporis filo atque habitu sciscitari)*[12]. Furthermore, it is not surprising since the physiognomy was founded by the same society that created the masked theatre: the Romans. More specifically, the Latins established a physiognomy centred on the person's pathos-expressivity rather than their physical shape. This is why *pathognomic* is used to describe this first example of physiognomy.[13]

At the end, the subject of physiognomy is the general sense that characterizes an individual. It is a process of recognition of a person which is particularly difficult to demonstrate. It is based on a general impression and, as a result, it is a combination of several characteristics from which a specific physiognomy is derived. The result is a sort of *global expression* and the accidental emotional expressions are variations of the original one. So, it is possible to discover the same dominant essence of a person in his or her different moments of life; it is even possible to identify the same general

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[11] M. Bettini, *The ears of Hermes: communication, images, and identity in the classical world*, p. 165.
[12] Aul. Gell. NA. 1.9.2 from A. Gellio, *Noctes Atticae* (177).
[13] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History*, p. 64.

expression in two different individuals who are members of the same family.

In Aristotelian terms, physiognomy is definable as the substance of an individual and its modifications are accidental. In reality, these alterations can go beyond the individual's experience and they can be passed down through generations as family resemblance factors. Similarly, even if many peculiar qualities are present in the two distinct persons, Petrarch could individuate the likeness between father and son. Petrarch calls this similarity «*aria*»[14], it is like a common shadow that identifies the parent as the source of the offspring.

> «*un'ombra però, un'aria, come la chiamano i nostri pittori, [...],*
> *produce quella somiglianza che ci richiama alla mente il padre non*
> *appena abbiamo visto il figlio, pur risultando diverse tutte le misure, se*
> *si facesse una misurazione*[15]»

It is worth noting that these similarities are not always distinguishable. Such common aspects are evident in particular categories of comparisons: as for family members or through different ages of the same person. It is also true that changes of the bony structure may occur, in the subsequent stages of life that is the aging process, but a constant dominant expression is still visible, these physical mutations cannot eliminate the individual's unity.

Despite this explanation, Petrarch and Aristoteles' examples support the idea that each individual is made up of a variety of different faces that offer a sense of "unity in diversity". Emotions cause changes in the face and its appearance is modified on a regular basis, but these changes are only transitory. In this way, Charles Le Brun was convinced that eyebrows were indicators of the inner states experienced by the human's soul. The eyebrows were identified as the main element of physiognomy by the Parisian painter because the eyebrows, in his opinion, express emotional moods. [16] For Le Brun

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[14] F. Petrarca, *Le famigliari XXIII*, ed. it. curated by V. Rossi, II ed. (I ed. 1933) Sansoni, Florence 1942.

[15] «A shadow, or "air" as it is defined by painters [...] generates the similarity that in our mind instantly recalls the father to the son, and vice versa, whether the scales if measured appear different» F. Petrarca, *Le famigliari XXIII*, pp. 78-94.

[16] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History*, p. 65.

the eyebrows are like hands of the clock which alert the viewer of the emotional state of the person.[17]

In the same way, Janet Robertson[18] advises are focused on the problem of similarity. The painter identifies the main causes of an unnatural expression of the face in the gaze, the position of the eyes and the intensity of the look but also on the upper lip, the position of the ear of the depicted person. In those terms similarity does not reside in human's expression, it rather lies in anatomy.

Physiognomy was later focused to the physical element of the person, with the study of bodily features and the analysis of his or her essential characteristics, beginning with Della Porta. His theory is the polar opposite of Aristoteles'. In fact, Lavater's intention was to extrapolate the possible similarities between a person's particular aspect and his or her behaviour. It was thought that the anatomy would serve as a warning system for certain human categories. With this as a starting point, it is easy to see why Della Porta, after realizing the *Humana physiognomonia* in 1603, chose to dedicate himself to celestial physiognomy as well. This second approach was centred on the premise that facial physiognomy may predict human fate as well. He also believed that the status of the internal organs might be revealed by the face: a beautiful face would indicate that the internal organs were in good state. In these concepts, the face was transformed into a picture (*pictura*) created by nature as a transparent mask which is inseparable from the real face of the person.

In 1775 an important work by Johann Caspar Lavater was published, it was titled *Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe* (Physiognomic fragments for the promotion of human understanding and human kindness[19]). His intention was to produce a catalogue of the fundamental human's facial types. For him, virtue was mirrored in the physical features of a person, but in the same way the face could also «transform into a satanic mask»[20]. He also assures that

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[17] J. Montagu, *The Expression of the Passions: The Origin and Influence of Charles Le Brun's "Conference sur L'Expression Generale et Particuliere"* (1960), Yale University press, New Haven 1994.

[18] J. Robertson, *Practical Problems of the Portrait Painter*, Darton, Logman & Todd, London 1962.

[19] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History*, p. 65.

[20] J. K. Lavater, *Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und* Menschenliebe, p. 122.

physiognomy can reflect the true nature of an individual. He intended physiognomy as a science, and his goal was to discover the universal types of people through observation. He distinguished various sorts of physiognomy in his work, the most intriguing of which is the so-called moral physiognomy. It can deduce information about a person's psyche by interpreting physical outward facial motions. Another crucial component of his logic is his recognition of the difficulties in generating realistic portraits, because if the face is an image, it is difficult to make a portrait that matches the original model's exact form. Lavater had a revelation when he observed the nine drawings of Socrates' head (*Fig. 30*), in that moment he realized a significant resemblance to the ancient portraits of the same subject and these nine some kind of caricature. Even if the face of the character was distorted in different expressions, it remains easily recognizable. The drawings demonstrate the preservation of the image, which is called in physiognomy the "substance" of a character.[21]

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[21] Ivi, p. 99.

Figure 30 Socrates, Nine Profile Heads, illustration from Johann Caspar Lavater in *Physiognomische Fragmente* 1775-78.

In order to identify the inner state of a person, the external appearance is inevitably disturbed by a series of natural expressions that confuse the senses. For this reason, Lavater oriented his analysis towards new frontiers: the study of the brain. In this sense, he believed that the human skull may reveal proof of the subject's strength or weakness. For example, in the plate XLII (*Fig. 31*) Lavater described the possessor of the skull as certainly a «craft malicious and stupid»[22].

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[22] J. K. Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy* (1781), ed. The Classics, Sheridan 2013, pp. 248-250.
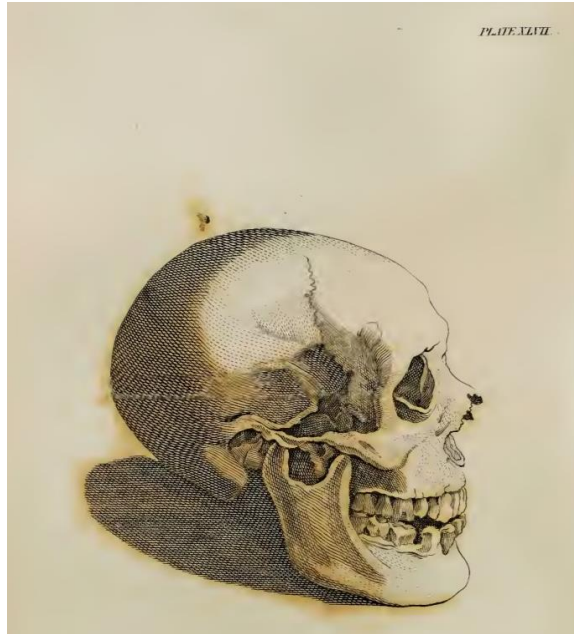
Figure 31 Plate XLII from *Physiognomische Fragmente*, 1775-1778.

The pseudo-science of physiognomy was questioned by the physicist Georg Christoph Lichtenberg in his essay *Űber Physiognomik; Wider die Physiognomen*. He undermined the aim of the physiognomy for which there was a possibility to find out the temperament of a person from his\her face. The expressions on the surface of the face, according to Lichtenberg, are the result of effective motions. His research shifted the focus from physiognomy to pathognomy. He attributed the face movements to correct muscle actions in such way. As a result, his contribution was to separate the study of physiognomy from the hard bones of the skull.[23]

Moreover, when "animal physiognomy" was finally called into question in the XVIII century, the major critics were moved by Hogarth and Lichtenberg. They pointed out the relevance of the little changes of the face, because they demonstrate the emotional state of the person, not his\her personality. However, for the two researchers, those expressions have a role in the manifestation of a character. A person who is concerned the majority of the time will invariably assume the "aurea" of a worried person in overall. In this circumstance, certain physical traits are permanently altered: the forehead will

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[23] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History*, p. 69.

reveal his feelings by adopting an expression that will become normal and consistent on that face. If a person is generally happy, he or she will show a constant smile, however this concept does not work perfectly because it is too anchored in Enlightenment. In other words, Hogarth imagined the face in the same way Locke did for the human's mind: both are like blank slates waiting for impressions which are derived from individual experiences. Every derived expression, be it cheerful or sad, is part of a bigger complex, they are embedded in what is definable as the character of a person. The expressions are part of a whole, so it is not possible to describe the character of an individual by just one side. A smile can have many distinct characteristics and meanings: a pessimist's grin is not the same as an optimist's smile. Facial expressions can be influenced by internal or external factors. Anyhow, since this moment, physiognomy is no longer focused on the superficial surface; instead, researchers are concentrating on what is beneath the skin.[24]

In this regard, Charles Darwin had widely contributed to the argument, especially in his book *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872). For the scientist, all the movements of the face have their origin in specific muscles. In this publication Darwin wrote an introduction that stated he was not interested in considering the «permanent features»[25] as the mirror for the character of a person. Physiognomy now has to look at the evolution of men's expressions, which Darwin believes follows the evolution of the species. Individuals need stereotyped expressions since they can transmit certain complicated messages in a few instances. The main concern is the face's muscular activity, not its bones or anatomical features. The evolution of these muscular actions, according to biologists, can direct the entire evolution of humanity. Evolution necessitates adaptation and inheritance in order to ensure survival. Thanks to Charles Bell, a succession of face muscles is represented by diagrams and letters in the following tables used by Darwin to establish his theory. (*Fig. 32*)

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[24] E. H. Gombrich, J. Hochberg and M. Black, *Art, Perception, and Reality*, pp. 42-44.
[25] C. Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), in "The Works of Charles Darwin", vol. 23, ed. by F. Darwin, New York University Press, New York 1989. Here pp. 64, 73-76.
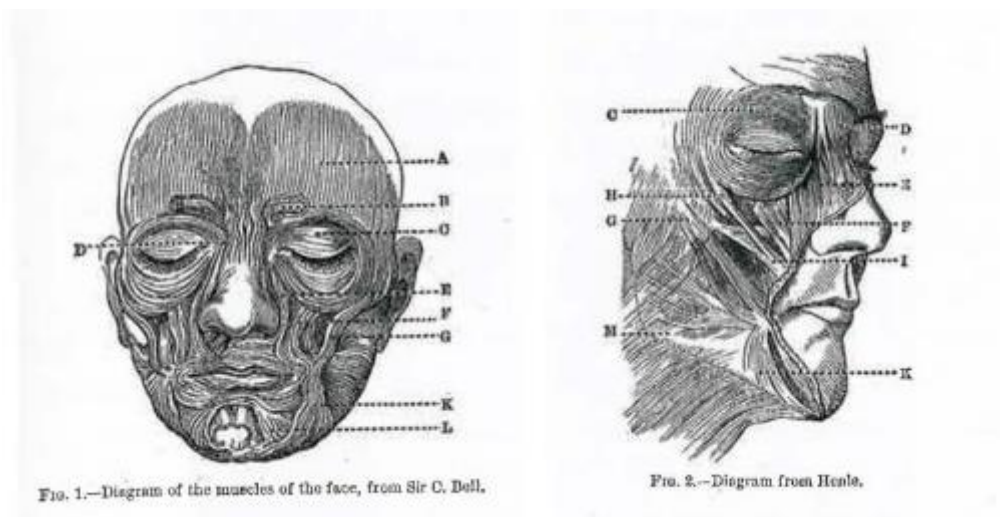
Figure 32 Two illustration of facial muscles from *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* by C. Darwin (1872).

Darwin identified muscular action as the fundamental source of expressivity, which includes emotions like sadness, anxiety, and fury. All of these movements are pure and automatic in nature, but they can also be caused by human volition.[26] For these reasons, Darwin's theory is based on the idea that expressions have to be considered as social actions. Because the muscles are evidence of social interaction with other individuals, facial muscles are fixed in interpretation. Communication among individuals is possible because the muscles convey a message that is easy to interpret: since every human can produce such gestures, in turn everyone can understand the meaning of this behaviour. Expressions participate in the evolution of mankind; the face demonstrates a peculiar phylogenetic history. Darwin concluded his exhaustive theory of evolution of facial expressions for communicating purposes, simply naming it as "the language of emotions", he recognized its fundamental role in guaranteeing the welfare of humanity. In conclusion, in the field of sciences, the anatomic tendency triumphed over physiognomy.

Considering Petrarch's words, it is easy to understand why the position of the eyes is a fundamental aspect for a good portrait. The distance between the eyes, the angles of the mouth are essential aspects which denote the bony structure that constitutes and

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[26] Ibidem.

characterizes the depicted person. The rigid structure is almost unalterable and it significantly impacts the general expression of the face, this concept can be defined as the *dominant expression.*[27] We are unaware of the ambiguity that our looks might create, and we are astonished if the painter captures our "real" appearance. The painter's interpretation is based on a thorough comprehension of the structure of the face, thus the search for the dominant expression comes later. What is more important is that the variations of the expression have to be always traceable to the dominant expression of the depicted image.

Egon Brunswik, a psychologist, undertook extensive research on the subject. The researcher wanted to know if there was a link between these two factors. His experiments show that we are sensitive to even little changes in a person's physiognomy. And that is the point: he discovered that changes in the distance between our eyes had a very strong effect on our overall perception of the subject portrayed.

To tie all this together, the secret of physiognomy in portraits is evident in the so-called masterpieces. One of these countless examples is certainly the portrait of *Pope Innocent X* painted by Velazquez (*Fig. 33*). In this marvellous oeuvre, the figure seems to be free from a single rigid posture, it appears to be in a constant changing of face. The energy of the gaze is almost palpable and the facial expressions look like they are in flux; but they are all traceable to the dominant one. This is because all the variations of the global air (*aria*) of the subject are coherent with the physiognomy of the character. [28]

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[27] E. H. Gombrich, J. Hochberg and M. Black, *Art, Perception, and Reality*, pp. 27-29.
[28] Ivi, pp. 52-54.

Figure 33 D. Velazquez, *Pope Innocence X*, 1650, Rome, Doria Gallery.

