BLURRED BOUNDARIES AND RETURN TO AUTHENTICITY:
IMAGE POLITICS OF ARTS IN CYBERSPACE

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This dissertation entitled

BLURRED BOUNDARIES AND RETURN TO AUTHENTICITY
IMAGE POLITICS OF ARTS IN CYBERSPACE

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Abstract:

This dissertation investigates the phenomenon of authentic art in cyberspace. The focus is the existence and spatial transformation of authentic art in the digital era, rather than art created by digital technology. The dissertation proclaims that the spectator exists in a unified world of physicality and virtuality; also, the existence of art in the real world and cyberspace cannot be simply split into a physical space and a non-physical one. By applying an interdisciplinary methodology including Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s Existential Phenomenology, Walter Benjamin’s Critical Theory, Wolfgang Iser’s Reception Theory, and modern Museology, this dissertation examines the phenomenon of art in cyberspace, through an inclusive study of the phenomenon of spatial transformations of the existence of art.

I examine the embodied relations of art-technology-Lebenswelt by focusing on the relationship between technological transformation and the existence of art. The discussion logically leads to the concept of technological embodiment. Under this circumstance, I claim that authentic artworks from the past currently coexist with images produced and reproduced by modern technology. The boundaries between the spheres of the body and of technology have begun to transgress, overlap, and blur in the digital world of cyberspace. Moreover, this project also
points out that the phenomenological temporal aspect of viewing digitized art in cyberspace is twofold, and both are related to the body-subject. The temporality of a spectator’s viewing experience is unique because the experience of one’s own temporal flow is quite different from the experience of others; one can only grasp his/her own temporal flow in reflection and, therefore, as already past, whereas one grasps the alter-ego in the simultaneity of a present now.

Finally, this dissertation discovers the significance of digitized art in cyberspace by stating that this new space and place for human sensory perception is the place for the everyday exploitive power relations to be challenged through the new effect of art-and-technology embodied relationships. They are filled in their circumstantial links with capitalism and with fundamentalist politics. The experience of looking at digitized artworks in cyberspace, such as on museum sites, eventually has its own power and politics of display. This dissertation eventually concludes that the digitized art images do not lose the context of their original artworks, but maintain an embodied relationship with the physical existence of their artworks. We therefore cannot easily separate them as physical/virtual or real/unreal. Rather, the boundaries between these concepts need to be abandoned. Only with the boundaries blurred can the meaning of art be returned to the originals, and the authenticity of the artwork then returns back to the physical part of the artwork’s existence.

Approved: Keith M. Harris
Assistant Professor of Interdisciplinary Arts
For

My parents and Amon
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Introduction

Facing Digitized Works of Art

The very fact that the sign can be more or less probable, more or less distant from what it signifies, that it can be either natural or arbitrary, without its nature or its value as a sign to its content is not guaranteed by the order of things in themselves. The relation of the sign to the signified now resides in a space in which there is no longer any intermediary figure to connect them: what connects: what connects them in a bond established, inside knowledge, between the idea of one thing and the idea of another.

Michel Foucault, The Order of Things

In 1970, when Michel Foucault published a book under the title, The Order of Things, it caused a stir among scholars who concentrate on studying objects/ things and their meanings because it challenged them to acknowledge the relationship between the object, language, and the concept of representation. As the quotation above mentions, the logic of representation has become a serious academic issue. Entering the twenty-first century, human communities are facing a big challenge, in which an object may have many, or at least different types, of representations and meanings. If we consider that a work of art is a sign, or a kind of representation, this sign/representation perhaps becomes less concrete, and it has a variety of representations and meanings.

Since the Internet has become one of the most popular communication technologies, human beings are experiencing simultaneously two extremely different representational worlds, the physical world and virtual world. In “The Art World & I Go
on Line,” Robert Atkins begins by stating that “future art historians will mark the 1994-95 season as the year the art world went on line” (Atkins 58). Because of the advancement of communication technology, there were more than 5,000 artists, museums, galleries, and other arts organizations around the world that staked out sites on the Internet in 1994-95 (Atkins 59, Madoff 1). Not only do artists pay to post images of their arts on the Web without major gallery representation, but art institutions also open visual arts sites in the Internet. Obviously, museums and galleries are already significantly affected by the new communication technology. The most famous museums and galleries have constructed their own websites in order to make their collections more widespread. Thus, a work of art becomes a virtual image existing in cyberspace, and leaving materiality behind. Because of this productive means, a series of questions has emerged both in academies and in the public sphere: “can art in cyberspace live without a body?” This has become a paradoxical question in recent years.

In discussing the phenomenon of art work on line, Michael Govan, director of the Dia Center for the Arts in New York, notes:

There’s no question that it will result in greater access to art. But I don’t think that the medium improves the art experience for the viewer. […] The web is limited. If it’s considered supplemental to physical work, it’s fine. But when people start talking about it as the primary experience, there are big problems. (Madoff 34)

Peter Weibel also notes that the tense dialectical relationship between painting and architecture lies in that the former is two-dimensional while the latter is three-dimensional. Cyberspace, however, has created a new form of space and a new
experience that imposes an entire change upon the concepts of “now” and “here” (Weibel 9-14). Pierre Levy echoes Weibel’s idea and demonstrates that cyberspace is a place full of glamour, for in this space messages are transmitted or retrieved according to different tastes and situations. Different from traditional media, electronic messages surround the receiver, who is placed in the center of cyberspace because the boundary between the real authors and spectators is blurred, and spectators can play the role of the author as well. Because cyberspace has changed the relationship between the creator and the spectator with arts’ qualities, the essence of art and the standard in aesthetics appear to be fundamentally different (Levy 366).

With the development of capitalism and the advancement of digital technology, human beings have stepped into another new stage of mechanical reproduction, in which capitalism reproduces and digitizes art imagery in cyberspace. The logic of the commodification has become central to cultural debates. In this logic, a work of art is commercialized by market forces because capitalism forcefully incorporates art imagery into its economic sector, and separates a work of art from its traditional context. Meanwhile, art exists not only in a physical form but also a virtual form. By virtualizing artworks, however, the art has many differences of representation. On today’s Internet, the three-dimensional quality of sculpture no longer belongs with virtualizing imagery. Spectators cannot truly comprehend works of art by only surfing online. Thus, if the process of the mechanical reproduction has argued about the essence of art and its authenticity, this dissertation then attempts to question what the meaning is behind the process of digitizing artwork into cyberspace.
1. Facing Duplicated Representation

This dissertation is an interrogation into the phenomenon of authentic art in cyberspace. The focus is the existence and spatial transformation of authentic art in the digital era, rather than art created by digital technology. This dissertation argues that the existence of art in the real world and cyberspace cannot be simply split into a physical space and a non-physical one. We must think of it as a universal power enabling the physical and non-physical to be connected. The work of art in the digital era forces the appreciation of the authentic artwork to increase. The art world faces a new situation; that is, it exists both in the physical world and cyberspace, and the spectator can experience the differences of the same work of art between the physical world and cyberspace in contemporary society. Even though the work of art exists both physically and virtually, the authenticity and legitimacy of artwork still remain on a physical existence of a work of art and make an authentic work of art more precious.

This phenomenon is significant to official institutions (museums and galleries), the arts, art historians, and spectators because digital technology has had a major impact on the production and experience of art during the past two decades. Not only have traditional forms of art such as painting, photography, and sculpture been transformed by digital technology and media, but entirely new forms such as cyber-art, digital installation, and virtual reality have emerged as recognized artistic practices, collected by major museums, institutions, and private collectors around the world. Because the characteristics of the digital medium pose a number of challenges to the traditional art world, not least in its presentation, collection, and preservation, the phenomenon of
digitized artworks needs to be examined more seriously for the sake of the artist, the art world, and the artworks themselves.

