# 28. / 29. 06. 18

## RE/DISSOLUTION
## Learning from Pixels
Academy of Fine Arts Munich

For further information please contact:
Sebastian Althoff / Academy of Fine Arts Munich / althoff@adbk.mhn.de
Elisa Linseisen / Ruhr-University Bochum / elisa.linseisen@rub.de

**www.fg-mimesis.de**

The German word "Auflösung" refers to both the resolution of an image, the technical term for its assembled constituents - digitally implemented: its amount of pixels - and to dissolution: of sugar in water, of people in laughter or tears, of objects or details merging with the background. The workshop Re/Dissolution aims to investigate this double meaning not as a coincidence but as a real connection between an increasingly greater resolution of an image with its high amount of pixels, promising a sharper image or a visual "higher definition," and the dissolution in this very process where single pixels become less and less visible as they dissolve into millions of other pixels around them. While "sharpness" brings up an alleged phenomenological indication to see more details of an object and to differentiate it from its surrounding, it also entails a loss of distinction when focusing on the pixels rather than the assembled object.

Roger Caillois begins his famous text *Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia* with the claim that "from whatever side one approaches things, the ultimate problem turns out in the final analysis to be that of distinction: distinction between the real and the imaginary, between waking and sleeping, between ignorance and knowledge, etc. - all of them, in short, distinctions in which valid consideration must demonstrate a keen awareness and the demand for resolution." For Caillois, the distinction between the organism and its surroundings is among the most clear-cut and it is the failing to uphold this distinction that marks legendary psychasthenia. However, where Caillois observes the dissolution of the organism into the environment because of the lack of distinction, digital images show a dissolution happening within the pursuit of distinction.

Thus, the phenomenon of re/dissolution points at what is lost in a process that seems to be ever more inclusive (including more pixels to include more details). This is evident not only in digital images but in surveillance more generally. Striking examples are cases where face recognition fails to identify the faces of persons with dark skin, or where Asian users set off a detection when taking a picture asking them if they blinked. While these might just be glitches - errors in the software - exclusion plays a central role in digital surveil-lance or Big Data. Indeed, the claim to objectivity by data based surveillance hinges on a process to exclude intentionality and subjectivity from the data. Data is sorted through by algorithms and not individuals, implicitly claiming that these processes are thereby free of biases because by concentrating only on patterns and correlations it abstains from making any judgements. Data itself is considered objective only because it does not require a self-depiction, e.g. in form of a questionnaire, but is produced by traces left unintentionally while shopping online, using Google or Facebook or just walking around with one's cell phone. There is no need and no possibility to present oneself in a certain light.

However, Caillois also offers himself for a different reading. The images he uses to describe the "assimilation to space" are not all frightful, but at times depict losing oneself as an joyful and almost erotic experience. Similarly, the moments of loss within the pursuit of distinction described here - the exclusion of subjectivity, the glitch and the dissolution - contain possibilities of resistance. In Hito Steyerl's video installation *HOW NOT TO BE SEEN: A Fucking Didactic Educational .MOV File* performers dressed as pixels - with white, grey and black cubes over their heads - dance against the backdrop of resolution targets. This is, a voiceover tells us, the third lesson: How to become invisible by becoming a picture, how to become part of a picture by becoming smaller or equal to one pixel. In a similar spirit, Legacy Russell proposes the glitch as a central figure of resistance, embracing the error and questioning what constitutes an error in the first place. Likewise, Glitch Art and the Post-Internet discourse think about the broken or dissolved digital image as a way to expose the inherent processuality of the digital as messy transmissions. Working as a manual, artist Rosa Menkman's *The Vernacular of File Formats*, compares digital file formats based on their visible and differing compression artifacts. The aesthetical output can be used as a guide through the confusing state of numerous digital file formats and not only treats files as vague black boxes that help content to travel through its digital surroundings, but visually specifies them and their way of transmission.

Thus, the workshop Re/Dissolution seeks to address - though is not limited to - the following topics:
- Producing Clean Data (Filtering/ Exclusion of Noise)
- High Definition (HD), Digital File Formats
- Digital imagery
- Glitch, Glitch Art, New Aesthetics
- Glitch Feminism
- Big Data, Digital Surveillance, Counter Surveillance
- Post-Digital, Post-Medium, Post-Internet
- Counter-Documentation, Realism
- Losing (Oneself) as a Form of Resistance

The workshop is jointly organized by the Ruhr-University Bochum and the Academy of Fine Arts Munich as part of the DFG-research group Media and Mimesis. The workshop will combine both theoretical positions and artistic practices, seeking a dialogue between these two epistemological fields.

# Medien und Mimesis