3.2 The dominant expressions and the caricature

The dominant expression has a fundamental role in caricature portraits, it conveys similarity to the physical model and it expresses the *vultus*. This similarity is provoked by the physiognomic substance of the face, although other features may be drastically changed or substituted. The physiognomy is at the heart of this sort of representation: a caricature must portray an individual's globality, its global expression, or "aria". In the seventeenth century, caricatural drawings were designed as specific portraits with a clear reference to the model; they displayed the subject, which had to be clearly identifiable, even if it was usually depicted in a mocking manner (*Depravata imitatio*)[29]. (*Fig. 34*)
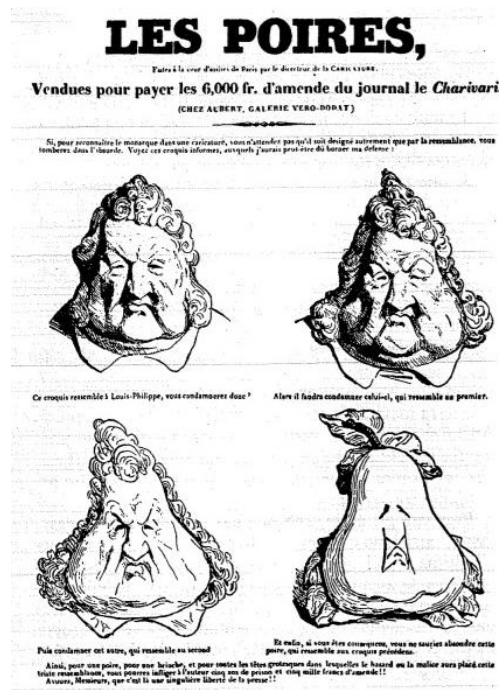

Figure 34 C. Philipon, *Les Poires*, in *"Le Charivari"*, 1834.

In art history, there are many examples of caricature portraits; it is well known that even one of the most famous artists, Leonardo da Vinci, used these humorous pictures. (*Fig.*

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[29]M. Bettini, *The ears of Hermes: communication, images, and identity in the classical* world, p.148.

35). Caricatures like Annibale Carracci's "ritrattini carichi" (small bizarre portraits) are the perfect examples of caricatures. (*Fig. 36*) These small portraits were created during the painter's breaks from work at the Carracci Academy in Bologna (1585). He stood in front of the school's door, staring at the passers-by, and he wonderfully captured the substance of the strangers in his sketches. He was able to condense the specific and recognizable lineaments of Bologna's passing men and women into a few lines. The painter's goal was not to depict the inhabitants' faces in a realistic manner, but rather to create symbolic images of them.
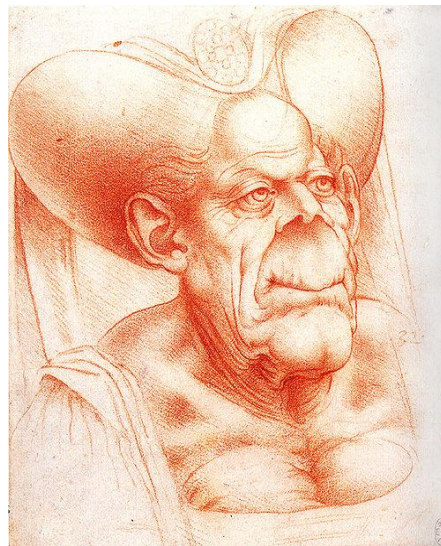

Figure 35 L. Da Vinci, *Grotesque Head*, c. 1480-1510, Windsor Castel, Royal Library, UK.

After having individualized the structural features of the face, the purpose of caricature is to exaggerate these elements. It is a matter of physiognomy.[30] The portrait must respect and transmit the person's general physiognomy, as well as keep the initial correspondence clear: measurements can vary, proportions are fictitious and differ from visual perception, but despite these intentional disproportions, the painter's goal is to draw out the person's resemblance. In addition, the subject's inner character must be revealed, the painter must deliver a message, and the viewer must participate

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[30] E. H. Gombrich, J. Hochberg and M. Black, *Art, Perception, and Reality*, pp. 45-47.

emotionally.

The exaggeration of specific elements is designed by the artists, and if the result is satisfactory, it indicates that the painter understood the subject's overall expression. The recognition of the original model, despite the alterations caused by the painter's hand, is the subject of caricature. The drawing could be realized by *pictorial hyperbole*, which is the subjective selection of which components should be over-emphasized in the creation of a portrait. In doing so, the caricaturist may mimic the process by which all faces are encoded and remembered.[31] Maintaining the distinctive features of the face aids in the identification of the precise owner of those unusual characteristics.[32] However, it is not completely clear how facial traits may be reproduced in caricatural illustrations in such an efficient manner. It is not just a matter of physical qualities; otherwise, it should be classified as a realistic portrait. As previously discussed, caricature differs from traditional representations of the face because it also analyzes stereotypes of an individual's inner nature. Therefore, this portrait must accurately depict the outside image of the face, which includes the eyes, lips, nose, and other features.[33] We have already seen that in Latin culture, all of these physical characteristics were referred to as *facies*. The caricature, on the other hand, must depict that person's dominating expression, which must also incorporate the human being's inner dimension. With all of these factors in mind, it appears that creating a hyperbolic caricature of the face without changing the representation's initial model will be problematic.[34] This vague but fundamental concept is the essence of caricature itself; it

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[31] R. Mauro and M. Kubovy, *Caricature and face recognition*, In "Memory & Cognition", 433-440, 1992, here p. 433.

[32] L. L. Light, F, Kayra-Stuart and D. Hollander, *Recognition memory for typical and unusual faces*, in "Journal of experimental psychology. Human learning and memory", 212-228, 1979. See also T. Valentine and V. Bruce, *The effects of distinctiveness in recognising and classifying faces*, in "Perception", 525–535, 1986.

[33] G. Davies, H. D. Ellis and J. Shepherd, *Face recognition accuracy as a function of mode of representation*, in "Journal of Applied Psychology", 180–187, 1978 (https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.63.2.180)
See also M. P. Friedman, Reed, and E. C. Carterette, *Historical and philosophical roots of perception* (1971), ed. by E. C. Carterette and M. P. Friedman, The Academic Press, New York 1974.
Also S. J. McKelvie, *The role of eyes and mouth in the memory of a face*, in "*The American Journal of Psychology*", 311–323, 1976 (https://doi.org/10.2307/1421414)

[34] D. Perkins*, A Definition of Caricature and Caricature and Recognition*, in "Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication", 1-24, 1975.

resembles the idea of *vultus* used by Latins to indicate the general recognizable presence of a person.

Figure 36 A. Carracci (1560-1609), *sheet of studies of caricatures,* British Museum, London, UK.

In any respect, the *vultus*'s power in caricature is minimal; all that is required is to make the person represented recognisable. In reality, *vultus* is used to identify the individual who has become the subject of a humorous attack; the comic effect is dependent on the recognizability of the face in the photograph; otherwise, no laughs will be heard. There are examples of caricature also in the Latin culture, in this regard Cicero's reasonings on the topic are essential. Cicero indicates different types of comic effects, one of these is the humour of shameless. For Cicero, an example of this idea of shameless humour is Crassus' caricature of Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus, he addressed to his rival the words

«*per tuam nobilitatem, per vestram familiam*».[35] These words ("by your noble descent, by your family line") may not appear so fun as they were for the Romans, this is because the fulcrum of the witticism resides in the tonality he gave to them. Crassus imitated the voice and also the face of Gnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus.[36] The close association between caricature and *vultus* is obvious in this case; it is the *vultus* that resides in caricature. Consequently, a person's *vultus* can be imitated, but not his or her *facies*. Here the comment of Servius on a passage from Virgil will make clearer the correspondence:

«*tu faciem illius noctem non amplius unam / falle dolo, et notos pueri puer indue vultus*»[37] («use your tricks to counterfeit the face [*facies*] of Ascanius for not more than one night and, boy that you are, put on the familiar face [*vultus*] of that boy»)[38]

This speech was pronounced by Venus to her son to prepare him for what will come after. Cupid wanted to make Dido fall in love with Aeneas. He transformed the physical features of Ascanius mimicking the Aeneas' ones.

Servius remarks: «*faciem pro vultu posuit. nullus enim faciem alterius potest accipere, sed vultum, qui pro mentis qualitate formatur. unde infra est 'et notos pueri puer indue vultus'*»[39]. Vergil substituted the word *facies* for the word *vultus*. In truth, no one would ever put on another's *facies*, but they may take on another's *vultus* because it is formed in accordance to mental traits. This is what Vergil means when he says later «and, boy that you are, put on the familiar face [*vultus*] of that boy».[40] But, for our purposes, the *vultus* contained in the caricature cannot be reduced as a matter of voice. For this reason, the visual representation of the face is explained with physiognomy.

Another way to represent the dominant expression of a person is the *filum*. It is a Latin word and the correct translation for this word is difficult to determine. The term was

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[35] Cic. De orat. 2, 242. M. T. Cicero, *De oratore*, tr. en. by J. M. May and J. Wisse, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001.
[36] M. Bettini, *The ears of Hermes: communication, images, and identity in the classical world*, p. 122.
[37] Verg. Aen. 1.683f. P. Vergilius Maro, *Eneide,* I book, tr. in prose by L. Vaini e V. Caselli, VII ed. (1822) C. Mordacchini, Rome 1826.
[38] M. Bettini, *The ears of Hermes: communication, images, and identity in the classical world*, p. 148.
[39] Verg. Aen. 1.683f.
[40] M. Bettini, *The ears of Hermes: communication, images, and identity in the classical world*, pp. 162-165.

used to describe the external shape of an object. *Filum* can be associated with the English term contour, or more literally, it would be translated as filament. Thereafter, *filum* can also describe the general aspect of a person, at this point the Latin word is more similar to the French "*silhouettes*". In other words, *filum* refers to a very thin line that is a common thread throughout all the parts of a human being.[41] The representation of that *filum*, should give back the general identity of the person. (*Fig. 37 and 38*)
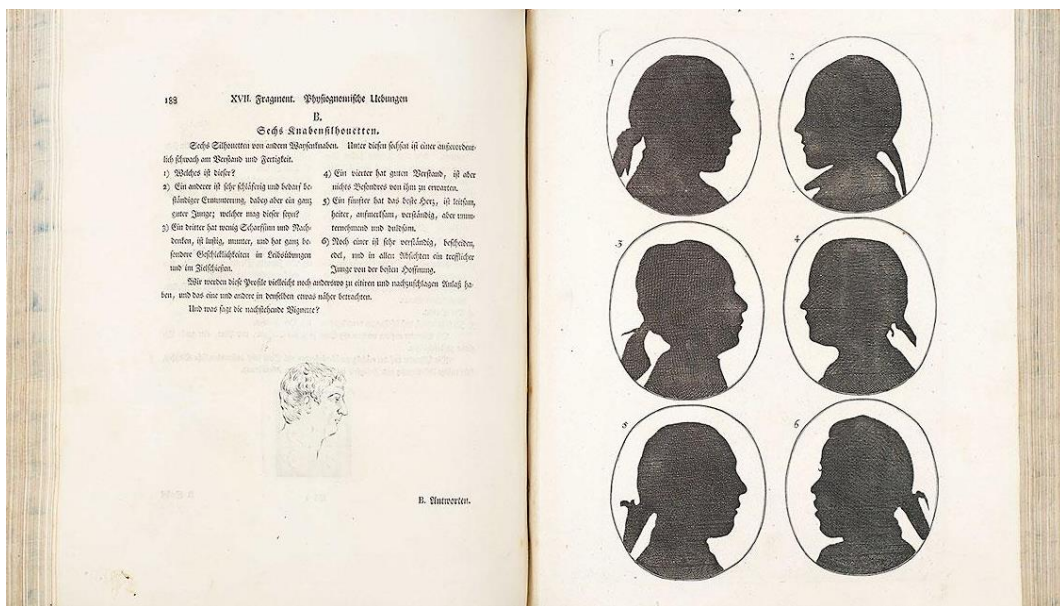

Figure 37 Silhouettes studies, an extract from Lavater's *Physiognomische Fragmente*.

Although the profile contour is transmitted by the solid structure of the bones, silhouettes are useful for representing a face without the distracting presence of facial expressions. It is not the case that Lavater used the study of silhouettes in his studies; his goal was to discover the secret of the biological depiction of a human's expression, and he identified the study of physiognomy as a vital ingredient for imitating illustration.
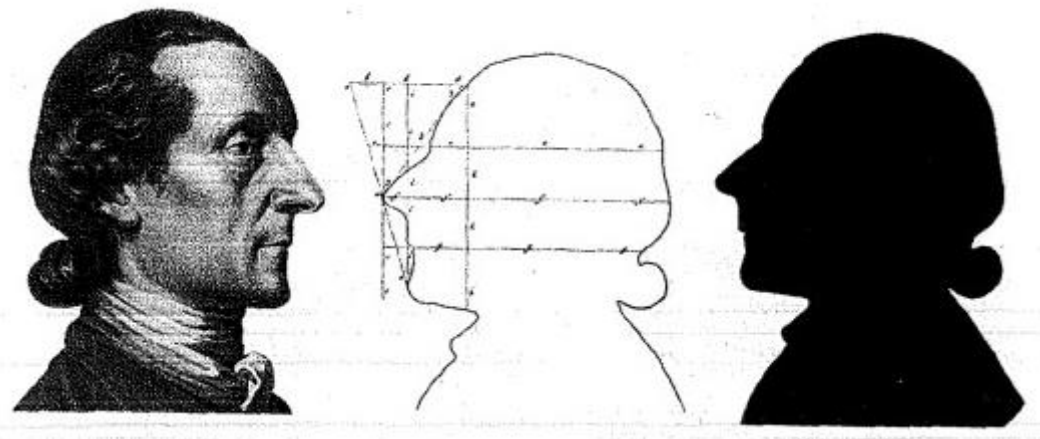
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[41] Ivi, pp. 164-165.

Figure 38 Coding of silhouette and permanent facial traits in order to determine character. J. C. Lavater *Physiognomische Fragmente*.

Lavater's contributions are many and controversial, but they are helpful for our purposes. During the nineteenth century, Lavater's theories influenced the formation of anthropometry, a discipline that focused on identifying criminals and mental illnesses based on their physiognomy. Cesare Lombroso released his book *Born Criminal* in 1876, which symbolizes the highest point of perversion of physiognomy; after this point, the subject will discuss race hygiene.

A continuation of his theory can be seen in Franz Joseph Gall's doctrine, known as phrenology.[42] Other areas of 19th century knowledge were built on Lavater's teaching: anthropometry, which claimed to recognise mental patients and criminals by their body measurements, followed by criminology as the study of criminal. After Cesare Lombroso's *Born criminal*, physiognomy reached its most perverted high point talking about race hygiene; this extreme idea was clearly a theory of the Nazis[43].