Because this dissertation proclaims that the spectator exists in a unified world of physicality and virtuality, there are two aspects of this phenomenon that will be considered: the existence of art and the spectator’s experience. First, the location of the art is very different than that of the past. This part examines the different spatial existences of art in different times. Second, based on a phenomenological attitude, the spectator is the one creating meanings. In other words, the meaning will be created by the interaction between the art and the spectator. Hence, this part seeks an understanding of the spectator’s perception.

By applying an interdisciplinary methodology including Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s Existential Phenomenology, Walter Benjamin’s Critical Theory in the Frankfurt School’s tradition, Wolfgang Iser’s Reception Theory from the literary tradition, and modern Museology, this dissertation will examine the phenomenon of art in cyberspace, through an inclusive study of the phenomenon of spatial transformations of the existence of art. These approaches will be examined in the following discussion. While other studies have approached this phenomenon by employing different single disciplines, such as Cultural Studies, traditional art theory, or communication theories, these are from the more traditional Cartesian philosophical point of view; none has applied an interdisciplinary methodology that applies various theories to this phenomenon.

Moreover, traditional studies tend to focus on formal similarities and differences between the physical existence of art and art in cyberspace. However, works of art are facing an extremely different situation today. The problem is that many critics from
Marxist frameworks lean towards a more jaundiced view of the shifts, particularly in terms of how digital reproduction’s impact on art and culture has a negative anti-social force per se. This dissertation, therefore, attempts to address these key issues confronting art by employing a phenomenological point of view, and provides a new horizon toward the situation of authentic art in cyberspace. The aim of this dissertation is to provide a philosophical and cultural discourse which is more interdisciplinary in its essence.

2. Criticism of the Cartesian Philosophy

As mentioned previously, most of the former research has been based on the Cartesian philosophical tradition. This Cartesian philosophy, however, is problematic in perceiving today’s Internet. Hence, the focus of this criticism is on an important aspect of this dissertation, that is the attitude toward space from the Cartesian tradition.

Many publications on the Internet, cyberspace, and virtual reality are based on the Cartesian philosophy. Traditionally, the Cartesians interpret this phenomenon in the methodology of dualism, which considers that reality consists of two basic types of substances usually taken to be mind and body or two basic types of entities, mental and physical. Gordon Graham’s book *The Internet: A Philosophical Inquiry* (1999) proposes that virtual reality is an oppositional concept of physical reality based on dualistic philosophical thinking (22-24). Gordon Graham has pointed out:

> With the concept of “virtual reality” we arrive at the world of science fiction and of fantasy. Or so many suppose, and it may indeed seem that if in the discussion of virtual reality every limit on the imagination is
removed, then all the factual and conceptual constraints which control our speculations are lifted also. (151)

Graham seeks to propose his philosophical reconsideration on different kinds of agendas related to the Internet. His dualistic argument asserts that the real world is irreplaceable, and virtual reality is only a simulation of reality. Humans are fascinated by virtual reality because it can free all limitations from the real world. Therefore, the virtual world has been constructed as an outer space. He brings to bear the disciplines of traditional philosophy in analyzing what appear to be completely new social phenomena, which is considered to be problematic.

Michael Heim’s *The Metaphysics of Virtual Reality* (1993) and *Virtual Realism* (1998) are the most significant writings on virtual environment and new social phenomenon based on the traditional Cartesian methodology. Heim argues that virtual reality and its meanings are still very abstract by contrast to realistic images in our daily lives. He argues that the extended use of virtual reality is likely to alter our senses of reality (Heim 109-110). He claims that the virtual environment is a new way of living with advanced technologies, and it is not realistic. For Heim, virtual reality is a new special model for human culture and the world; this new form forces our culture to change, and results in symbolic elements mutating in history. In discussing the notion of virtual reality, he notes that this new device causes an “ontological shift,” which is not a change in how we see things, not a shift in our epistemological stance, but a change in the world under our feet, from realistic to virtual (Heim xiii, 45, 117). In other words, Heim considers that virtual reality existence, opposed to true materials, does not have real substance through saying, “virtual worlds do not re-present the primary world” (Heim 47).
Even though Heim has a more positive attitude toward today’s technologies, he still thinks that modern computer technology changes the way we perceive our world by stating “we no longer need to believe we are re-presenting the real world of nature” (Heim 47).

Similarly, Mark Slouka also suggests that modern technology may be changing humanity’s experience of reality. In “The Road to Unreality,” he notes that the development of communication technology has placed humans in a state of so-called unreality. The way humans communicate has gradually lost the foundation of physical reality that existed in the past. Today’s Internet increases this unreal situation. Slouka says:

As everyone knows, unreality increases with speed, walking across a landscape at six miles an hour, we experience the particular reality of space: its smells, sounds, colors, textures, and so on. Driving at seventy miles an hour, the experience is very different. The car isolates us, distances us; the world beyond the windshield—whether desert mesa or rolling farmland—seems vaguely unreal. At supersonic speeds, the divorce is complete. A landscape at 30,000 feet is an abstraction, as unlike real life as a painting. (3)

Slouka believes that cyberspace functions as “the road to unreality,” rather than the information superhighway. For him, virtual reality not only assaults our sense of identity, place, community and reality, but also leads us rapidly away from that which makes us truly human. His major argument is that “the world provides context, and without context, ethical behaviour is impossible” (Slouka 13). Slouka thinks that the computer
systems that have been developed still exist outside our sensory world. The systems do not belong to reality, but constitute instead a suppression of reality (Slouka 19-20). That is to say, he thinks that reality (real space) is the physical world we perceive with our real senses; yet, the computer technology is a device that can distract us from the physical world. His fear of crushing the human's spirit by replacing human environment with mechanical objects is definitely problematic.

Slouka claims the idea of unreality and cannot stand for modern technology, because he believes that the concepts of physicality, or materiality, should be rooted in humans’ world. This statement is similar to Michael Heim’s point of view on virtual reality. He thinks that we should consider virtual reality as “an event or entity that is real in effect but not in fact” (109). That is to say, virtual reality is a simulated or manufactured kind of reality. It is not a real reality because it has no real existence. Clearly, both Slouka and Heim come to an agreement: reality demands a physical foundation.

The Cartesian point of view has also influenced many scholars who discuss photographic and digital reproductions. Mark Sagoff believes that concerning photographic reproductions of paintings, it is obvious that the spectator cares about the original painting rather than its photographic replica. Although photographic reproductions are useful vehicles because they show us a great deal about a real work of art, yet they are not art works in themselves. Those reproductions are insignificant as photographs because they are not real paintings. For instance, if a reproduction captures the strength of the mountains in a painting by Cézanne, it is not because it duplicates the
More specifically, many scholars state that it is necessary, when discussing the work of art in the digital era, to elaborate first on the characteristics of digitized art creation and how they influence aesthetic experiences. Based on the two concepts of art and design, Chen Jie-Ming notes that the digitization of art in the virtual world focuses on the interactive feature that allows spectators the freedom to choose their own point of view of artworks and feel the spatial experience conveyed by the artworks. Staff and process are no longer closely related to the creation of an artwork. Instead, a script is provided for every single piece of work of art. The new process includes: script-writing → photography → image editing → screenplay → conceptual development (decision-making on style and interface) → decision-making on the framework (visual presentation) → designing → authoring → dubbing in background music (Chen 56-65). As a result, when we browse an image of artwork online, what we see is no longer the original masterpieces, but a digital image presented through the process of script-writing, photography and visual design. To this extent, virtual reality creates a virtual experience formed by the extreme specialization of computers (Mirzoeff 102-103). This hyper-real representation is fundamentally different from the way people traditionally perceive works of art.

Needless to say, the function and role of cyberspace for these scholars greatly surpasses those of the traditional physical counterpart and databanks are at the center of the creative process in the digital era. According to Beardon and Worden, the multimedia, interactive displays make it easier to get close to the exhibits (Beardon and Worden 63).
We have to question, however, whether such representations make information flow more freely or shape another kind of cultural authenticity in the physical museum. Beardon and Worden consider that the essence and paradigms represented in multimedia can be divided into three categories: database paradigm, hypertext paradigm, and communication paradigm, all of which are quite different from physical museums (Beardon and Worden 63). Compared to traditional art, the representation done by current computer graphic design makes use of existing packaged software to produce synthesized works with visual features. Nevertheless, these points, lines, planes or three-dimensional shapes must be combined by computers into a work with artistic ideals to be qualified as a true creation. But the digital representation of art misses this point. Scripts corresponding to the qualities of each artwork are written in the aforementioned process of computer programme design. It appears that museums are established on the web, but they are merely programs produced by a group of digital experts.

Obviously, the traditional point of view considers the virtual world and the physical world as two oppositional concepts. We admit that the concept of space has changed and is changing. Nonetheless, unlike these scholars who attempt to split two spatial experiences: physical and virtual, “Space,” as Maurice Merleau-Ponty demonstrates, “is not the setting (real or logical) in which things are arranged, but the means whereby the positing of things becomes possible” (Perception, 243). Thus, this dissertation states that the issue of experience of cyberspace cannot be simply split into two physical and non-physical aspects. We must think of it as the universal power enabling them to be connected.
3. Toward A Phenomenological Investigation

The central theme of Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology is that a full understanding of the natural and social worlds which we inhabit inevitably leads back to aspects of our experience through which meaning is bestowed upon the objects of experience. We can be sure that a new era of computerized textuality has begun, and computerized images demand new modes of reading, perceiving, and thinking. In so doing, we need a new methodology to examine the existence of authentic art in cyberspace.\(^1\) Thus, the methodology used in this dissertation is interdisciplinary. It applies Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenology, the Frankfurt School’s Critical Theory, and Wolfgang Iser’s Reception Theory as its interdisciplinary methodology.

Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) informs the main theoretical groundwork of this dissertation’s stylistic writing strategy and phenomenological analysis of art in cyberspace. By denying the empirical discourse of the relationship between subject and object, in which scientism considers that the world is the object of analyzing outside of subject, phenomenology pays great attention to the nature of lived experience and emphasizes that the relationship between the subject and object has been blurred. Phenomenologists turn their focus to the “*Lebenswelt*”\(^2\) (*Lifeworld* or *lived world*), in which the human and world cannot be separated.

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\(^1\) Authentic art in this dissertation refers to a visual physical object made by the artist. Such art, such as a painting or a sculpture, possesses aesthetically relevant features which no copy could possibly exemplify. Authentic art generally has properties that a physical object does not have; for example, aesthetic, expressive, and representational properties. Therefore, authentic art has a unique status: a proper appreciation of the work requires that the spectator perceive the object rather than a reproduction of it.

\(^2\) This concept as a phenomenological term was first introduced in Husserl’s *Crisis in European Science and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1954). This idea has now become the most widely known, and one of the fundamental concepts in the phenomenology tradition. The phenomenologist sees that common science has ignored the importance of our living world, and has viewed this world as an object for research. This point of view results in a more abstract world, rather than a living world in which we exist. Therefore, the phenomenological attitude suggests that we should return to phenomenon, return to our living world.
As Merleau-Ponty points out, phenomenology should not only be a rigorous science; it should at the same time be a discipline that allows us to think about space, time, and our living world (Perception, vii). To comprehend Lebenswelt is to recognize that the world is more than a product of empiricism. In order to understand this world, we need a departure from our daily-life experiences. Don Idhe clearly notes that phenomenology “may be characterized as a philosophical style that emphasizes a certain interpretation of human experience and that, in particular, concerns perception and bodily activity” (Lifeworld, 21). That is to say, phenomenology emphasizes that experience exists within the relationship between human beings and things, rather than in the object itself; and a primitive model indicating this concept can be “I-relation-world” (Idhe, Lifeworld, 23). Hence, world is not an object for disciplines such as physics or astronomy. World is not an objective appearance of science; world is the Lebenswelt that the human lives in.

Thus, the phenomenological view of Lebenswelt asserts that a thing is present in a time dimension and is placed in a spatial dimension. That is, a thing exists in a horizon, and the world is compelled by horizons (Welton 736). Merleau-Ponty demonstrates that the world itself is the phenomenal field. Here, the concept of horizon, or field, can be understood earlier by using Don Idhe’s term of “cultural or contextual perception (Technology, 12). Consequently, the concept of Lebenswelt not only means a new understanding of the world, but also indicates a new perception of reality.

In other words, human is “being-in-the-world” (Pivcevic 83-92). Merleau-Ponty is an existential phenomenologist, in that he denies the possibility of bracketing existence.

Because English translations of “Lebenswelt” are inadequate in conveying the nuances of meaning of the original term and sometimes do not fit into the grammatical or semantic context of this dissertation, I purposely leave “Lebenswelt” untranslated.
Following Husserl’s premise of “Eidetic Reduction,” in which the purpose of phenomenology is to seek the essence from the existence, Merleau-Ponty demonstrates that the “essence” is only a means and not the end of phenomenology. By contrast, the end of phenomenology is “existence.” He states:

What is phenomenology? […] Phenomenology is the study of essences; and according to it, all problems amount to finding definitions of essences: the essence of perception, or the essence of consciousness, for example. But phenomenology is also a philosophy which puts essences back into existence, and does not expect to arrive at an understanding of man and the world from any starting point other than that of their “facticity.”

(Perception, vii)

This statement describes the importance of “being-in-the-world.” For Merleau-Ponty, “being-in-the-world” is a unity of the human and the world, where the human plays a vital role in his relation to space. Thus, he states that “the body is the vehicle of being in the world, and having a body is, for a living creature, to be [inter-involved] in a definite environment, to identify oneself with certain projects and be continually committed to them” (Merleau-Ponty, Perception, 82). Merleau-Ponty’s environment here means “situation,” which is related to the body of the human. The body’s spatiality is not like that of external objects or like that of “spatial sensation,” spatiality of position, but a spatiality of situation (Merleau-Ponty, Perception, 100). This spatiality of situation corresponds to a person’s living world. It not only means the external relationship between the person and his/her environment, but it also demonstrates the contact between one and the other. Thus, this concept of situation represents a further step of
interrelationship between human’s interiority and exteriority (Mallin 7). It is obvious that Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology has three main sites in terms of human beings, space, and the lived world. In the following chapters, the concept of Lebenswelt and the relationship between human beings and Lebenswelt will be discussed in order to examine the art-Lebenswelt relation.

Essentially, Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenology of Perception is arranged around three main parts: “The Body,” “The World as Perceived,” and “Being-for-itself and Being-in-the-world.” Merleau-Ponty’s definition of phenomenology is the study of essences, which includes the essence of perception and of consciousness. He also denotes that phenomenology is a methodology of describing the nature of human’s perceptual contact with the world.