Clearly, Lavater was solely interested in researching what appeared to be a vast and undiscovered branch of physiognomy at the time. He was intrigued by the possibility of a relation between the external and internal aspects of the human body. On the other

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[42] W.F. Bynum and H. Bynum, *Dictionary of Medical Biography*, Greenwood Press, London, 2006, vol. II, p. 536.
[43] R. T. Gray, *About Face: German Physiognomic Thought from Lavater to Auschwitz*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit 2004.

side, Lichtenberg warned about the risks latent in Lavater's pseudoscience, he tried saying:

«*If physiognomics ever becomes what Lavater hopes it will be, then we will begin to hang children before they commit the crimes that deserve the gallows. [...] A physiognomic auto da fé*»[44]

Fortunately, these views were eventually abandoned in favour of more scientific ones. This is the case with the aforementioned Lichtenberg, whose contributions finally influenced the study of physiognomy.

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[44] G. C. Lichtenberg, *Schriften und Briefe* (1968), tr. it. by N. Sàito, Albani, Bologna 2020.

3.3 The crisis of the face

To reiterate the point, physiognomy tried to individuate the *general air* of the face through the identification of its dominant expression, but the final image is nearly indistinguishable from its mask. The distinction between face and mask blurs its bounds, which is the core contradiction of physiognomy. The dominant expression remains, but only by excluding the unintentional emotions and expressions that the face can produce: this representation, like the mask, outlasts time.

The problem with caricature arises from our inability to distinguish deformations from true facial characteristics: the goal is to determine whether an expression is derived from a physiognomic permanent character or a transitory emotion. The elements of the fictitious modification of the image in the caricature portraits are evidently unacceptable as physical characteristics of the subject. In caricature portraits, the features of fake image modification are clearly undesirable as physical attributes of the subject. In other words, while considering Munch's scream, it is obvious that the mouth distortion cannot be reduced to a physical element; rather, it is linked to the expressivity of the face. This expressivity arises from an internal condition or, to put it another way, it is a representation of a temporary expression.[45]

We may conclude that, if the accidental expressions are easily recognizable: the face is reducible to a mask. If the alterations can be traced back to the general expression, the representation is successful and, consequently, the painter has elaborated a process of extraction; this confirms the characteristic of the face of being considerable as an immutable mask. In this sense, the mask can represent the peculiar physiognomies of a face, and it can make possible the instant recognition of a specific person among millions of others. There are examples in which the mask englobes the face: Napoleon or the henchman finance expert of Hitler Hjalmar Schacht. These two figures are known for their peculiar traits, especially for the aesthetic ones. The image of Napoleon triumphed
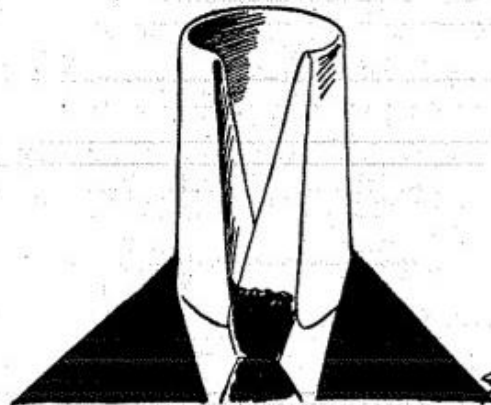
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[45] E. H. Gombrich, J. Hochberg and M. Black, *Art, Perception, and Reality*, pp.94-99.

over the passing of ages: it is always clearly recognizable and it is almost impossible to discern the person from its exterior traits.

Figure 39 H. Sandberg (1908-1991), *The financier of Hitler and Greater strategist today*, Berlin.

Figure 40 Caricature of Schacht, 13th June 1932 in "8 Uhr Abendblatt", Berlin.

In the same way Hjalmar Schacht is famous for its white starched collar (*Fig. 39 and 40*),

in this case the particularly high white collar became the distinctive feature of the character. Day after day, the general consensus recognized this particular trait as Schacht's most defining characteristic. As a result, the mask has consumed the entire figure, transforming it into an image in itself. The mask's mission is to portray the peculiar qualities that we are aware of in an iconic way. This procedure only works if the presented subject is well-known to the general public; otherwise, the process is blocked. This easy identification is useful in caricature, because it permits a rough description of the fundamental lines that compose the whole familiar face and the result is guaranteed.

In other cases, where the individual is unknown or appears to be too similar to others, more details are needed to identify that person. This phenomenon is described in psychology as the «masking effect»[46](*effetto di mascheramento*). This particular effect that does not allow us to recognize that particular person, can also happen when the subject is hit by a strong light that alters the features, the same happens for the opposite, when the subject is immersed in excessive darkness. Likewise, a deafening sound would eliminate the finer notes and they result not audible anymore. So, the *masking effect* in psychological terms is about the moment in which a big impression impedes the perception of more tiny ones. Masquerade methods can be seen in many facets of our lives, but camouflage is particularly important in the art of deception. Disguising is, in turn, the centre of play-acting; the performer must persuade others of his or her ongoing personality changes. The successful actor does not require the use of a mask; it must be a matter of recitation.

In the same way, we are accustomed to easily detect certain «social types»[47], as for the "outdoorsy", the "nerdy", the white collars or the artistic type, but the list is very long and it would be useless to enumerate all the different possible categories. These are instances of how our modern society works; these examples demonstrate the human ability to blend in order to be accepted and recognized as a member of a specific social group.[48] In Jung's terms, this ability is considered as the strategy of wearing a specific

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[46] Ivi, pp. 19-20.
[47] Ivi, p. 15.
[48] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History*, p. 184.

mask, or *persona*, in order to be undetectable in the middle of the mass. The social mask impedes the appreciation of the person as an individual, it disturbs recognizability and due to its presence, there is a sort of a barrier. For this reason, the mask is intended as camouflage activity.

The concept of the genuine self is the polar opposite of that of the performing role. The ego is always moved by the need to express itself, but it requires a secondary tool that is tied to how it is viewed by others in order to do so. We can read the most basic qualities of a person's face, such as age, sex, and gender, but it is through their gaze and expressions that we can get a more accurate picture of who s/he is. Many masks arise from the ego's activity, all of which belong to the same face. These products are proof of the ego's efforts to be perceived in the same way as it believes it is. As a result, the world sees us through our many faces, and our gazes and expressions can turn us into masks. The commitment to self-expression, like every other social act, corresponds to a specific social place in society. Descartes placed the ego beneath the surface of the face in his classic work *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia*, but he did not provide a direct correlation between the ego's expressions and the real face. The two things are not unified because they belong to distinct realms. The face is concerned with the physical world, but the ego, in mechanical terms, is the true identity of the human being, and it belongs to its inner sphere.

«*I do not know precisely who I (moi) am, but I am certain that I am." He thus refused "to consider anything else to be my I" (II.s) even though his own body attempted to deceive him about that (II.J). "The I has a face," but this merely belongs to the "machine of flesh and bones such as one finds upon a corpse and which I call body*»[49]

In the XVII century also the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588 - 1679) investigated the conflictual relationship between the face and the mask. [50] In the first chapter of his book the *Leviathan*, published in 1651, he analysed the topic of

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[49] R. Descartes, *Méditations métaphysiques* (1614), tr. it. by S. Landucci, Laterza, Bari-Roma, 2010, p. 36.
[50] S. A. Lloyd and S. Sreedhar, *Hobbes's Moral and Political Philosophy* (2002), in "Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy", ed. Edward N. Zalta, 2020.

individual's representation. Hobbes identified a characteristic shared by both the common person and the actor. Considering the fact that, person in Latin means disguise.[51] More precisely, in these terms, *persona* refers to the actor upon the stage who assume a different external appearance, which is dissimilar from his\her real identity. Hobbes defined the social individual as a masked person. The main difference between the actor and the common people, is that the latter act a «natural role»[52], whereas the performer is playing an artificial one. In the second scenario, it can be described as an "artificial person" capable of resembling a variety of people. This argument is also articulated in the *Leviathan* as the figure of the state. This "artificial person" represents a group of citizens, or, to put it another way, a political iconography. Hobbes' parallel is that the state reflects a multiplicity of human people, just as the "natural person" contains the unique personalities within itself.[53]

The artificial person is also present when the speaker stands in front of the public, or on a screen, in this case the orator has to put on his face a mask. «We live in a society that continually produces faces»[54], as a result, every person that appears on a billboard must wear a mask and not a face anymore. Advertisements and politics have not only transformed the facial presence as a bargaining tool, but they have also undersold it.

Similarly, face modification is prevalent in our everyday lives, with varying standards and meanings. The most well-known tool for this transformation is makeup, although coiffure also plays a significant function. Furthermore, the mask is present in private life and it may appear at any time; the difficulty lies in removing it when necessary. The problematic question is removing makeup from the skin, yet occasionally a cleanser is insufficient. Moreover, cosmetic surgery has been increasingly popular in recent decades, making matters even more challenging. After the advent of globalization in our

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[51] T. Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651), ed. en. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2011, pp. 72- 92. For the original text of the *Leviathan* (1651), published in London 1962 see chap. 16.
[52] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History*, p. 28.
[53]Ivi, pp. 26-29.
[54] T. Macho, *Das prominente Gesicht: Vom Face-to Face zum Interface*, ed. de. by M. Fassler, ed. Wilhelm Fink, Munich 1999, pp. 121-136.

modern civilization, the face became globalized as well, and the number of local physiognomies decreased. Another essential aspect of this predicament is the role of the mass media, which has gradually taken control of the corporeal presence of the face and stolen it from individuals.[55]

Thomas Machos theorized the «proliferation of face»[56], in his studies he individuated the origin of this phenomenon back to the modern age. In his mind the affirmation of portraiture has a decisive role in the business of faces. Moreover, Macho affirms that the real turning point in this topic is represented by the eve of the mass media society: this commodification of faces has been democratized and it has been accelerated thanks to the success of photography.

This is especially visible in contemporary art, where the prominence of the face on aesthetical adverts or when politicians' faces are featured on slogans pushes for an even stronger consumerist mentality. The counteraction of true ones' nostalgia was generated by this constant and ever-increasing consumption of faces. The philosophers George Simmel and Emmanuel Levinas also contributed to this discussion.

The crisis of face is finally formulated by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their oeuvre *A Thousand Plateaus* written in 1980. The face and the head were distinguished by the two philosophers; the latter is considered a component of the body, whereas the former clearly dominates it. The key feature of this distinction is that facial expressions have a considerable influence on corporal behavior, which explains the dominance of the face over the body. Furthermore, they blurred the line between the face and the mask; in their view, these two entities are one and the same. In those terms the separation between the two collapses, and they explain that the urgency for our contemporary society is the unstoppable deconstruction of the face. For the authors the face is a European concept and the only salvation could be represented by the dissolution of the totemic presence of it, in doing so our conception will be freed by the chains of the colonial period.[57] The reasons behind this statement are related to the idea that the

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[55] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History*, p. 136.
[56] Ivi, p. 31.
[57] G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* University of Minnesota

modern «*facialization*»[58] (*visagite*) is alien to primitive societies. This is because in these cultures, the history of the mask was intrinsic to the sacred ceremonies. The ritual mask has to govern the whole body, instead of the European contemporary society in which the mask serves as a social construction in every situation. Deleuze and Guattari identified the exact representation of this diversification in Bacon's artworks (*Fig. 41*). The message of the painter centres on the distinction between face and head. The philosophers claim that Bacon is «a painter of heads, not of faces»[59]. More precisely, Bacon did not struggle against the face but he wanted to free the depicted person from the omnipresence of the mask. His expressive characters are screaming heads rather than malformed faces. This ferocious scream has a cathartic function and it finally smashes the masks that have enslaved it.

In conclusion, Roger Caillois affirms that in our contemporary society, a particular phenomenon is the «gradual disappearance of the mask as a medium of transformation».[60] It means that the face, instead of the mask, becomes the medium of transformation and it is performed as the real mask. In modern times, the disguise is

Figure 41 F. Bacon, *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X*, 1953, New York, Carten Burden collection.

Press, Minneapolis**,** 1980.

[58] G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *L'Anti-Œdipe* (1972), tr. it. by A. Fontana, Einaudi, Turin 2002.

[59] G. Deleuze, Francis Bacon: *Logik der Sensation* (1995), tr. it. by S. Verdicchio, Quodlibet, Rome 2008, p. 19.

[60] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History*, pp. 48-49.

practiced with the whole body. Furthermore, self-expression becomes a social act that reflects one's social status. The mask might be said to be the role, but it is now being played with the face.

Chapter 4: Contemporary uses of the mask
4.1 The consumption of media faces

Descartes, in his studies, had already theorized the phenomenon whereby states and regimes create artificial person to convey the political ideas perpetuated by these systems. There is an actual creation of a political iconography of the state. This is the turning point which permits us to arrive down to the present days, in what we can define as the «Face of the Age»[1]. The emergence of mass media, which provides an essential homogenization of faces: the acceptance of defined and repeated forms of faces, characterizes the contemporaneity. The canon of beauty limited to this historical period is an excellent example of this concept.[2]

From the moment in which the homogenization through mass media begun, it was clear that a mask would be present forever. In this sense, the mask has trapped the faces that appear on our screens and even in the advertisements that are offered to us today. It is paradoxical to think that these faces, distorted by the presence of the mask, are increasingly similar to the masks of death that we saw in the first chapters of this thesis. The masks that appear in advertisements and on television screens take on a meaning that is similar to that of the original meaning the masks had in primitive societies. For that reason, the faces framed in newspapers and broadcasting mediums are then stored in giant archives which are comparable of barren endless graveyards. This material is composed mainly by photographs and videos, which permit the reconstruction of the lives of the character who held those faces. In fact, reportages of dead people are always attached with those types of recordings. The deceased are remembered without the illustration of death. As a result, the lifelike-pictures show a mask that can never depart, it is the crystallization of an icon: the artificial finally takes possession of the natural one, the images and so the mask, substitute the effective person.[3]

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[1] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History*, p. 2.
[2] Ivi, pp. 2-11.
[3] Ivi, p. 159.

In the same way, the mask becomes even more present because all of the photographs distributed by mass media are extreme close-ups: this leads to the consequence that all the faces on pages or screen appear detached from their bodies. The relapsing of the rigid frontal depiction of the face highlights a crisis: it is a symptom of the undermining of emotions and feelings of the face. The closer the camera comes to the physiognomy of the face, the more it seems independent from a real person.