Merleau-Ponty challenges three dominant philosophical trends, Scientism, Empiricism, and Intellectualism, that are inadequate to describe the phenomenology of perception. Against the traditional concept of sensation, Merleau-Ponty indicates the concept of perception. He emphasizes the issue of the body by discussing the concept of body and space. Merleau-Ponty thinks that we should suspend objectivism and recognize that traditional dilemmatic thought fails to understand either the subject or the object. We should realize that the origin of the object is positioned at the center of our experiences. In the following chapter, Merleau-Ponty denotes that the theory of the body is actually a theory of perception. The body is a medium for perceptions of the world. The world exists only when humans perceive it, and humans communicate with the world in order to construct meanings. Thus, the body is an expressive space, which contributes to the significance of personal actions. By embodiment of the body within the world,
Merleau-Ponty claims that the existence of humans as “Being-in-the-world” in the last chapter is the conclusion. It means that humans exist in the world, and humans and the world cannot be separated as object and subject. By three logically compelling chapters, Merleau-Ponty develops his Phenomenology of Perception to emphasize that the aim of Phenomenology is not only seeking essences of phenomena, but also existences of beings.

Obviously, space is one of the key links by which humans and the world are correlated. Spectators experience different concepts of space. They can walk into museums to perceive artworks; they can also surf on the Internet to search for the same images. With this transformation of spatiality, what spectators perceive represents a more important question since the meaning of phenomenon is created by the interactive relationship between the human’s body, space, and world.

Because the concept of “spatiality” remains an important position in this description, this dissertation focuses on the discussion of the transformation of the spatial existence of an artwork, where the art exists, the meaning of the transformation, and the spectator’s perception by taking examples from various works of visual art. Furthermore, from Merleau-Ponty’s aesthetic theory, this dissertation draws upon his theory of vision, which allows us to examine this particular phenomenon of human experience in both the physical world and cyberspace. Thus, by applying Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological aesthetics, this dissertation seeks an understanding of how spectators perceive differences of the same object and what they think.

For Merleau-Ponty, essence is the means through which things can be understood, rather than an end or object of investigation (Williams 17). Phenomenology is the specific name for a historical movement born in Germany with Husserl, Heidegger, and
sustained in France by Merleau-Ponty. Following the accounts of Merleau-Ponty, Husserl, and Heidegger, Richard Lanigan, in *Phenomenology of Communication*, systematically outlines the phenomenological method that will be employed in this dissertation. This phenomenological method has a unique way of so-called phenomenological discussion. This unique writing style operates with three orderly methodological considerations: phenomenological description, reduction, and interpretation (Lanigan, *Phenomenology*, 9).

### 3.1 Phenomenological Strategy

Since phenomenology seeks to describe conscious experience, the first step of the phenomenological method is to describe the flow of conscious experience or awareness. The main contribution of phenomenological investigation to the critical understanding of phenomena lies in its attempts to present an understanding of phenomena which does not take given cultural modes of explanation for granted, and which seeks to flesh out the complexity and richness of experience (Williams 15). A phenomenological examination is the appearance of a new significance; it is achieved through the manipulation of psychical or physical materials. Eugene Kaelin notes that a phenomenological description of the imagination entails some aspects of a perceived situation, and that the same sort of description for communication by means of artistic creation requires an ultimate return to a perceived situation (80). Merleau-Ponty points out that phenomenological description aims:

To return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always speaks, and in relation to which every scientific schematization is an abstract and derivative sign-language, as is geography in relation to the
country side in which we have learned beforehand what a forest, a prairie or a river is. (Perception, ix)

That is to say, while performing a phenomenological investigation, a phenomenon needs to be carefully placed to present to embodied awareness of an individual.

“Phenomenological description,” says Lanigan, “is rhetorical in nature” (Phenomenology, 10). Nonetheless, the phenomenological attitude does not concern what phenomena are about, but how to show phenomena in order to enrich experiences. For the purpose of accomplishing this, phenomenology proceeds with phenomenological reduction, epoché, or bracketing.

The aim of phenomenological reduction is to determine which parts of description are essential. Lanigan demonstrates that this is the most difficult part of the theory because it needs a precise definition of the necessary condition of the body-subject which is merely a sufficient condition under description (Communicology, 17). In other words, we need to find out which parts of the experience are parts of our consciousness, and systematically visualize each part as present in the experience. By comparing contexts, one can reduce the description. Thus, description becomes a reduction (Lanigan, Phenomenology, 10).

The application of the phenomenological reduction is a procedure by which given aesthetic percipients attend to the unique qualitative appearance of the objects created for enjoyment. The phenomenologist considers the arts as the language of creation, and aesthetics as a general theory of linguistics. This phenomenological attitude looks upon artworks as sign vehicles within the context of aesthetic expressiveness. All artistic creations, like all human activities, involve the joint activities of a large number of people
(Becker 178). Through their cooperation, the artwork we eventually see or hear comes to be and continues to be a significant body of signs. Art obviously embodies the emotional states of the artist, and likewise an audience may be emotionally moved by the contemplation of such an embodiment.

After the steps of phenomenological description and reduction, the third step of phenomenological investigation is phenomenological interpretation. It is an interpretation of the previous description and seeks to explicate the lived meaning of phenomena. In other words, it is a step of concrete application that combines description and reduction steps in order to specify the meaning that the body-subject investigated (Lanigan, *Communicology*, 17; *Phenomenology*, 10). In this final step, the lived-meaning is signification.

As the result, Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological method is radical. This new and positive cogito, which is different from the Cartesian cogito, is the “presence-at-the-world,” the unity of the body-subject in the lived-body experience (Lanigan, *Speaking*, 44-5). The body-subject, in this experience of perception, affirms the lived reality. This dissertation thus will follow this phenomenological discourse logic as the framework of chapter design.

### 3.2 Beings with Technology

The following discussion’s focus, furthermore, is on the phenomenological discussion of the relationship between human beings and technology. Alongside the phenomenology tradition, Don Ihde’s serial books, *Existential Technics* (1983), *Technology and Lifeworld: From Garden to Earth* (1990), *Instrumental Realism: The Interface between Philosophy of Science and Philosophy of Technology* (1991),
Philosophy of Technology: An Introduction (1993), and Postphenomenology: Essays in the Postmodern Context (1993), will also be the theoretical background of this dissertation. Ihde’s serial books not only gradually bring the phenomenology tradition into postmodern society, but also seek to develop a philosophy of technology. Existential Technics is a collection of essays which focus on three topics in terms of technics, perception, and interpretation. Ihde argues that there has been a preoccupation with science and there is a well-established philosophy of scientific tradition in North America, but the philosophy of technology has only begun to emerge in recent years. Within ten short essays, Ihde continues discussing the relationship between technology and human self-conception, based on Heidegger’s Phenomenological tradition, and ultimately introduces post-Heideggerian hermeneutic phenomenology.

Technology and Lifeworld: From Garden to Earth explores some of the most crucial issues relating to the role of technology in daily life in the contemporary, multicultural world. By applying phenomenological philosophy, Ihde seeks to establish a philosophy of technology. In this book, he focuses on the concept of Lifeworld, which was introduced by Husserl. Ihde summarizes the original idea of technology in Heidegger’s, Husserl’s, and Merleau-Ponty’s writings in order to extend their ideas to modern concepts of advanced technologies. Here the technology clearly occupies a foreground position on Ihde’s discourse. Beginning with a phenomenology of human-technology relations and then moving on to a hermeneutics of technology-cultural embeddedness, Ihde attempts to draw from the traditions mentioned, but is not limited to their past forms.
Instrumental Realism: The Interface between Philosophy of Science and Philosophy of Technology also focuses on the relationship between technology and human beings, but is more narrowly issue-related with science’s instrumentation at the interface concerns. Ihde states that we should look at instruments as an interface in order to develop the philosophy of technology. He also claims to isolate themes which continue to be serious issues within both the philosophy of science and the philosophy of technology.