A perfect example of this phenomenon is the work by Helmar Lerski *Metamorphosis through Light* (*Verwandlungen durch Licht*). The face was transformed by the artists into a sculpture, and so it become an artifact. The result is a masked person who does not need any shield to evade life. (*Fig. 42*)
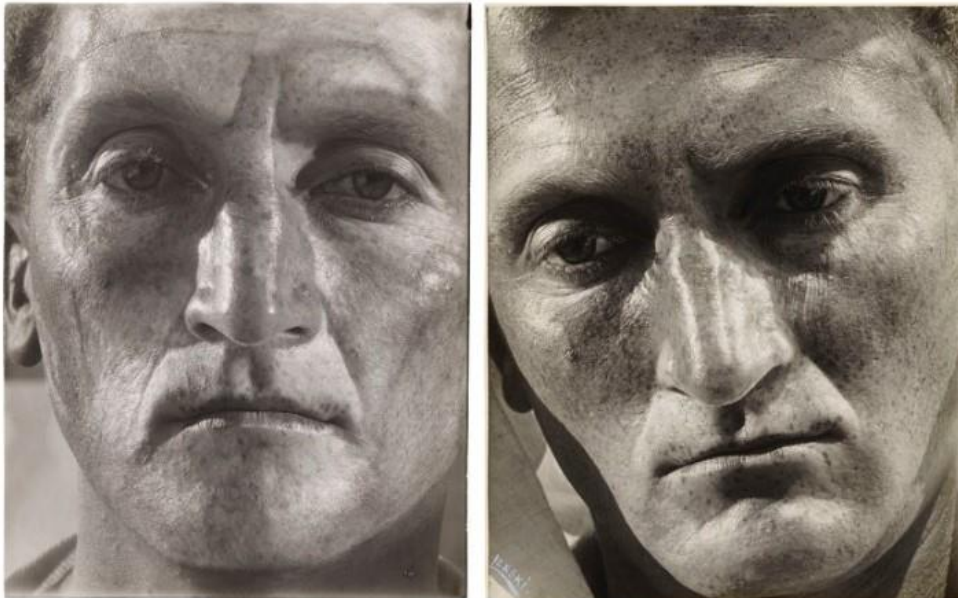

Figure 42 H. Lerski, two works from *Metamorphosis Through Light,* Tel Aviv, 1936. Provenance: Kicken Gallery, Berlin then acquired from a private owner in 1989.

In today's media world, there is a perpetual production and consumption of faces. As a result, it is not surprising that Belting claims that the media's masks have substituted the natural face in our culture. The steady stream of fake faces, ergo the masks, results in an overabundance of images, resulting in homogenization. Consequently, a gradual vanishing of the truly human face. This was evident since the very beginning of photography; with the advancement of technology, the speed and precision with which

the method of face reproduction can now be recreated is astounding. These digital innovations produce perfect replicas of the face and the masks in our times that are hard to identify. As a result, new synthetic faces are created and the original body is cut off. This is the advent of «*cyberfaces*».[4]

Finally, these cyberfaces do not aspire to complete resemblance to the real thing and therefore their goal is not to be true representations of reality. The mass media extrapolates faces from real people: facial masks are created, and the two beings no longer exchange glances. In the present circumstances, the viewer and the owner of the mask do not interact anymore, everything is reduced to a passive reception of the message produced by the person displayed on a screen or from any other part. These facial masks appear also in public life, it is the case of a speaker whose face is excessively enlarged on a screen and he inevitably loses the real proportions of the face; consequently, will be perceived by the public as a mask. In this way, the orator is speaking for his own mask.

In «The facial society»[5], as Thomas Macho illustrates occurs when: consumers of faces become passive to the constant production of replicas of the face. And consequently, even the producer starts to fabricate masks instead of natural expressions. In this regard, the statements from Macho are revealing: «Our society continuously produces faces and for this reason is definable as a *facial society*. Advertising for aesthetics and political purposes had politicized the face, they had also commercialized it».[6]

In other words, the production of faces follows the logic of advertising, or of politics. In media society everything is a product and has a price. The consequences of this phenomenon are many: most of all, it raises a separation between *prominent faces* and *anonymous* ones. Both of them have their origin in masks because they are both made in an artificial way.[7]

In the private consumption of faces the same happens, because the individuals start to

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[4] Ivi, pp. 171-174.
[5] T. Macho, *Das prominente Gesicht: Vom Face-to Face zum Interface*, p. 25.
[6] Ibidem.
[7] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History*, pp. 175-177.

publish their own figure in exchange for an apparent diversification. In this way, the public and the private realm become parallel worlds and this can be translated as the new version of the «*Société du spectacle*»[8] (*Society of spectacle*). This term was coined by Guy Debord, who was an important philosopher, sociologist and writer of the past century (1931-1994).

The problem of famous people as part of the media society is that they were already masks during their lifetime. At the same time, a media face cannot die because it already belongs to the un-natural world, just the body is bound to physical existence. That is the case for Warhol's work on Marilyn (*Fig. 43*): through idealization the artist was able to separate the face from the physicality of the body. Indeed, Monroe's face survives unperturbed in its beauty and youthfulness. In other words, she was already a stereotypical figure even while she was alive. The whole world knew that the face of Marilyn no longer belonged to her, instead it belonged to the public.

Figure 43 A. Warhol's preparation of a publicity of Marilyn Monroe for the film Niagara (1953), 1962, Archives of the Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh.

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[8] G. Debord, *La société du spectacle* (1967), tr. it. by P. Stanziale, Massari, Viterbo 2002.

Similarly, even in private life, the mask is inescapably present. It may seem that we limit the presence of the mask in coiffures, creams and makeups. In reality, this entity is much more present than we expect. A special mention should be made for cosmetic surgery, which provides for a transformation of the face to look like a famous person. In this case we cannot talk about mimesis of the self because it has nothing to do with it, rather it is a representation of an alien ego with its mask.

After decades, in the 2000s, people became attracted by the mimetic impulse to look like famous stars. The desire was to be recognized among the crowd, evidence of this tendency in 2004 a tv show called *I Want a Famous Face* promised surgery interventions to the participants.[9] In this occasion, cosmetic surgery promises a significant likeness to the idols of the star system to ordinary people: only in this way will their faces be guaranteed to be recognized among the crowd. This aim can be defined as a desire for near-permanent camouflage since the individual loses his or her real face in order to get a completely other one; following the intervention, he or she will be recognized in the public simply because of the resemblance to a celebrity. In the work from Moravia *The conformist*, on the other hand, the main character Marcello aspires to dissimulation, to be unrecognizable among the rest. People in the above-mentioned example of the TV show, on the other hand, want the exact opposite result: to be noticed in the crowd due to their physical attractiveness. The dichotomy of exhibition and dissimulation is expressed in these two situations once more. Disguise and camouflage mindsets are used to achieve both.

The crisis of portraiture led to what is defined as *Facial society*. Magazines have compensated for the loss of photographs and self-portraits since that time. Even if those publications offer a product that is far from a real human face, they work by transforming the image into a contemporary idol. As a result, the fictional worlds of performers, celebrities, and public figures triumph over reality. The media aided in the

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[9] V. L. Blum, *Objects of Love: I Want a Famous Face and the Illusions of Star Culture*, in "Configurations", vol. 15, 2007, pp. 33-53.

creation of abstract models and values, and it is worth noting that everyone can recognize himself or herself in the symbols provided by society. The media creates representational products and takes the role of real and representative presence in public. Because screens produce simulated proximity, which is an anonymous experience for the person represented. Physical proximity is no longer required, and faces can now exist in their «distant presence».[10]

The laws of media societies are written by the constant presence of pictures, and the large faces depicted everywhere take on the appearance of giant masks. The cult of faces has complete influence over the population, their desires, anxieties, and demands. Everything is uttered by phantom characters, i.e. the mask, which is created as a cultural product with the ability to attract or repel audiences. Culture, in reality, has a tendency to regulate expressions, as evidenced by the emphasis on specified standard expectations or inappropriate customs. For these reasons, the mask, whether handcrafted by men or involving a living face placed against a genuine one, is a cultural construct.

Furthermore, the history of face masks in authoritarian regimes or churches is complicated. The prevalence of these facial pictures has reached astounding proportions in this regard: iconoclastic figures are placed on walls or raised as monuments. The public sphere is transformed into a theatre for these power plays. Images of such leaders require symbolic representations in order to convey their authority to the masses. These projected figures have inherent abilities that can move masses and even states, but when they are destroyed, they expose their impotence. This is what occurred to Hosni Mubarak in Egypt during the January 2011 revolutions. During the uprising, the tyrant's photos were tarnished or simply removed.[11] The fleeting character of the enormous masks that swarm cities and streets is revealed by such iconoclastic acts. (*Fig. 44*) When such enormous faces are injured, they reveal themselves to be something other than a face, even if they have the appearance of one.

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[10] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History,* p. 182.
[11] Ivi, pp. 182-181.

Figure 44 Egyptian demonstrators tear down a poster of Egyptian President H. Mu*barak,* Alexandria, 2011.

In order to live in a society that venerates faces, or as Ulrich Raulff affirms «no one will ever again live pictureless and no one will live faceless»[12] new ways of replication are required to exist in a culture that values faces. The availability of new technology affects and improves the masks' effectiveness. The history of the face emerged in contemporary media history with photography, which hastened and democratized the portrayal of the individual role in society. Continuing with films and television, the climax is briefly attained with the eve of the Internet; social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram have completed this process of inexorable change.

The amazing amount of data that crosses cultural barriers is increasing every day, and the rate at which these images are shared and received is increasing as well. However, the one piece of information that is lacking is the true face, which is ironic.

According to Belting, modern society has reached a standstill in its assessment of the face, which has become a proxy for male separation. Faces are supposed to be rated simply as good or bad in the media society. The digital monopoly of our time concerns the German art historian, in his opinion the new technology is leading to a «stubborn

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[12] U. Raulff, *Image oder das öffentliche Gesicht*, ed. by D. Kamper und C. Wulfs,ed. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt 1984.

belief in the reality of the face and the realism of images that depict it».[13]

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[13] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History,* p. 92.

4.2 Controlling the faces of the crowd and the AFR technology

In *Face and Mask: a double Story*, Hans Belting concentrated on photo archives dating back to the nineteenth century. The goal of these collections was, and continues to be, to register and document individuals from large groups of people. Photographers, reporters, and police officers are instructed to push their picture shoots on people's faces. The anxiety of preventing and recognizing the faceless threats of criminals lurking in crowds is at the heart of this state behaviour. Government agencies are concerned about a significant number of people living in large cities for this reason they have being monitored. In any case, this trend explains the unstoppable development of facial monitoring techniques. For these reasons, a face archive was formed, and administrators utilized it to compile statistical data about people.[14]

One of the first to describe this occurrence was Edgar Allan Poe. In his story *The Man in the Crowd*, the protagonist is repeatedly disappearing into the crowd in order to catch a face that is becoming progressively indistinguishable from other individuals. The man of the crowd cannot survive if he is alone; he requires the protection of the mob to survive. According to Walter Benjamin this story marks the beginning of Poe's detective narratives. Furthermore, he states: «[The Man of the Crowd] does away with all the drapery that a crime represents. Only the armature remains: the pursuer, the crowd, and an unknown man who manages to walk through London in such a way that he always remains in the middle of the crowd».[15] Poe is able to illustrate a major issue in current mass society: the division between self and others, ego and mass. There is no distinction between pursuer and pursued in his remarkable short story. in this work Poe talked about us as a mass society and he pinpointed the true source of the majority of crimes in the common man.[16] This is because the frequency of impersonal crimes[17] rose at the time, and the single common cause was recognized as an ordinary person

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[14] Ivi, pp. 192-204.

[15] W. Benjamin, *The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire: Selected Writings* (1938), vol. IV, tr. en. by H. Eiland and M. W. Jennings, Harvard University Press, 2003.

[16] W. Brevda, *Search for the Originary Sign of Noir: Poe's 'The Man of the Crowd*, in "Mythosphere", 357-368, 2000.

[17] J. G. Kennedy, *Introduction: Poe in Our Time, in "A Historical Guide to Edgar Allan Poe"*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2001, pp. 78–81, (http://www.jstor.org/stable/41508407)

who can blend in with the crowd.

Édouard Manet is undoubtedly another key figure who examined the power of the masses through his art. His works are characterized by a large number of persons whose contours, colors, and characteristics are merged together. As a result, the collective submerges the individual faces, culminating in a living mass. The crowd scenes are depicted in a cheerful manner, but they retain the critical issue that defines the mass system: it is a hybrid of a battlefield and a collaborative framework. Manet depicted modern Parisian culture in familiar settings such as cafes, gardens, parks, and opera houses. (*Fig. 45*)

Figure 45 É. Manet, *La Musique aux Tuileries*, 1862, National Gallery, London.

In the study of masses, physiognomy strives to make a contribution at some point. Physiognomic was interested in concentrating criminals' faces in order to find common qualities that would eventually show a link between facial features and criminal behavior. Civic morals unavoidably deteriorated as a result of this thinking. The theory's apex was the concept that persons with unusual features, such as similar cranial size or ocular tendency, were born criminals, with the insane result that they should be imprisoned before they commit a crime. Obviously, this trend was considered a mistake, and the delusion of concretizing this research was eventually abandoned.

In any case, the first archives were constructed to track the nameless faces of the masses in order to predict potential criminal acts or to quickly identify the offenders after they had committed the crime. People were registered with approval numbers and an official stamp[18] in those archives. Faces are rapidly transformed into masks by creating a collection of faces stripped of their body and life characteristics.

The history of identity cards as a tool of control has its roots in distant times, they are a precedent of passport photographs that we are accustomed to. The personal identity cards are dated to medieval times and they were originally based on not very reliable descriptions of the identified person.[19] Since the nineteenth century, new methods of identification have been designed and approved. One of these examples is the wide use of photographs which provide a clear improvement in crowd control.

The establishment of a special unit of the Paris Police Department by Alphonse Bertillon in 1882 marks a watershed moment. He established the *Signalement*, a comprehensive database of people comprised of brief descriptions, dimensions, and three photographs of each individual. Bertillon noticed that two images of the profiles, as well as a frontal image of the face, were required to avoid facial expression changes. The birth of signage photography («photographie signaletique»)[20] was marked by this event. This innovation had a lot of benefits, but it was also rather expensive, therefore it was eventually abandoned and replaced by finger examination.

The same mechanism occurs nowadays, new technologies supplant the old ones because they are more efficient and less expensive. Iris scans, which are even cheaper and more effective than fingerprints, have largely supplanted fingerprints in recent years. Faces are easily preserved as digital information as a result of this breakthrough, making it easier to consult an individual's personal information. As a result, people's identities have devolved into a numerical and abstract issue. In the words of Belting: «Our visual perception of the face which was intended as a mirror for personal identity,

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[18] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History*, pp. 192-204.
[19] A. Sander, A. Döblin and M. Robertson, *August Sander* (1994), ed. Schirmer's Visual Library, 2013, p. 13.
[20] Ibidem.

is no longer relevant for official recognition». This human ability to recognize people no longer reigns supreme: because to scientific breakthroughs such as biometrics and AFR (Automatic Facial Recognition), a richness of sensitive information can now be extracted from a single hair, a fragment of skin, or DNA. While walking we walk in the streets among our own similars, o ur faces are more important to video surveillance than they are to us.

Art has the ability to reclaim the humanity that has been robbed by the rigorous archival system. An example of this idea is the installation created by Jochen Gerz in the Museum am Ostwall in Dortmund. the artist named is work *The Gift* because it involved an exchange of gifts between the participants. Those who had contributed to the realization of the work, at its conclusion could exchange their portrait for that of another person. (*Fig. 46 and 47*) The project comprises of 700 images, at the beginning were only 500. These photo-portraits were taken by the artist and then hung on the museum's wall. The outcome is an inventory of faces and physiognomic traits, while the wall appears to be more of a "collective memory," at first glance. it recalls the concept of togetherness and solidarity. The work of art was designed to function in the same way as states and police prefectures do when it concerns to facial recognition. The Gift is interested in public and private spheres, the theme of invisibility, and the interaction between the individual and the collective body.[21]

Figure 46 J. Gerz, *The Gift*, 2008-2009, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA).

[21] S. Weigel, *Phantom Images: Face and Feeling in the Age of Brain Imaging*, ed. with J. Kohl, in "Kritische Berichte", 33-53, 2012, *("EN FACE: Seven Essays on the Human Face"),* Marburg 2012, here pp. 47-50.

Figure 47 Two participants on the project *The Gift* exchanging their portraits, Dortmund, Ger*many, 2000.*

The fact that guests were asked to participate with their own faces symbolizes the installation's interactive character. Those images were taken from the same perspective and light, and the creation gradually began to invade the walls of other museums, and it could theoretically never cease growing. The gift's concept pertains to the idea of tourists leaving their photo and receiving one of another visitor's.

The reference to the repository is an allusion to the Kassel Contemporary Art Exhibition *Documenta*. In 1987 the French conceptual artist Christian Boltanski selected 350 black and white photos of people who had been deported to Auschwitz. (*Fig. 48*) The faces were exposed unidentified by removing from them their civilian status. These faces are saved as separate entities that exist outside of time and space. Another work of art by the same artist was inspired by this idea of documenting people's faces. Children from the Lycee Chases, published in 1987, explains the premise of the archive. These memorial photographs were taken in Auschwitz, the saddest place on the planet. In this case, the project entirely corrupted the concept of the archive. Boltanski gathered images of Jewish children for this piece in order to elevate these faces to reliquiar memory. Boltanski's photographs remained nameless images that continued to be unfinished due to a loss of recollection that prevented a reconnection with their

names and bodies.[22] To those faces were denied the opportunity to keep their identity; they resisted identification, and as a result, they were documented as a mass extermination of victims. Memories of Auschwitz are more than just human masks; they also carry on the legacy of death masks.[23]

Figure 48 B. Chistian, *Reserve-Detective III*, 1987.

The methods by which security agencies monitor persons have radically changed as a result of new technologies. One of these breakthroughs occurred in Maryland, where the National Security Agency (NSA) was formed. NSA stands for National Security Agency. This organization is hidden away in the vast Fort Mead park, and it receives a massive amount of data every day: the equivalent of millions of books in the Congress library.[24] This organization is significantly larger than the CIA or FBI, and its sole purpose is to listen in on people's conversations.[25] For Harrison Salisbury, first regular correspondent for the New York Times in Moscow[26], the NSA is «the most impressive creature of modern espionage. If I ask my neighbours what is the biggest agency in

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[22] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History,* 199-201.

[23] V. I. Stoichita, *The Pygmalion Effect: From Ovid to Hitchcock*, tr. en. by A. Anderson, The University Chicago Press, Chicago 2008, p. 190.

[24] E. Laurent, *La guerre du Kosovo*, I ed. Plon, Paris 1999.

[25] Ibidem.

[26] E. Pace, *Harrison E. Salisbury, 84, Author and Reporter, Dies*, in "The New York Times", 1993, Retrieved in 2009 (https://www.nytimes.com/1993/07/07/obituaries/harrison-e-salisbury-84-author-and-reporter-dies.html?sec=&spon=&pagewanted=all)

America, they will probably answer FBI or CIA. Indeed, NSA is much more powerful, but perhaps one American out of ten even knows the meaning of the acronym»[27].

If listening is useful, listening with the support of images is even better. As a result, the American government established the National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA) in 1996.[28] The Pentagon, which is the headquarters of the United States Department of Defense, is directly responsible for the NIMA. Images taken by military satellites in orbit were used by the Agency. Furthermore, in 1997, the national defense organization agreed to «participate in the Global Program for Information Dominance, that is to bring under control the total flux of commercial images of the world».[29]

In terms of crowd control, Automatic Facial Recognition (AFR) is the most effective and widely employed technology in current cities. The AFR is increasingly being used in criminal justice systems around the world, particularly in China, Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Italy.[30] The fear of terrorist strikes has grown exponentially since the 11/09 tragedy, which explains why this technology has advanced so quickly.[31] To identify persons, modern technology uses biometrics like as DNA, facial extrapolation, iris scans, and fingerprints. A comprehensive system of algorithms drives the biometrics parts of the investigation, providing a range of functions such as comparison, identification, and verification. Comparison is about creating new intercorrelations among a multitude of information gathered from different sources. Indeed, verification considers the correspondence in one-to-one (1:1) inquiry, especially from the image captured by the camera and then verified with a passport stored in the database. Ultimately, the identification concerns the research through one-to-many

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[27] Ibidem.

[28] P. Virilio, *Télésurveillance globale*, in "Le Monde Diplomatique", 545, 1999 (https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/1999/08/VIRILIO/3196)

[29] Ibidem.

[30] K. L. Ritchie, C. Cartledge, B. Growns and others, *Public attitudes towards the use of automatic facial recognition technology in criminal justice systems around the world*, in "Plos One", 2012 (https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0258241)

[31] D. Lyon, *Biometrics, identification and surveillance*, in "Bioethics", 499–508, 2008 (https://doi.org/ 10.1111/j.1467-8519.2008.00697.x). See also M. Mann and M. Smith, *Automated facial recognition technology: Recent developments and approaches to oversight* (2017), in "The University of New South Wales Law Journal", 121-145, 2019 (*https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/ielapa.771179858194317*)

(1:N) sources or databases.[32]

Examining facial features such as eyes, noses, and other facial characteristics is the technique for this high-tech surveillance implementation. The face must be transferred to a flat surface and the fundamental data retrieved from the image in order to obtain these insights. Furthermore, information must be mapped in order to construct an automatic recognition system; the program determines whether the face correctly correlates to the name based on an algorithm. The system can only respond yes or no to inquiries regarding the effective relationship of the given name and the face stored in the database.[33] Surveillance cameras are installed in sensitive areas such as border crossings, as well as public areas such as streets and parks.

In these terms, the face recognition system considers the face as a mask: it is archived as a statistical entity and therefore isolated from the rest of the body; as a result, the face crystallizes as a distant icon on a picture.

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[32] K. L. Ritchie, C. Cartledge, B. Growns and others, *Public attitudes towards the use of automatic facial recognition technology in criminal justice systems around the world*.

[33] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History*, p. 92.

4.3 Masks without faces

In contemporary art, the faces had already been accustomed to the transforming power of filters in media technologies. Due to the radical changes in facial culture, such as the creation of cyberspaces, real faces have become even more rare. This shift has its origins in media culture, with films and photography, but it has now been democratized via technological gadgets. In this view, cyberfaces must be considered not only as a mutation of the personal aspect of an individual, but also as a true turning point for current media productions: they are cyber masks. The distinction between what is natural and what is an artistic production is a challenge for us, the cyberfaces are the fundamental part of this problem. Because, hybrid realities emerge, making it impossible to distinguish between what is genuine and what is not.[34]

According to Belting, the anthropologist Manfred Fassler described the concept of cyber faces as «the ability of a face to subsist without the necessity of being reflected by a mirror».[35] To look at it another way, cyberfaces can be distinguished from actual ones since they do not require communication with the outside world or even with themselves. Cyberfaces are not required to glance in the mirror, and they do not expect to learn anything about their appearance. The mirror is an important tool for personal development; humans have been looking for their reflection from childhood, and it is an act of self-acceptance. Things changed with the advent of mass media and the consequent «tele-presence»[36], Fassler is worried, he affirms that the «future of the face is uncertain».[37]

Contemporary art pushes us to take a close look at various areas of culture, particularly the most controversial ones.[38] Our civilization, at this specific moment in history, should be defined as a culture of surfaces rather than bodies. This is due to the fact that, in today's society, apparent real faces can be created at any time and by anyone without

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[34] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History*, p. 239.
[35] M. Faßler, *Ohne Spiegel leben. Sichtbarkeiten und posthumane Menschenbilder*, ed. Wilhelm Fink, Munich 2000, p. 19.
[36] Ibidem.
[37] Ivi, p. 97.
[38] W. A. Ewing, *About Face: Photograph and the Death of the Portrait*, ed. Hayward Gallery, London 2004.

having to correlate to the physical reality. As a result, the faces are unable to engage in the life cycle, and hence cannot be classified as live or death masks. An empty mask is the only thing that can come out of a spontaneous face fabrication. This is what "cyber face" really means: a mask that looks exactly like a face but, ironically, it does not correlate to any genuine model due to its wholly different nature. In truth, cyberfaces resemble real people, but they have no resemblance to a specific face. As a result, we have got a hollow mask wandering around our displays.

The most effective result achieved by media society is that images have already established their «imaginary world».[39] Instead of being considered the double of the face, as it was in previous epoques, the mask alludes to an endless number of alternative models in these conditions. In these views, the digital mask is a paradox: it no longer serves as an illustration and instead presents itself as an entity in its own right. Because cyber faces are self-contained, the historical link between face and mask gradually breaks down. In other words, the digital face is a historical contradiction in portraiture.

Portraits, on the other hand, have a unique position in today's culture. Portraits, according to Claudia Schmolders, have a different meaning in our time than they did in the past: they are memory media, making reference to something or someone who lived in previous epochs. Indeed, they have lost a fundamental aspect: they are no longer an occasion for generating curiosity; instead, they wait calmly and in silence for our screen to be exhibited. As a result, our computer monitors have sterilely formatted all of the facial photos we have created.[40]

Because virtual faces are "programmed" to remain without an identity, a new form of anonymity has appeared. This desire to maintain anonymity with a cyber face is referred to as *Terminal Identity*.[41] The term "terminal" refers to the computer's display (terminal), but it also refers to the idea of discarding a former identity in favour of a new,

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[39] On this topic see M. Wertheim, *The Pearly Gates of Cyberspace: A History of Space from Dante to the Internet* (1999), ed. W. W. Norton & Co Inc, New York 2000.
[40] C. Schmolders, *Eye Level. The Linear Perspective in Face Perception*, tr. by J. Chase, L. Anderson and J. Kohl, in "Kritische berichte", (*"EN FACE. Seven Essays on the Human Face"*), 2012.
[41] S. Bukatman, *Terminal Identity: The Virtual Subject in Postmodern Science Fiction*, Duke University Press, Durham 1993.

manufactured one. Why are facial recognition systems the most widely utilized techniques for establishing identity? Some of the points generated from the International Civil Aviation Organization's list may be useful for our objectives. Facial recognition is favoured over other recognition tactics because: first, the majority of citizens consider facial photographs as socially and culturally acceptable; second, it is a non-intrusive form of verification because the user does not have to engage with any device. In addition, the AFR does not need costly efforts or a significant amount of time in enrolment procedures; this technology has the advantage of having a quick reaction time and the ability to conduct retroactive investigations.[42]

Considering that states have dramatically increased the number of surveillance cameras in their territories in the response to the 9/11 terrorist attack. Things have changed so fast that no amount of restraining legislation has been designed to contain these innovations. Is there any public discussion on the subject? Is there any modern art that considers the growing reality of surveillance? If that is the case, how do artists react to this interest in facial recognition technology? Surveillance Art is a new art language that analyses and occasionally inquiries about the surveillance measures used by governments and private individuals. Three case studies will be presented in the next chapter demonstrating three different approaches conceived by artists in the field of surveillance art.

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[42] L. Hausken, *The Face in the Biometric Passport*, in "*The Art of Identification: Forensics, Surveillance, Identity*", Penn State University Press, 159-181, 2021 (https://doi.org/10.1515/9780271091372-010)

Chapter 5: Case Study of masks against surveillance
5.1 The Surveillance Art

The surveillance society, as we know it today, is the result of a phenomenon that began in the previous few decades. Surveillance was presented as a response to the most tremendous event of this century: the terrorist attack on September 11th, 2001. The international scenario has been increasingly complicated after the attack on the Twin Towers. North American and Europe gradually abandoned the Schengen Accord, and since that time, all the commodities, persons and information that travelled across the borders were brought under strong surveillance.[1] Since that historic moment, states have radically altered how authorities and agents monitor the movement of products, persons, and personal information.

For this reason, K. Gunnarsdóttir and K. Rommetveit individuated a policy vacuum in the European legislation after 9\11. Laws appeared prepared for the inclusion of new biometrical methods of surveillance in European countries.[2] The two Norwegian researchers identify the same climate of urgency also in the political situation of the United States and Canada. At the basis of their idea there was the fact that in both countries the biometric technologies were presented to the public as a salvation: the only tool that could provide a sane division between «us and them».[3] In addition, considering the fact that a public debate was basically absent, the AFR technologies rapidly became common in surveillance practices. AFR is still considered as the most effective biometric technology available today.

The escalation of government monitoring modalities shifted to the concept of *permanent risk* and *risk management*. These new methods of control, according to

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[1] E. Zureik and M. Salter, *Global Surveillance and Policing* (2005), ed. Willan Publishing, 2013, p. I.
[2] K. Gunnarsdóttir and K. Rommetveit, *The Biometric Imaginary: (Dis)trust in Policy Vacuum*, in "Public Understanding of Science", 2, 195-211, 2017 (https://doi.org/10.1177/0963662516688128)
[3] J. P. Aus, *EU Governance in an Area of Freedom, Security and Justice: Logics of Decision-making in the Justice and Home Affairs Council*, in "Arena", 15, 4-51, 2007 (http://www.arena.uio.no/publications/)

Haggerty and Ericson, might be labelled «surveillance assemblation».[4] According to their theory, cross board information will be divided into digital and physical components, which will then be reassembled in a different order and meaning. As a result, human bodies are separated from their digital shadows, resulting in «data doubles».[5] In other words, data doubles suggest the conversion of human bodies, as well as minds, into data. These pieces of information are reassembled to provide a personal reflection and interaction.[6]

The term "surveillance society" appeared for the first time in 2006, it is mentioned in a report compiled by the Surveillance Studies Network (SSN). The SSN is an international research centre which also provides an informative network on surveillance, it is a charitable organization registered in the UK and its aim is to develop knowledge on this interdisciplinary field by research and through the distribution of its journal. Two years before the publication of the report, Richard Thomas, the information commissioner of the United Kingdom, warned English citizens, declaring: «We are sleepwalking into a surveillance society».[7] These strong words were perfectly understood by the SSN, in fact, in the above-mentioned report they assert «Where we find purposeful, routine, systematic and focused attention paid to personal details, for the sake of control, entitlement, management, influence or protection, we are looking at surveillance». [8]

Since the War on Terror started after the 2001 attack, the methodologies of surveillance technologies have increased. [9] Closed Circuit Television (CCTV), drones, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV), and satellites in orbit that can distinguish faces, vehicles, and other objects are some of the most well-known examples. More revolutionary technologies, such as the AFR and biometrics analysis, should be included in our list. Because of the events of the current War on Terror, these monitoring measures

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[4] K. D. Haggerty and R. V. Ericson, *The surveillant assemblage*, in "Br. J. Sociol", *51*, 605–622, 2000, (https://doi.org/10.1080/00071310020015280)
[5] Ibidem.
[6] Ibidem.
[7] R. Thomas interview, *Watchdog's Big Brother UK warning*, in "BBC News", 2004. (http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/3568468.stm)
[8] Report on the Surveillance Society for the Information Commissioner by the SSN, 2006.
[9] S. Cahill, M. Campbell and S. McKnight, *Art and Surveillance* (2022), in "Art and Surveillance". (http://www.artandsurveillance.com/about/)

incorporate military strategies on civilians, and these activities are widely accepted. Surveillance technologies are prevalent in public settings and residents' private lives in the cause of national security and world peace.