The last of his serial books, Philosophy of Technology: An Introduction also concentrates on the establishment of a philosophy of technology. By tracing back to Plato and Aristotle’s philosophies, Ihde discusses problems between philosophy and technology, science and technology, and technology and culture. He also uses theories of Langdon Winner, Albert Borgmann, and himself in order to claim technology as phenomena. The other essay, “Heidegger’s Philosophy of Technology,” aims to concentrate on elaborating Heidegger’s concept of technology. Ihde suggests that in terms of Heidegger’s systematic concern with praxical, now technological humanity, artful praxis is not some simple addition to the current epoch of Being, but is the strategic counter-balance to what Heidegger fears is the threat of closure. Thus, there is an internal need for the turn to the current epoch of Being from Heidegger’s point of view, as a response to the age of technology.

After establishing the philosophy of technology, Ihde contextualizes his theory in the postmodern condition. Postphenomenology: Essays in the Postmodern Context is an investigation of the relationships between global culture and technology. Ihde applies his skill as a phenomenologist, which is unified by what he describes as a concern, which
arises with respect to one of the now major trends of Euro-American philosophy—its textism. Ihde divides this book into two parts in terms of postmodernity and technoculture, and practicing postphenomenology. From the theory to practice, Ihde’s book not only deals with the relationship between technology and culture, but also draws on cross-cultural issues in the age of technology of the twenty-first century. All these books are focused on philosophical discussions of modern technology. This dissertation attempts to employ Ihde’s philosophical discourses to the art world in order to gain a phenomenological understanding of *authentic art in cyberspace*.

### 3.3 Interdisciplinarity

This dissertation moreover needs to go further in applying Walter Benjamin’s Critical Theory, and Wolfgang Iser’s Reception Theory to examine both aspects of the spatial transformation of art into cyberspace and the spectator’s perception.

In utilizing Critical Theory, this dissertation’s emphasis is on the history of the spatial transformation of the artwork. The Frankfurt School, one of the more important western Marxist schools, shifts emphasis to culture, which indicates the theoretical assumption: culture, especially elitist culture, is in opposition to society. In other words, culture is independent and revolutionary. They put the Marxist concept of historical materialism into the center of their philosophical discussions in order to develop their “Critical Theory.” Marx has already stated that human beings interact with their environment and with each other within some fundamental set of productive relations and actions (Ihde, *Technology*, 9). In the Marxist theory, technology has long been a preoccupation. If Marx is right that humans are essentially self-interpreters, then historically we find ourselves in a new interpretative situation with respect to technology.
This theme is associated with the phenomenological interpretation of technology and lived subject.

Since this dissertation is a departure from Walter Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” it is necessary to illustrate Benjamin’s idea on the mechanical reproduction of art first. In *Illuminations* (1936), Benjamin approaches his essays in an interdisciplinary method to look at material, technical, sociocultural-symbolic, and political economic power dimensions to the respective technological advancement as it is problematically co-constituted. The essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” specifically deals with the technology-versus-culture debates of the respective political and intellectual milieus. Benjamin argues that there is nothing inherent in the unique value of the authentic work of art beyond its basis in the service of ritual. The mechanical reproduction of art changes the reaction of the masses toward art and in doing so, underscores the sharp distinction between criticism and enjoyment by the public.

Walter Benjamin points out that the mass production of artwork, enabled by mechanical technology, has blurred the boundary between fine art and popular culture, and thus has brought the former to the general public. Within the discussion, the art still exists in a physical form whether it is authentic or a replica. The only change of this process of the mechanical reproduction is that the historical indication and the authority of artwork have been dissipated by mass reproduction. Thus, the aura of the artwork disappears along with the replicas while the mysterious authenticity of the artwork grows stronger.
Walter Benjamin’s mechanical reproduction theory informs us of the meaning of the mechanical reproduction of artwork. He claims:

Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence. […] The situations into which the product of mechanical reproduction can be brought may not touch the actual work of art, yet the quality of its presence is always depreciated. […] One might subsume the eliminated element in the term “aura” and go on to say: that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art.

(Benjamin 29-30)

Benjamin concludes the process of mechanical reproduction by introducing the concept of “politics.” He states, “the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice — politics” (Benjamin 220).

Moreover, concerning the topic of authentic arts in cyberspace, there are several books and articles which are related. Mark Wolf’s Abstracting Reality: Art, Communication, and Cognition in the Digital Art (2000) is one of the foremost publications on art in the digital age. In this book, Wolf responds to Benjamin’s essay, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” and he states that reproduction of artworks in the digital environment has restored the aura and cultural value of artwork in physical museums, art museums and art galleries. Wolf argues that
digitizing art has overthrown the mode of representation in traditional art, and virtual galleries will become new distribution channels for the arts. Human life will be very different from now to the coming digital era, in which it is important to have the ability to select and obtain desired information and materials, while aesthetic ethics will be reconstructed. However, his discussion of art and digital technology is more on technological and cultural perspectives, and lacks a totalistic consideration on the existence of art.

R. L. Rutsky’s *High Techne: Art and Technology from the Machine Aesthetic to the Posthuman* (1999) points out that we have realized that, on the web, virtual museums and theaters are established, and in this techno-cultural space, all physical artworks can go beyond the limitation of time and space and reach regions where the authentic works are unavailable. With this virtual representation, an artwork can get to the terminal devices in every household anywhere, anytime. He argues that on the surface, this is the embodiment of the popularization of art, but in reality, the representation of the visual art has lost its historical connotations. The virtual representation of artworks in the museums is no more than a graphic representation. The influence of technology is not only electronic, but also emotional and spiritual. Through technology, art and culture gradually blend with each other in modern society. In this particular phenomenon, electronic media and computer technology combine cultural aesthetic forms and the concept of data in mechanical reproduction, and culture is constructed as reproducible information or data. Obviously, this book concerns information engineering aspects of the computer age, rather than concentrating on artistic representation and cultural values, which are the more important for this dissertation.
Debbie Hall’s article, “The Original and the Reproduction: Art in the Age of Digital Technology” (1999), denotes that in the process of the new reproduction technology, not only is the essence of the artwork transformed, but our feelings about the artwork are also changed. The new media and the digital imagination have already become the dominant mechanism in virtual space, creating a virtual environment in which all abstract visual, auditory and linguistic elements are equivocally consumed, transformed and connected. The general public has come to rely on reproductions to get closer to traditional artworks so that the virtual exhibition space constructs a special environment for everyone to be involved in very easily. This article is closer to the objective of this dissertation, yet the author’s emphasis actually is not on the existence of art and its cultural problem. More specifically, the author addresses this phenomenon in the light of media studies and Cartesian tradition, which are not this dissertation’s focus.

Bridget Fowler’s “The Hegemonic Work of Art in the Age of Electronic Reproduction (1994),” is an assessment of Pierre Bourdieu’s cultural theory and phenomena of the work of art in the age of electronic reproduction. Fowler states that, for Bourdieu, it is now artistic knowledge that has come to serve the ancient purposes of ideology in justifying social inequality and domination. The love of art has been substituted for the love of God. Thus, the aim of this article is to show the similarity between the apparatus of established religion and the institutionalized place of art based on Bourdieu’s cultural theory. Even though this article has a unique point of view on the audience’s response, it still ignores the importance of spatial transformation and spatial existence of artwork in the living world.
Clearly, we can realize that the work of these scholars more or less is dependent upon Walter Benjamin’s famous essay, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.” Undoubtedly, Benjamin’s essay has much to offer contemporary analyses of the phenomenon of today’s Internet. Since then, there have been several books and articles about art in the mechanical reproduction age and cyberspace. M. I. Franklin’s “Reading Walter Benjamin and Donna Haraway in the Age of Digital Reproduction” is the most recent publication about Benjamin’s concept of mechanical reproduction and Donna Haraway’s cyborg manifestation. In this article, Franklin discusses how Benjamin’s and Haraway’s attitudes take on technological change, which can contribute to re-examining our theory and research on new information and communication technologies. By juxtaposing Benjamin’s and Haraway’s articles, Franklin argues that we need to redefine the concept of technology. Art and politics can recognize the interwoven relationship between them as spheres of action, material and myth-making practices, and reproduction of real life without recourse to essentialist explanatory frameworks, aesthetic conventions, and hierarchies of good taste. Franklin demonstrates that both Benjamin and Haraway provide important entry-points and substantive insights for discussing the relationship between art, culture, and technology. The essay ends with an open conclusion, allowing readers to re-examine the relationship between humans and machines. Franklin, however, employs a formalist methodology to compare Benjamin’s and Haraway’s articles. As a result, this approach can only provide the basic content of the two famous essays by Benjamin and Haraway.