Moreover, in 2005 new standards for the control of passports were approved by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). This update provided the inclusion of biometric information and facial recognition implementations. As a result of the inclusion of a chip in passports that ensures a comprehensive examination of the individual, states have begun to coordinate in order to provide citizens with worldwide surveillance. This global interoperability agreed that these new standards should be adopted by all the states no later than 2010. In practice, biometric technologies have been used in airports and dunes in more than sixty countries since 2006. The number of participants rapidly increased, nowadays the number of member states is more than 120 and despite America and Europe also Asian countries, South America and also African countries have joined the program. The remarkable thing is that this phenomenon had such a quick development, but everything was done almost without a proper public debate.

In present times, contemporary art is starting to question the validity, the effectiveness and the legitimacy of these new forms of public surveillance. Art provides a chance to investigate both the technologies involved and the actors who use them. Artists are doing critical investigations through exhibitions and art objects that thematize the surveillance methodologies and its consequences. This is an interesting field of art because in these terms it can engage the relationship between technological supervision and the image it produces of the everyday life of people.

The philosopher Michael Foucault wrote *The Birth of the Prison* (*Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison*) in 1977 about the evolution of institutional and industrial tactics of government surveillance and detention. His research placed the so-called Bentham prison in a sociological perspective, as a structure capable of subverting the monitoring regime due to its unique construction. Because it is made up of a circular tower that climbs from the middle of an annular building, this device is known as the panopticon.

(*Fig. 49*) Because of the perspective relationship between the cells and the surveillance tower, as well as the fact that it was backlighted, anyone could tell whether or not it was occupied. Because the impression of being controlled is still felt by the prisoners, surveillance was always possible even when the controller was not there. This architectural innovation produced a wonderful effect «to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects». [10] It is no surprise that the panopticon has become an iconic symbol for surveillance research in society today.[11]
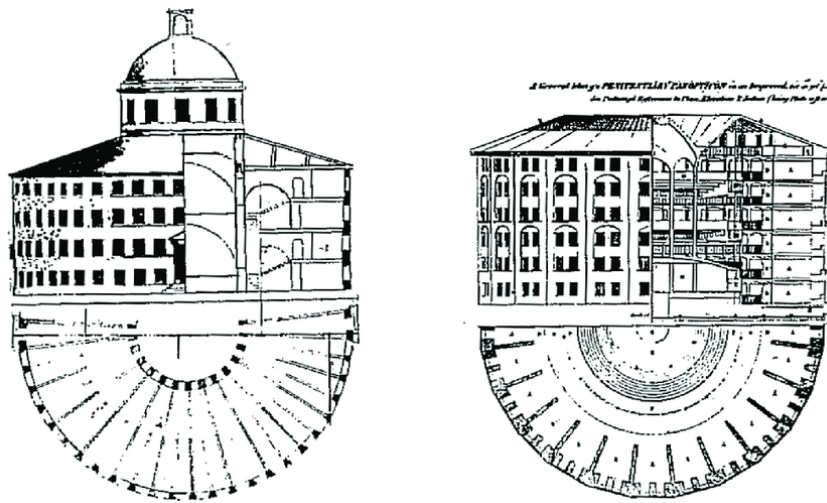

Figure 49 J. Bentham's Panopticon in elevation project, floor building, lateral sections and architecture section of the building. Project by Di Gennaro and others 1975.

While Lyon, on the other hand, claims that the panopticon is insufficient to describe the surveillance hypothesis. Bigo recommended several changes to the project in this regard, and this new version is known as the «*banopticon*».[12] The citizens, rather than the criminals, are the focus of this second case. If Foucault's theory is founded on the idea that prisoners are encircled by society, Bigo's claim is based on the idea that in societies today, the "normal" citizen is encircled to the excluding of the *abnormal* ones.[13]

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[10] M. Foucault, *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*, tr. en. by A. Sheridan, Penguin, London 1977, p. 201.

[11] G. Caluya, *The post-panoptic society? Reassessing Foucault in surveillance studies*, in "Social Identities", 621-633, 2010 (https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2010.509565)

[12] E. Zureik and M. Salter, *Global Surveillance and Policing*, p. 61.

[13] D. Bigo, *Security and Immigration: toward a critique of the governmentality of unease*, in "Alternatives:

The metaphor of the borders is a perfect topic which is probably understudied. While all borders are important, some are much more relevant than others. Inter-state borders, for example, provide a specific message that can imply negative situations such as discrimination or oppression. International borders, on the other hand, can be an opportunity for openness and commerce. In this sense, such borders always represent the condition of the countries involved, as well as the over-determination of different political, economic, military, and cultural visions.[14] Despite individual policing, the political and economic spheres in our modern society are merging their boundaries due to increased worldwide mobility. As a result, in Zureik's study, the genesis of «the conversion of the body into data»[15] is traced back to this global mobility regime. Following this direction, it becomes clear why biometric elements are considered fundamental in surveillance practice in our present days.

What defines our contemporary situation is the paradoxical fact that the mass surveillance is required by the states and governments, but corporations involved in this process have to maintain discretion on the way they do it. For them, control tactics must remain opaque to the public in some instances, but surveillance is also about exposing what isn't visible: it is about exposition, it is about finding the generalities of each individual. The absurdity of the situation is that we are sometimes completely aware of the methods by which we are being controlled: consider public spaces, where the panopticon is always present. It is a panoptic approach since people can see the cameras that are controlled in areas like squares, parks, and civic buildings. In such public areas, the panoptical concept alters our behaviour toward others. At the same time, we do know almost nothing about the NSA (National Security Agency) project of archiving of recordings or the Global Information Dominance program provided by the NIMA (National Imagery and Mapping Agency). Furthermore, the most pressing aspect of this topic is the contemporary panopticon paradigm, which includes the opacity of digital information. The panoptical model hides in our portable displays whether we like it or

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global, local, political", pp. 63–92, 2002.

[14] E. Zureik and M. Salter, *Global Surveillance and Policing*, p. 3.

[15] E. Zureik and K. Hindle, *Governance, Security and Technology: the case of biometrics*, in "Studies in Political Economy", pp. 113–137, 2004.

not. The true invisibility of the monitoring system is the ability of data and computer coding within our devices to perpetuate this sense of control over our intents. In this way, in the algorithmic model we are in, the central eyes of Bentham's prisons are replaced by the power of information. The serious issue with smart monitoring models is that they deliver answers that are not just timely, but also preemptive and even predictive.[16] during the opening of the New Art Gallery exhibition.[17]

With "Surveillance art" artists attempt to debate the complex subject in this way. This was the case with the New Gallery exhibition group, when a number of artists collaborated on a project whose initial goal was to raise public awareness about the impacts of surveillance on human independence and privacy. They assert «Surveillance has been an increasingly omnipresent force in North American culture [...] Physically and digitally, a person's actions are monitored, and the question of whether or not that is harmful to one's existence arises»[18] and the exhibition's goal was to look into the geopolitical and economic mechanisms that are caused by states' invasive monitoring logics.

Moreover, the works presented in this art exhibition are significant in matters of political identity, social media invasiveness, personal surveillance and they also questioned the importance of activist behaviours. Art can clearly show the level of societal consciousness on specific topics, and in this case, the artists are sounding the alarm. Artworks such as Sterling Crispin's masks or Jillian Mayer's video installations and pictures are revealing. (*Fig. 50*)

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[16] J. Puar and L. West, *Jasbir Puar: Regimes of Surveillance, interview,* in "Cosmologics: A Magazine of Science, Religion and Culture*",* 2015 (http://cosmologicsmagazine.com/jasbir-puar-regimes-of-surveillance/)

[17] J. Wilkinsons, *Interrupt, intercept, investigate, interrogate*, in "Unlisted Station", presentation of Surveillance group show at The New Gallery, Calgary, 2015 (https://www.mathieulambert.fr/unlisted-station.html)

[18] Ibidem.

Figure 50 J. Mayer*, Billboard for ICA Miami, Miami.* Photo by Fredrik Nilsen Studio.

Surveillance artists and art curators encourage the use of online databases in their campaigns since their goal is to spread as much information as possible about the topic. The essential role of these online archives, which were previously employed by the surveillance system to identify people, has now changed: the art has taken ownership of the "enemy's" instruments. Furthermore, these databases, which are given by individual artists or art galleries, are participative and they encourage debates. Surveillance art is a multidisciplinary topic that necessitates the participation of several individuals like researchers, artists, and social studies specialists. The *Art and Surveillance* platform, which is promoted by the Canadian Research Council of social sciences and humanities, is an example of this phenomena. It is a website that gathers researchers' findings and exchanges knowledge on the topic.[19]

Surveillance art is a new phenomenon that arose in response to the terrorist attack in New York in 2001, as we have seen. It is impossible to perfectly define such reality at the moment because it is not yet acknowledged as an art movement or an art current. Another essential consideration is that surveillance artists use a wide range of methods to deliver their messages and to actualize their oeuvres. Some artists are interested in

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[19] The Website promoted by the Canadian Research Council about Surveillance Art http://www.artandsurveillance.com/about/

the political aspects of the idea, while others are more interested in the social consequences; some artists are playful, while others are cynical. Again, some creators fully embraced the cause, while others just did so for a brief period of time during their work. But probably, the most fundamental difference of visions is: for somebody *artveillance*[20] is about using the monitoring technologies to make art, whereas in other cases, the artist simply refers to the most famous theorizations of the topic.

In terms of the theoretical context of what surveillance art is, Bringhenti defines it as «any art initiative that is realized to interrogate the surveillance society».[21] This style of art does more than just criticize government acts; it also helps to the construction of a collective imagery. Bringhenti traditionally defines *artveillance* as any artistic effort that combines art and surveillance, and this definition has two important implications. First of all, art has to be considered in its technological aspect, that is to say art as a technological production and the inevitable contamination of digital tools in the realization of a piece of art.[22] Second, surveillance methods must be treated as artistic products, according to Bringhenti; the concept is that technological processes that produce state-of-the-art recognitions must be considered in all of their amazing and impressiveness.[23]

Surveillance art, in general, tries to undermine technology efforts in the identification of people. As a result, the majority of the artwork created under this trade is focused on the face. One of the most essential objectives of *artveillance* is to make it impossible to recognize a person in a crowd; surveillance artists make use of distorted face images, camouflaged equipment, makeup and hairstyle, reflective underwear, and realistic resin masks, among other strategies, to elude facial identification. All of these anti-surveillance camouflage strategies give an aestheticization of resistance to surveillance

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[20] A. M. Bringhenti, *Artveillance: At the Crossroads of Art and Surveillance*, in "Surveillance & Society", (Special Issue on Surveillance, Performance and New Media Art), ed. J. McGrath and R. Sweeny, 175-186. (http://www.surveillance-and-society.org), here p. 175.

[21] Ibidem.

[22] C. Paul, *Digital Art*, III ed. by Thames & Hudson, London 2003. See also B. Wands, *Art of the Digital Age*, ed. Thames & Hudson, London 2006.

[23] A. M. Bringhenti, *Artveillance: At the Crossroads of Art and Surveillance*, p. 175-176.

societies' discriminatory logics.[24] Hanna Rose Shell characterizes camouflage approaches in artworks as follows: «a way of seeing, being, moving, and working in the world. It is a form of cultivated subjectivity. As such, it is an individualized form of self-awareness that is also part of a network of institutional practices».[25] Torin Monahn, on the other hand, believes that none of these designs or camouflage techniques accomplish successful counter visuality. However, in the next chapters, there will be presented some important case studies in which the expectations are met.

In general, all of the examples offered have the same goal: to turn the human face into a mask. Even while makeup experts can effectively transform the physiognomy of a face, it stays the same under the masquerade. It is all a matter of perspective in all of these cases, and the artist's objective is to shift the perception that the cameras have on us. These designs can be used to deceive facial recognition software: cosmetics can fool both people and machines. As a result, this escamotage techniques might be used to trick even the AFR algorithms. As a consequence, the mission of *artveillance* is to gradually turn the face into a mask.[26]

The artist Adam Harvey's designs are a vivid demonstration of anti-detection cosmetics. She came up with the concept of *CV Dazzle*, where *CV* stands for Computer Vision. Harvey's CV Dazzle is a unique and aesthetically pleasing concept in which she designed face makeup techniques based on the optical illusion design of dazzle camouflage. Indeed, the artist experimented with dazzle camouflage, a phenomenon known as "razzle dazzle" in previous chapters of this thesis. As a result, we know that Dazzle is named for the jarring stripes that were painted on battleships to ensure that they were not detected by enemies. (*Fig. 51*) Likewise, Harvey's makeups cause disorientation and make facial recognition technologies ineffective. Computer vision differs from the human's one and the electronic observer searches for specific input. Harvey's works compromise the efficiency of digital intelligence and if algorithms are triggered by those

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[24] T. Monahan, *The Right to Hide? Anti-Surveillance Camouflage and the Aestheticization of Resistance*, in "Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies", Vol. 12, 2, pp. 159–178, 2015, here p. 159.

[25] H. R. Shell, *Hide and Seek: Camouflage, Photography, and the Media of Reconnaissance*, Zone Books, New York 2012, p. 19.

[26] H. Belting, *Face and mask: A Double History,* pp. 208-209.

alien patterns, they fail to detect any human face.[27] It is particularly fascinating to consider how *artveillance* works employ the same mimicking and camouflage methods as that of the natural world.

Figure 51 A. Lismer, *Olympic with Returned Soldiers,* 1919. The subject is a Canadian troop ship outfitted with dazzle camouflage.

Indeed, we have already seen how these special patterns are efficient for camouflage purposes: these lines respond to the principle of the disruptive figures, theorized by Thayer. It is the same mechanism that worked for the *Coppe-head snake* (*Fig. 18*), what the painter called *countershading*.[28] The stripes null the real contours of the animal or of the object, as a result, the visual continuity is broken by the orientation and the sizes of the painted lines. In the same way, the colors and shapes applied by Harley disrupt face-detection. These designs follow the same logic of countershading, pursuing Thayer's opinion it is clear that the same discourse could perfectly fit also the art-

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[27] R. Meyer, *Avoid Facial Detection Algorithms … with a T-Shirt* (2013), in "The Atlantic'', retrieved in 2014 (http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2013/10/avoid-facial-detectionalgorithms-with-a-t-shirt/280253/)
[28] A. H. Thayer and G. H. Thayer, *Concealing Coloration in the Animal Kingdom* (1909), Andesite Press, New York 2015.

surveillance example.

«Animals are painted by Nature darkest on those parts which tend to be most lighted by the sky's light, and *vice versa*. [...] the fact that a vast majority of creatures of the whole animal kingdom wear this gradation, developed to an exquisitely minute degree, and are famous for being hard to see in their homes, speaks for itself».[29]

In reality, the identical technique is used in military planes. Because of the American painter and naturalist's favourite principle of counter-shading, the figure is occulted by light beneath and dark above, resulting in the occultation of the figure. In order to avoid facial surveillance in our cities, Harvey creates its own camouflage scheme. (*Fig. 52 and 53*) The artist frames the eyes with his designs and reverses the shadow and light lines on the face. Darkening or hiding parts that are normally light, such as the bridge of the nose or the upper cheek. As a result, the person's face will not be perceived in the same way.[30] Thanks to this makeup the physiognomy is distorted and therefore not detectable by artificial intelligence.[31] All of Harvey's work is geared toward some sort of algorithm. For example, all make-ups operate against the Viola-Jones Haar Cascade algorithm. Because CV Dazzle alters the x,y axis through which the camera interprets our face as a picture, it disrupts facial recognition. The Viola-Jones approach is compatible with OpenCV, one of the most popular face detectors. This method excels at computational efficiency and performs well for frontal face imagery. It is great for real-time face recognition, and it is frequently utilized in mobile applications, web services, robotics, and scientific study. We can observe how animal camouflage tactics are also adopted and utilized in the artistic field thanks to this example. As we will see, surveillance art makes full use of these mimicry techniques.

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[29] Ivi, pp. 14–15.
[30] Website from the artist A. Harvey (https://cvdazzle.com/)
[31] A. Harvey, *How to Hide from Machines*, in "DIS Magazine", 2013 (http://dismagazine.com/dystopia/evolved-lifestyles/8115/anti-surveillance-how-to-hide-from-machines/)
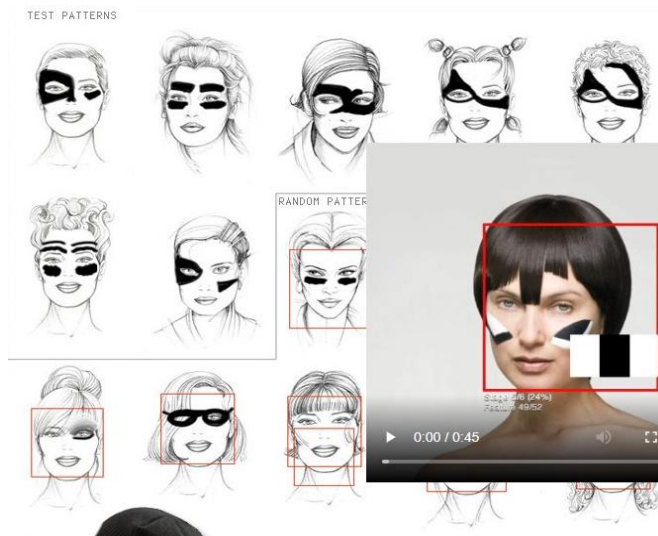
Figure 52 A. Harvey, *Look n° 1* and sketches, 2010.

Figure 53 A. Harvey, *Look n° 4,* 2010*.*

These are the main motivations behind these *artveillance* works proposed by Harvey. To conclude, I report the comment of the artist: «From all appearances, deception has always been critical to daily survival—for human and non-human creatures alike—and,

judging by its current ubiquity, there is no end in immediate sight».[32]

This was an early example of how surveillance artists adapt Caillois' and others' animal-related skills for their own purposes. Instead, in the next chapters, we will look at situations where three-dimensional creations have been realized in the realm of *artveillance*. The proposed case studies concern three contemporary artists who investigate in their own way, with their own sensitivity, the current trend of surveillance and privacy of the citizens of the so-called *surveillance society*.

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[32] R. Meyer, *Avoid Facial Detection Algorithms … with a T-Shirt*.

5.2 Data-Masks by Sterling Crispin

Sterling Crispin is a conceptual artist who uses technology to create artwork that is in opposition to AFR technology. Because the artist is concerned about the constant and aggressive development of biometric identification technology, he designs masks that can be used to counteract it. The masks in question are the outcome of a project that uses recognition technology to specifically prevent it from working. The artist produces 3D masks that are based on the algorithms that artificial intelligence uses to perceive individuals. These morphed faces were then 3D printed as masks; they are like shadows of humans and this is how we are perceived by the machine-minds-eye devices. This demonstrates how the machine and the mass surveillance understand human identity, revealing newly unknown aspects of these systems. (*Fig 54*)

Underpinning his objectives, the artist dedicated to the development of these works in order to be used in a variety of contexts. Crispin's *Data-masks* were created as a form of political protest by bringing invisibility from today's surveillance and biometric procedures. Data-Masks give shape to an otherwise impenetrable network of control and identification systems, allowing us to see how they affect our identities.[33]
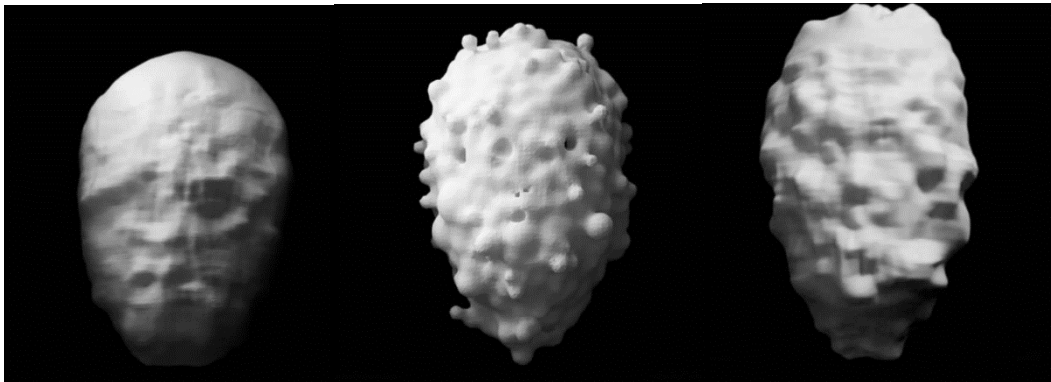

Figure 54 S. Crispin, *Chronos, Kodama and Atë Data-Masks*, 2013-2015.

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[33] S. Crispin, Data-Masks: *Biometric Surveillance Masks Evolving in the Gaze of the Technological Other*, thesis project for Master of Science in Media Arts and Technology, University of California, 2014.

"*Data-Masks are animistic deities brought out of the algorithmic-spirit-world of the machine and into our material world, ready to tell us their secrets, or warn us of what's to come.*"[34]

For the creation of these works, the artist used a variety of computer technologies, including C++ and MeshLab. He definitely began by creating two-dimensional images, which he will subsequently turn into more intricate three-dimensional creations. All of this is to re-create the machine's perception of people. As a consequence, while most humans and robots agree that at least one of these generated images looks like a face, very few humans would confuse it with a live person's image. (*Fig. 55*)
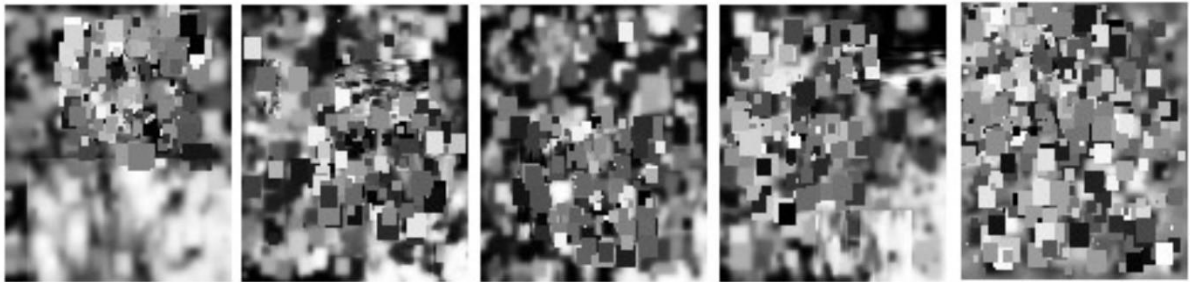
Figure 55 Facial recognition view of *Data-Masks* with Facebook face detection technology.

Using various facial recognition algorithms, Crispin generates three-dimensional masks that confront us with the faceless/inhumane face. In that instance, the topos of the mask must be taken into account from a cultural-anthropological perspective.[35] In this way, the artist's masks are the apotheosis of cyber faces. They both are empty faces and there is no individual behind that screen. Crispin's aim is to get these figures recognized as authentic by the same system that created them: artificial intelligence. As a result, this might be understood as a reappropriation of the mask. The mask has always been with us, since the dawn of time, and we could never abandon it, even now, in our present time. As in the instance of Crispin, this mutable entity, the mask, adapts and embraces

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[34] Ivi, p. 43.
[35] F. Flömer, *This person does not exist. Cyberface und Data-Mask bei Sterling Crispin*, in "Ffk Journal", 6, 20–37, 2021 (https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/15865)

scientific evolution.

To sum up, these works make us think about the mask's current significance and the various shapes and forms it can take on thanks to the machine code. Furthermore, the data-masks present an original viewpoint, specifically to that of the artificial intelligences. This is because the artist intends to use these data masks as a mirror. The digital mask can be transformed into a mirror, they can reflect the digital-panoptic world in which we are immersed in.[36] The artist was able to return the image that the cameras had of us thanks to the algorithms. Because, after all «we see the world not as it is, but as we are» [37] and this is also true with artificial intelligence.

[36] S. Crispin, Data-Masks: *Biometric Surveillance Masks Evolving in the Gaze of the Technological Other*, p. V.

[37] Ivi, p. 21.

5.3 URME SURVEILLANCE by Leo Selvaggio

One artistic attempt by Leo Selvaggio in the service of combating surveillance, particularly face-recognition technology, involves the design of masks that are uncanny replicas of his own face, generating thousands of expressionless doppelgängers roaming through the crowds. In contrast to the first case study, Selvaggio's efforts are not merely limited to obscuring a person's face, thus making it invisible from software (AFR); rather, the artist ensures that, by wearing this mask, s/he will be recognized as a real and proper identity.

Selvaggio's masks are made using 3D technology, developed thanks to ThatsMyFace.com software. The 3D-printed resin mask, which was created from a 3D scan of Selvaggio's face, captures his looks and skin tone with astonishing precision, yet the eyeballs of the wearer shining out of the eye holes give the look a creepy feel. (*Fig. 56 and 57*) In any case, the resin mask is just one part of the broader project called URME. Because this includes an open-source software which will digitally manipulate video to substitute people's faces with the artist's one.

Figure 56 Detail of the realistic mask created by L. Selvaggio for the *URME* project.

All masks made in this way respond to the facial recognition technology used by

Facebook, which is one of the most effective software available at the moment. Selvaggio's point of view is original in that he recognizes the inevitable rise surveillance in public spaces and everyday life and hence the message he gives is to learn to live with it; yet, what distinguishes him is that he proposes a method for doing so while preserving personal privacy and identity.

Figure 57 L. Selvaggio, *URME project, Chicago, 2014.*

URME (pronounced "You are me") is a work of art that is intended to be used by the public. Selvaggio is an artist from Chicago, one of the most heavily surveilled cities of the United States. Indeed, in the URME site it is reported that «Chicago has over 25,000 cameras networked to a single facial recognition hub».[38] In this respect, the mask might become a strumentalized face, as wearing one allows you to break social conventions while limiting the consequences associated with doing so. Masks can, in fact, cover one's identity, allowing for activity that violates social norms and limitations. They can indeed express an anonymous collectivity, protecting individuals from sanctions, especially if they are used for activism. The artist's choice is audacious since it provides a large

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[38] L. Selvaggio's website (http://www.urmesurveillance.com/)

audience the opportunity to not only avoid being spotted by the cameras, but also the fact that these people may be traced back to him. As a result, Leo's works provide not only a new identity, but actually a real one: his own identity. In any case, the artist does not appear to be much concerned about the negative implications of his work on himself. Or, to be more precise, this potential does exist, but it requires some self-sacrifice. Quoting the words of the artist: «it is worth the risk if it creates public discourse around surveillance practices and how it affects us all».[39] (*Fig. 58*)

Figure 58 A group of people wearing the *URME Surveillance* mask created by L. Selvaggio, Facial Recognition Exhibition at the Wende Museum, 2016.

This surveillance-art example is fascinating because, on the one hand, we observe an obvious trend to disguise, as we saw in the earlier chapters discussing Caillois and Bouvet's theories. In fact, we see an example of how camouflage strategies are employed for defensive purposes; however, we don't eliminate the possibility that they may also be used for offensive objectives, but, like Selvaggio, we trust in the good will

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[39] L. Katz, *Anti-Surveillance Mask Lets You Pass as Someone Else*, in "CNET", 2014 (http://www.cnet.com/news/urme-anti-surveillance-mask-lets-you-pass-as-someone-else/)

of people. Second, Selvaggio's masks allude to the concept of the double, the doppelgängers, and the uncanny. The artist questioned the surveillance technology, arguing that mistaking one person for another makes the entire facial recognition system ineffective.

5.4 Zach Blas' Facial Weaponization Suite

The project proposed by Zach Blas is even more complex than those presented so far. It is a combination of several faces that put together create a new and disconcerting plastic mask. The resulting faces are then identified by facial recognition as a true human expression; Blas therefore defines his creations as «collective masks».[40] The artist's work is oriented towards a critique of surveillance methods that, in his opinion, would reduce us to a few limited categories, like mere objects. This example of *artveillance* is much deeper than it may appear at first glance, the intent of these masks is to enhance the link between humans, artificial intelligence, and those in charge of these surveillance tactics. The artist laments the emerging of the «global face culture»[41], which implies the increasingly intrusive presence of biometrics and facial detection technology, driven by ever-raising obsessive and suspicious desires to know, collect, calculate, categorize, and standardize human faces.