John Walker’s *Art in the Age of Mass Media* (1994) represents an exploration of how socialist artists respond to the imagery of the mass media, and what social roles
remain for art. Walker examines the relationship between art and mass media, and the countless interactions between high and low culture in a postmodern pluralistic world. By using a range of historic and contemporary works of art to illustrate his theoretical points, Walker explores a variety of ways in which modern artists have responded to the arrival of new mass media. In chapter three, Walker specifically points out that twentieth-century mass media routinely employs the fine arts in various ways, such as subject-matter, as a source of styles and formal innovations, and as a pool of skilled labour. This book suggests a good model for this dissertation, but art in the age of mass media is only a part of this dissertation’s focus.

Pierre Levy’s “The Art of Cyberspace” more specifically concentrates on discussing the relationship between artistic work and cyberspace. He concludes that there are three interdependent clauses in terms of message transmission, differences between author and reader, and environment. Levy also demonstrates the traditional artistic relationship between the artist and recipients, which helps this dissertation to demonstrate the aspect of the spectator’s reception.

Under this topic, this dissertation seeks to elaborate, based on Benjamin’s notion of authentic artwork, on how mass reproduction of artistic images not only deprives artworks of their authority, summoning spectators’ appreciation for authentic artworks, but also examines the politics behind the virtual representation of artistic images.

Wolfgang Iser’s Reception Theory is also utilized as a comprehensive strategy of spectator’s experience, because humans play a vital role in Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological theory of perception. Iser’s Reception Theory, the approach to literature that concerns itself first and foremost with one or more readers’ actualization of
the text, is based on a collective enterprise that has had far-reaching institutional consequences. It is a form of reader-response theory that focuses on the reception of a text, both on an individual and on a historical basis. Reception aesthetics examines how readers realize the potentials of a text, while reception history examines how readings change over the course of time. Thus, the dissertation also seeks an understanding of the spectator’s perception of viewing experiences of the world to complete Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the totality of the human and the world. By utilizing Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenology, Benjamin’s Critical Theory, and Iser’s Reception Theory, this dissertation seeks to establish a phenomenological interpretation of art in cyberspace.

4. Mapping Research

This dissertation consists of five chapters: an introductory chapter, three main body chapters, and a concluding chapter. Introduction, “Facing Digitized Works of Art,” outlines the purpose, thesis, methodologies, and the theories of the dissertation. This chapter also includes a brief description of the dissertation’s chapters.

Chapter One, “Art-in-the-world” attempts to concentrate on the phenomenological discussion of the existence of art and its relationship with technology in order to examine how the existence of art has been challenged by advanced technology. In other words, it is an introduction of the phenomenon of the relationship between art and existence. Beginning with the Greek concept of techne, the arts seek independent statuses in society. Whether it is authentic work or replica, a work of art exists only in the physical form. The physical existence of artwork, however, has been challenged by advanced communication technologies, reproduction and Internet technologies. Merleau-
Ponty states that “the body is the vehicle of being in the world, and having a body is, for a living creature, to be involved in a definite environment, to identify oneself with certain projects and be continually committed to them” (Perception, 82). Along with Merleau-Ponty’s statement, this dissertation states that the boundary between the real world and the cyber world should be banished. People are living in these two spaces simultaneously, rather than surfing in cyberspace with their mind only, leaving the body behind, so does art, which also exists in both types of form within the world. As mentioned above, this dissertation attempts to proclaim that the spectator exists in a unified world of physicality and virtuality. This chapter concentrates on demonstrating the existence of art, because the location of art is very different than that in the past. Whether it functions as political propaganda, serves as religious symbolism, or belongs in a private collection, the art exists only in a physical form, and its spatiality is permanent. Because of the increased power of mechanical and digital technologies, humans can easily duplicate an artwork and bring it to the public. By applying phenomenology, this chapter attempts to discuss the relationship between the existence of art and advancement of technology. This chapter also states that the existence of art, as well as the existence of Being, needs to be situated in our Lebenswelt in order to examine their meaning in the complex social network.

The second focus of Chapter One is on “Art in the Mass Media,” which seeks to understand how a capitalist society incorporates art into its commercial system. This chapter’s focus on print and electronic media ages bridges the relationship between art and technology into the following chapter. By tracing the idea of technology, this chapter examines different stages of technological invention in terms of prints, photography, mass media, and digital technologies, based on the Marxist philosophy of “historical
materialism.” Underlying this chronological arrangement will be the Marshall McLuhanesque structure of the development of human society and technologies. McLuhan claims that technology is an extension of the human body. He believed that the print revolution, begun by Gutenberg, was the forerunner of the industrial revolution. One unforeseen consequence of the print was the fragmentation of society. McLuhan argues that readers would read in private, and so be alienated from others. Printing confirms and extends the new visual stress. It created the portable book, which men could read in privacy and in isolation from others (McLuhan 50). Interestingly, McLuhan saw electronic media as a return to collective ways of perceiving the world. His global village theory posited the ability of electronic media to unify and retribalize the human race. What McLuhan did not live to see, however, was the merging of text and electronic mass media in this new media called the Internet. Therefore, the historical argument will parallel the phenomenological point of view on technology simultaneously, and this parallel will lead discussion into the next chapter which will focus on the phenomenological attitude toward art in cyberspace.

Chapter Two, “Perceiving the Space” seeks a phenomenological comprehension of art in cyberspace and the spectator’s perception of the work of art in different concepts of spaces. In today’s Lebenswelt, spectators have to move physically through the net, from one server to the next. Spectators must know the place to find the information they are looking for. Places, movement, traveling, navigating: a spatial concept seems to be the easiest way to understand the structure of such a network. But each spectator’s entry point is nevertheless in real space, the Lebenswelt. So it is with art, and spectators can access traditional authentic art easily while the existence of art moves from physical to
virtual. Thus, the main focus of this chapter will be on the concept of space and its transformation, and will examine how spectators experience works of art in physical and non-physical spaces simultaneously. In other words, an aspect of this chapter is to build up an understanding of the existence of art with pictures of spectators’ spatial comprehension, which represents their individual entry point to the space of the Internet or what they might associate with it. The questions such as the relationship between the arts, meanings, and existence, cyber-experience as spectacle, embodiment of power, and being within the world, will be the concern of this chapter.

Chapter Three, “Blurred Boundaries and Return to Authenticity” attempts to claim that cyberspace is neither an outer space nor a non-existent space, but the space within our Lebenswelt. Also, this chapter attempts to explore the purposes and meanings of digitizing art into cyberspace. By incorporating the conclusions of the spectator’s perception from the previous chapter, this chapter attempts to analyze the meaning of transformation from the physical existence of authentic works of art in the ordinary world and in the age of mechanical reproduction, and eventually transfers into cyberspace. By claiming “being-in-the-world” of art in the age of digital reproduction, the main theme of this chapter will concentrate on demonstrating the meaning of returning to the world, and the visual politics of this digitized transformation of authentic art.

Conclusion, “The Phenomenological Experience of Digitized Art in Cyberspace” concludes the phenomenological experience of digitized art in cyberspace and summarizes the investigation. This chapter attempts to synthesize that phenomenon of the digitization of artwork has been considered, with a special focus on the changes of experience and perception they bring about in our understanding and reading of the visual
image in cyberspace. This dissertation attempts to claim that the digitized art images do not lose the context of their original, but maintain an embodied relationship with the physical existence of artworks. Merleau-Ponty, reminding us of the embodiment we have so often neglected in Western philosophy, tells us that meaning already inhabits things. We thus cannot easily separate them as physical/virtual or real/unreal. Rather, the boundaries between these concepts need to be abandoned. Only with the boundaries blurred, can the meaning of art be returned to originals, and the authenticity of the artwork then returns back to the physical part of the existence of the artwork.

5. Summary

In this chapter, I have outlined the significant position of today’s Internet, and the problem it causes. It is phenomenal that duplicated and virtual images have been increasingly invading our daily lives in the contemporary world. Human beings’ Lebenswelt has also changed due to the modern technological transformation. Thus, we cannot perceive this phenomenon from an alien point of view. The virtual space is not an outer space of our lived-world. It cannot even exist without humans’ creation and imagination. This situation also affects our experiences toward the world of art. The second part of this chapter concerns methodology and theoretical discussion. By employing a phenomenological writing strategy, this chapter questions the problematic philosophical thinking regarding the Cartesian tradition. The denial of the Cartesian split is necessary for introducing Merleau-Ponty’s Existential Phenomenology as the methodology in this study. Through this discussion, this dissertation also outlines three significant steps of the phenomenological method, which is the framework of analysis.
underlying it. The last part of this chapter provides a picture of this dissertation, indicating and explaining each chapter’s focus.
Chapter One

Art-in-the-world

The way in which man experiences art is supposed to give information about its nature. Experience is the source that is standard not only for art appreciation and enjoyment, but also for artistic creation. Everything is an experience.

Heidegger “The Origin of the Work of Art”

Clearly, Heidegger explores the idea that humans intuitively create meanings in both their artistic creation and perception of art. That is, the interaction between human’s creation and perception is meant to be contextualized within a specific experience. Beginning with the Greek concept of technē, the arts started to seek an independent status in society. Whether it is an authentic work or a replica, all works of art have physical existence and form. The physical existence of an artwork, however, has been challenged by mechanical technology, advanced communication means, and the Internet. If we perceive a work of art as a meaningful body within the world, we perhaps can be bracketing (Husserl’s term) a work of art in order to establish brackets

3 Technē is an ancient Greek term for an art or craft including carpentry, sculpting, and medicine. Aristotle defines technē as a conscious variation. The technē of any craft-product is a principle external to the object. Obviously, the concept of technē has a craftsmanship orientation. In ancient Greece, a doctrine of cultural evolution saw humankind as progressing with the help of technē. To this extent, the concept of technē was comprehended as art, but meant, more precisely, the orderly application of knowledge for the purpose of producing a specific, predetermined product. Inspired by Aristotle’s account of technē, Heidegger thinks that technē is not treated objectively as an event in the world, but phenomenologically described on its own terms. Technē, understood in this manner, reappears in Heidegger’s later critique of technology as a contrasting mode of revealing that is respectful of human beings and nature. In this chapter, we will perceive “art” and “technology” to be an embodied relation. See Tad Bernnan, “Technē.” ed, Edward. Craig, Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy (London: Routledge, [Online available] March 23, 2005). J. J. Pollitt, Art and Experience in Classical Greece (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 69. Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” eds., Robert Scharff and Val Dusek, Philosophy of Technology (MA: Blackwell, 2003) 252-264.
around the experience to be described. Bracketing is not meant to isolate the experience in order to keep external presuppositions from influencing our description, but is designed to “analyze the experience in the context of consciousness and preconsciousness” (Lanigan, *Phenomenology*, 10). That is to say, we should perceive a phenomenon within its unique socio-cultural context.

To this extent, this chapter’s focus is on demonstrating the relationship between technological transformation and the existence of art. As the first chapter demonstrated, art traditionally exists only in a physical form, and its spatiality is permanent; nonetheless, the location of today’s art is very different than it was in the past. For example, humans can easily duplicate an artwork and bring it to the public because of the increased ability and usability of mechanical and digital technologies. Consequently, the physical existence of art has been challenged by advanced reproductive, communication, and the Internet technologies. This chapter traces the development of technology by focusing on different stages of technological inventions in terms of print, photography, mass media, and digital technologies. Underlying this chronological examination will be Marshall McLuhan’s theory of structure in the development of human society and technologies. McLuhan claims that technology is an extension of the human body. He believes that the print revolution, begun by Gutenberg, was the forerunner of the industrial revolution. McLuhan argues that printing confirms the extension of human’s natural senses. It created the small-scale portable book, which men could read in privacy and in isolation from others (McLuhan 50).
McLuhan sees electronic media as a return to collective ways of perceiving the world. His global village theory posits the ability of electronic media to unify and re-tribalize the human community. What McLuhan did not live to see however, but perhaps foresaw, was the merging of text and electronic mass media into the Internet. The historical argument of this dissertation parallels the phenomenological point of view on technological simultaneity, and this parallel automatically leads to the discussion that is the main topic of this chapter: the phenomenological attitude toward art and its existence in contemporary culture. By applying Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological methodology, the aim of this chapter is to examine the relationship between the arts and the concept of existence as developed in different periods of time all the way from the Greek notion of imitation to today’s digital reproduction.

1. Phenomenological Description: Art and Lebenswelt

Since the Cartesian split (i.e., minds and bodies) is inappropriate to explain the phenomenon of the digitized art in cyberspace, I suggest a unified view of *embodiment* must be substituted for it. Embodiment is a semiotic function in which body and mind are perceptive and expressive of one another (Lanigan, *Embodiment*, 2). That is, the human body is the ground for the mind. For Merleau-Ponty, the body schema is the perception in which man’s body is in the world as the heart is in the organism. The body keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system (*Perception*, 203-206). Merleau-Ponty suggests that perception and expression work in conjunction such that both are part of the signifying process (Lanigan, *Embodiment*, 2). That is to say, human communication, in the
phenomenological horizon, is embodied in both perception and expression. Human communication locates itself within the context of consciousness, culture, civilization, and nature (Lanigan, *Phenomenology*, 15). Since a work of art is also a lived-body, a sign vehicle, existing within the world, we shall look at it within its context in order to gain the phenomenological understanding of art and its existence.