According to the author it all began in 2011, the very same year that in our investigation we identified as the crucial moment for the birth of the so-called surveillance-art. In September 2011, the New York City Police Department revived an 1845 law that made two or more people wearing masks in public as an illegal act. During that day, the Zuccotti Park was occupied by the Anonymous group who wore masks with the face of Guy Fawkes, they were all arrested for «loitering and wearing a mask».[42] But the most serious thing is that after the arrest, these people had to agree to undergo the Iris Scan. They were given the choice of either accepting the identification procedure, or not, thus refusing to submit to an iris scan could result in their longer confinement. In any case, the fact that the police collected biometric information on people who had not committed any specific crime irritated the artist. Blas felt compelled to fight against

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[40] From the website of the artist (https://zachblas.info/works/facial-weaponization-suite/)

[41] Z. Blas, *Escaping the Face: Biometric Facial Recognition and the Facial Weaponization Suite*, in "Journal of the New Media Caucus", 2013 (https://median.newmediacaucus.org/caa-conference-edition-2013/escaping-the-face-biometric-facial-recognition-and-the-facial-weaponization-suite/)

[42] S. Gardiner and J. Firger, *Rare Charge Is Unmasked*, in "The Wall Street Journal", 2011 (http://online.wsj.com/article_email/SB10001424053111904194604576581171443151568-lMyQjAxMTAxMDIwMDEyNDAyWj.h™l?mod=wsj_share_email)

injustice and violations of free citizens' rights from that point on.

As a result, Blas does not tolerate the fact that, day by day, the number of facial recognition cameras is growing in cities around the world, especially in London for example. The capital of the United Kingdom is actually the city where the artist lives, he condemns the massive CCTV network that continues to record biometric information of British citizens. Blas is even more vehement in his opposition to what he refers to the so-called «biometric marketplace».[43] Nowadays, social media platforms can customize advertisements based on a person's sex, gender, and major behaviours traits. These monitoring techniques, according to the artist, are inextricably linked to military strategies. Blas attempts to free the face of people from these impositions by the use of a mask.[44]

The Facial Weaponization Suite is an art project created by Zach Blas that involves the participation of several people through a workshop organized by him. For this reason, the works created through this process are defined as *collective masks.* At the base of his experiments, the idea is to denounce and condemn the attitudes of discrimination that play the recognition technologies. In fact, Blas speaks of «Biometrics failure»[45] when these technologies fail to identify people belonging to ethnic minorities. This phenomenon is due to the fact that biometric technologies do not have enough information available about these minorities. In fact, surveillance technologies operate by very rigid categories. The example reported by Blas concerns the difficulty of recognizing through fingerprints or Iris scan the identity of an Asian woman.[46] But that is not all, biometric failures also involve discrimination by gender, race and sexual orientation. For this reason, the artist in his workshops initiates discussions regarding the global surveillance system, he opens debates on the ethics of the issue and raises questions about the possible discrimination that these systems may cause in people.

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[43] Z. Blas, *Escaping the Face: Biometric Facial Recognition and the Facial Weaponization Suite*.
[44] Ibidem.
[45] Ibidem.
[46] S. A. Magnet, *When Biometrics Fail: Gender, Race, and the Technology of Identity*, Duke University Press, Durham 2011.

The effective creation sessions are divided into two moments: first the participants are invited to debate the methods of surveillance present in their cities, then the real production phase begins. In this second phase, the artist scans the participants' faces with Kinect technology, then makes a 3D model of them. (*Fig. 59*) Finally, by combining all of the models' traits and facial features, a single mask with grotesque features will be obtained. (*Fig. 60*)
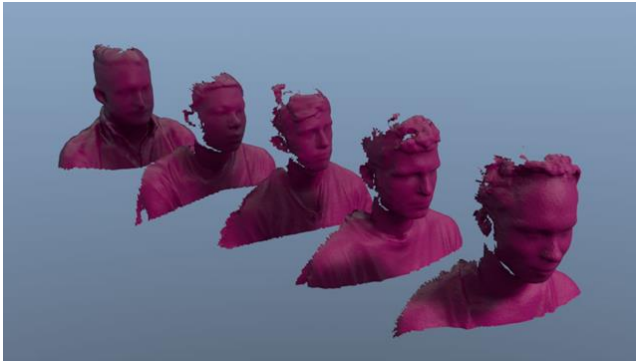

Figure 60 Z. Blas*, Facial Weaponization Communiqué: Fag Face*, video still of the last passage of the facial composition morphing process.
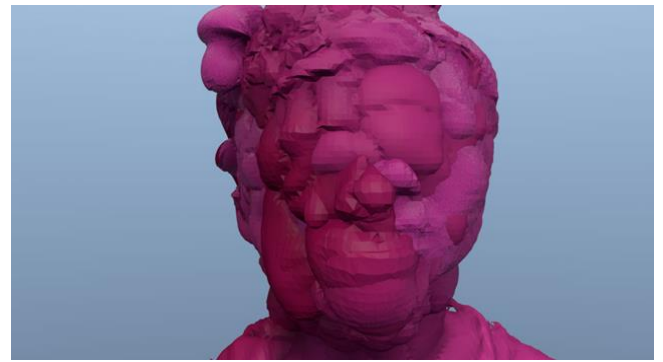

Figure 59 Z. Blas, *Facial Weaponization Communiqué: Fag Face*, video still of facial morphing process, 2012.

The most significant work of this project is the so-called *Fag Face* (*Fig. 61*), in this instance the author condemns the discrimination operated by facial recognition systems to the detrimental treatment of queer people. The biggest failure of biometric surveillance is precisely the discrimination of queer people, in fact the artist complains about an alarming campaign of identification of these people operated by biometric recognition. This explains the title of the work *Fag Face* because, according to this mechanism, artificial intelligences are trained to recognize the sexual orientation of a person through the analysis of his\her face. This strongly reminds of the discriminatory process that we have seen resulting from Lavater's physiognomy studies, when according to the 18th century Swiss philosopher, it was possible to recognize a person's attitude thanks to his facial measurements.

Figure 61 Z. Blas, *Facial Weaponization Suite: Fag Face Mask,* 2012. Photo by C. O'Leary.

Underlying the artist's beliefs there is a university study that report the disconcerting reality about this type of interest shown by government agencies. The study was realized by Nicholas O. Rule and Nalini Ambady, they presented an essay in the Journal of Experimental Social Psychology in 2008 stating that male sexual orientation can be reliably calculated through digital calculations. Furthermore, Rule and Ambady assembled a team of 90 Tufts University students, both men and women alike, and flashed the portraits of 90 people which were 45 homosexual and 45 heterosexuals. The exposure times varied in milliseconds. All the faces were photographed against a white background without any cultural markers or hair.[47] According to Rule and Ambady's tests, it is possible to determine a person's sexual orientation using these computations, even in a few milliseconds as in this case. The study provokes strong concerns in the queer community and more generally about the danger of social inequality. The *Fag Face* is a reaction to this signal; according to the author, it is possible to impersonate what the computers identify as "non-conforming" by wearing this mask. Blas' art is a

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[47] N. O. Rule and N. Ambady, *Brief exposures: Male sexual orientation is accurately perceived at 50 ms*, in "*Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*", 44, 2008 (https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2007.12.001)

strong criticism of these worthless human categorizations.

From a theoretical point of view, the artist in the creation of his works refers to the ideas of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. The following sentence is taken from the book *A Thousand Pleateaus*, these concepts expressed by the two philosophers are useful to understand the recurring theme in Blas' works.

«To the point that if human beings have a destiny, it is rather to escape the face, to dismantle the face and *facializations*, to become imperceptible, to become clandestine [to] faciality traits themselves finally elude the organization of the face».[48]

As a result, his project *Facial Weaponization Suite* aims to develop a human face that is empty of any identity. As a consequence, it is created a mask free of any social construct, it has the aim to safeguard the wearer's identity by making s\he non-existent. People are protected by a «fog»[49] that shields them from face recognition. Contrary to Selvaggio's work, where the people wearing the mask were traced back to him, here wearers will not be tracked back to any person.

In addition, besides *Fag Face* Blas also proposes two other projects that always aim to target the logic of discrimination implemented by surveillance systems and those who operate them. In reality, the artist's second piece is dedicated to the battle against racial prejudice. This mask investigates the actual problems that the system encounters in recognizing people of colour, in fact, this further biometric failure results in another inevitable discrimination. The artist's third example, focuses on the feminist community. While the fourth and final artwork focuses on the issues that arise at the border between Mexico and the United States; on this border, facial recognition cameras are programmed to recognize the ethnic background of the person attempting to cross the border.

In conclusion, all of these examples of *artveillance* made by Blas are centered in giving voice to very current social issues. The artist, through his works, seeks not only to raise awareness but also to provide tools that can actually be used in the case of protests or

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[48] G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* p. 171.
[49] T. Monahan, *The Right to Hide? Anti-Surveillance Camouflage and the Aestheticization of Resistance.*

activism. Remember that all of Blas' masks are functional and provide users with a measure of *invisibility* from biometric surveillance.

Conclusions and final remarks

Having dealt with the problems that afflict our contemporaneity in terms of the ever more present surveillance, I analysed the artists that are considered to be paradigmatic examples of art as an antagonist expression to global surveillance. Each one of these artists expresses his perplexity in a personal way and each one proposes different artistic solutions.

This work proposed a new key of interpretation to what is called surveillance art. The perspective of this study was to investigate the relationship that exists between the various methods of animal mimesis, present in nature, and the artistic strategies conceived by artists in *artveillance*. Observing the camouflage strategies devised in nature it is possible to easily understand the techniques and motivations that drive Surveillance artists in the creation of their works of art. Each of the artists proposed in the last chapter exemplifies one of the different mimicry techniques that have been previously explored thanks to the studies of Thayer, Caillois and Jean-François Bouvet.

For example, the case of Harvey, an artist who adopts the countershading strategies, studied by Thayer, provides a stratagem to evade facial recognition. The result of these artistic solutions are intended, just as Abbott Thayer would say, to pursue a kind of "transparency" so as not to be recognized by an enemy, in this case represented by the AFR system of surveillance. Harvey with his CV Dazzle realizes makeups that, besides having a relevant aesthetic impact, are also effective from a technological point of view. In this instance, the patterns painted on the facial skin look like a mask applied directly on the face of the model and produce a camouflage effect that perfectly succeeds in its purpose: to protect the identity of the person.

Similarly, Leo Selvaggio through his URME project expresses a political effort in trying to defeat the surveillance systems that limit people so much. However, unlike Harvey, he offers the mask wearer a true identity. Selvaggio, with his hyper realistic masks,

sacrifices his own identity in order to allow other people to evade surveillance systems. In this example, considering the categories proposed by biologists such as Caillois, Selvaggio's works perfectly fits the biological definition of a "disguise". Furthermore, this example is perhaps the one that most successfully allows a balance between the tendency of display and the art of camouflage that have just been discussed.

On the other hand, Crispin's Data-Masks aim to reproduce the picture that biometric technologies have of us humans. This is a revolutionary approach that suggests a new perspective on what is commonly referred to as the "enemy". The artist tries to elevate the beauty of the creations realized by the facial recognition algorithms. In any case, the message that the artist wants to express with his works remains in causal contact with that of the other artists reported in this thesis. Data-masks' aims to offer a concrete solution to the invasion of privacy perpetuated by control agencies.

Zach Blas is the last artist presented, as his artworks constitute a turning point. The Facial Weaponization Suite and Fag Face provide important moments of reflection on issues such as racial and gender discrimination. With his masks the artist succeeds in materializing the dystopian visions typical of surveillance technologies, but above all of those who operate them. Blas and what he calls "biometric failures" are indicators that our contemporary society has not yet fully considered the ethical consequences that result from surveillance practices. His inhuman masks are a mirror of what is considered non-conforming by our societies. The artist, in fact, puts in front of our eyes all the indignation he feels for the unjustified discrimination of queer people or people belonging to ethnic minorities.

Caillois states that appearing and concealing are both visual and communicative strategies, and that they are two extremes of a common matrix of visibility. The solutions conceived by these artists are a clear example of this. The artworks proposed here certainly have the objective of hiding the identity of the person, but at the same time they amplify the visibility of the wearer in the crowd. It is precisely this interplay of forces that makes the very meaning of surveillance art interesting. To conceal oneself is

necessarily to expose or exhibit oneself; the artists reported above perfectly express this duality in the phenomenon of camouflage.

In tracing this path, starting from the ancient Greek civilization up to our most current contemporaneity, this work identifies a constant and common element: the presence of the mask in different societies. Throughout the millennia, the human being has always been attracted to this identity, he has always made masks of his face. Each of these creations included not only a different form, but specific functions. Contemporary artists such as Zach Blas or Sterling Crispin are no exceptions: both make masks that have a very specific utility. These objects always confer, as they did throughout our history, a possibility of liberation from social conventions.

However, what at first glance could be defined as a paradox, that in these contemporary examples the mask is used to protect our identity, is actually not so distant from what we saw in ancient Greece or in ancient Rome. Persons and masks often blur their boundaries: it is a living relationship that blurs its contours as time and generations pass.

Therefore, through this work, it can be understood that it is not possible to precisely define the relationship between the human being and his\her mask, as it is subject to evolutions and continuous changes. What is possible, however, and is made evident by this thesis, is that we can take snapshots of the various historical moments in which the mask has made its appearance. These are precise key moments in which the mask is revealed or hidden, and through these we are able to express the complexity of the situation.

In conclusion, the mask, with all that it represents, has always been present in the history of humankind. During the centuries we have changed the aspect and consistency of the mask, but the it has always accompanied our social life. Surveillance art is a great example of tracing the use of the mask in our present, as we have seen. The urgencies that concern our globalized society were externalized through art, and this led to a reappropriation of the mask, to provoke debates and suggest solutions.

Contemporary art shows us how the use of new technologies, such as programming softwares or 3D printers, can create artworks that are increasingly effective in conveying a message. Furthermore, all of these artefacts are committed to combating in a concrete way the surveillance system produced by the global panoptic society. Therefore, we now understand how these artistic creations, in addition to conveying a message, are genuinely useful. Clearly, as the years go by, these technologies will improve and will become more and more efficient, both on the side of surveillance and of its opposite counterpart: the surveillance art. This is, therefore, a dialogue that will evolve over the years, and being such a contemporary topic, it will be essential to follow its evolutions and twists and turns. *Artveillance* is a field in continuous and rapid expansion, many new artists will contribute with new and fascinating artworks. The fact that this type of art can be so closely linked to technology can only bring novelty to the artistic field. Thanks to the phenomenon of *artveillance,* new ideas and debates useful to the community will arise, and, new forms of expression will appear as a consequence of the technological innovations that await us in the coming years.

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