1.1 Authentic Art and Mimēsis

Greek art is generally mimetic. *Mimēsis* is often translated as imitation and indicates the relationship between the words of a literary work and the actions and events they resemble. This concept was deeply embedded in ancient Greek culture, and laid the foundation for the classical notions of artistic creation in antiquity. It also shaped classical traditional value in art (Most, 381-382). As previously mentioned, phenomenological description accounts for a human awareness of what a phenomenon is. Lanigan has noted that communication actualizes the cultural demands of human interaction (e.g., the concepts of person, society, physical reality, and myth) that display human choice in the form of desire (e.g., values that are human, group, material, and spiritual) (*Phenomenology*, 15). Following this logic, one can realize that every oral culture creates its own peculiar relationship between its myths and its society; Greeks are no exception (Sienkewicz 202). They fantasized that all things in the universe were vitalized, and created the twelve gods to explain the phenomenon they perceived. Furthermore, religion and society had a very close relationship in ancient Greece. Greek polytheism is a religion of the intra-worldly kind, and influenced the country’s political institutions. Vernant notes:
not only are the gods present, not only do they function within the world, but cult rites and ceremonies have as their aim to bring the worshippers into the cosmic and social order over which the divine power presides. The diverse aspects of this order correspond to the different modalities of the sacred. (*Origins*, 319)

Here, we can recognize that political power and social order were the basis of religious doctrine; their cosmology and political practice tie in with each other. J. J. Pollitt examines the development of Greek art and its *Lebenswelt*, and suggests that the arts were used to express Greek civilization and vice versa, based on their cultural experiences (Pollitt ix). In each era of Greek antiquity, the Greeks employed their philosophical thinking in the creation of art. By concentrating on the Classical movement (c. 450-430 B. C.), Pollitt explores the way Greek civilization viewed things as they actually were perceived, which is reflected in the motto of “man is the measure of all things.” He notes, “the real nature of an object became a matter for subjective determination; man, and not an absolute standard outside of him, was the measure of it” (Pollitt 69). In the Classical period, Greeks employed Protagoras of Abdera’s philosophy to rule their politics, religion, society, and artistic creations. The example of the Gorgon Medusa from ancient Greek mythology can be used to describe the relationship between the existence of art and the Greek lived-world. According to Greek myth, the Gorgon was a terrible female monster whose appearance would turn to stone anyone who laid eyes upon it. The Gorgon’s destiny was to be killed by the hero, Perseus. At the time of her death, she gave birth to two children—one is Pegasus, a flying horse with wings on the head, and the other is Chrysaor, a man. When the Gorgon’s head was hacked off,
Chrysaor jumped out from her neck. After Perseus slew Medusa, he gave the head of the Gorgon to Athena. Athena attached the head to the front of her Aegis in order to give it Medusa's powers. Greek civilization has used the Gorgon’s image as a decorative icon in architectural sculptures and vase painting since the early period of Greek civilization even though the Gorgon was a monster.

The Gorgon has been found in a variety of locations in ancient Greece, not only on shields, but also on temples, ships, and potters’ ovens, because it was feared that the power of an evil eye might cause the pots to crack (Barnes 7). Because of war, Greeks suffered unstable social conditions; they needed to communicate to themselves through every kind of artistic construction. The most important characteristic that has caused the Greeks to be perceived as the ancestor of Western civilization is their astonishing imagination. After the barbarians invaded the Greek peninsula, the Greeks expanded their living space. This situation led to the admiration of heroes and produced enormous heroic stories. The Greeks employed the concept of epiphany because they believed that these visible iconographies could give them power in fighting. They created the Gorgon’s images and made them as large as possible. Thus, they could create a special visible effect through maintaining a certain physical distance between the sculpture and viewers. Medusa on the center of a pedimental sculpture may have interacted an impression of fear with the Greek. This terrifying aspect of the Gorgon created the feeling of horror in the viewer. This interrelationship between the Gorgon and the viewer would likely have occurred in reaction to any image of the Gorgon.

Greek spectators must have experienced a strange ambivalence: fear and hope. They regarded the Gorgon as an evil monster, yet hoped she could protect them at the
same time. That is the Greek artistic creation and the presence in the lived-world. The appearance of the Gorgon not only reflected their artistic creation, but also contemporary political and social conditions, or their lived-world. Obviously, religion, politics, and artistic representation cannot be separated since they were parts of the culture in Greece. Greek mythology is not only an artistic representation, but also religious faith. Greek mythology is the most distinctive heritage of the Greeks. It reflects the Greeks’ philosophy about the beginning of human beings and the phenomenon of nature.

In addition to the uniqueness of the Greek lived-experiences and their creation of art, another distinctive time span that exemplifies a similar relationship of humans to art is the medieval period. The concept of mimēsis was also rooted in medieval religious culture. In the medieval world, religious iconographies were not only associated with politics, but were also related to mystical theology. In other words, the artistic creation, theology, religion, and politics in the Middle Ages were interwoven. Mysticism held a precise meaning, often referred to as “contemplation” or “the contemplative life.” The mysticism of the Middle Ages had some merits, but also some serious flaws in both theology and practice. As Henry Chadwick states:

In Christianity, faith is the necessary precondition of advancement in the knowledge and love of God through meditation on the inner, symbolic, meaning of Scripture, linked to contemplation of higher things. Thereby the soul may be gradually freed from the distractions of passion and enabled to rise to the mystical vision of God. (384)

Medieval theology was brimming with the color of mysticism, which bestowed theology, especially the doctrine of Christianity, with certain mystical meanings. It meant that
through attaining a kind of experience of ecstasy, the spirit or the soul would receive some profound revelation from deep in the Christian doctrine. Mysticism is a type of language by which humanity could reach God and see what is unseen. By making the light of the Lord’s countenance visible to the eyes, by providing the viewer a visible sign, the image lends to the words of the prayer an unanticipated immediacy.

The light of God that shines down through stained glass windows to the earthly heaven in order to communicate to someone, who is praying, represents one of the more important aspects of aesthetics in the Middle Ages. Stained glass, for example, represents one of the most significant and interesting characteristics in the Gothic Cathedral from the twelfth century on. The manipulation of stained glass was designed to give the feeling of religious mysticism. At the time, windows represented particular stories from Biblical texts.

God illuminates Himself to the world through his mystical presence, such as mystical doctrines, scriptures, liturgical rites, and the church. Thus, the notion of “three senses of Scripture” – literal, moral, and spiritual interpretation – remains the most significant impact on Biblical hermeneutics. By the time of Gregory the Great of Rome, in the second half of the sixth century, the notion of “three senses of Scripture” had become the Gregorian tradition of four senses: the literal (semantic and historical); the allegorical (a theological or spiritual extension); the moral (an ethical application); and the anagogical (that which embraces the future) (Thiselton 390-391). Later, St. Augustine elaborated the concept of three hierarchies of sight: corporeal vision, spiritual vision, and intellectual vision, which are coherent within Biblical hermeneutics (Hamburger 192).
In the realm of metaphysical sight, the spiritual world of the invisible is not some infinitely distant kingdom; instead, it surrounds us like an ocean (Florensky 64). According to Florensky’s Medievalism, the church ritual is a synthesis of the arts. He considers religious art to be the highest synthesis of heterogeneous artistic activity. All techniques, narrative stories from the Bible, sacred liturgies, and more importantly, religious philosophy become like a whole (Florensky 100-101). By describing medieval religious images, we can recognize that those images do more than embody doctrinal truth—they also embody spiritual aspirations. We can also recognize that the language of images is not only the rhetoric of visual images, but also the ideology of images that the vision of God was a vision of the invisible, a supersensory experience. Therefore, the formulation of religious philosophy in the Middle Ages created the formula of order and mysticism. The pursuit of metaphysics ultimately led to the scientific method, a means by which to verify and refine metaphysical concepts.

These two examples from ancient Greece and the Medieval period describe the relationship between humans’ lived experience and artistic creation. Ancient Greece and the Middle Ages were unique because they employed their lived experiences to create artwork, and allowed artwork to be significant within their Lebenswelt.

1.2 Mechanical Reproduction

Walter Benjamin’s cultural theory introduced the concept of “mechanical reproduction.” At the end of his famous essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” Benjamin states, “its self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order” (244). Here, Benjamin refers to humanity’s becoming an object of contemplation.
of itself. Mechanical reproduction of art changes the reaction of the masses toward art.

In Benjamin’s mind, alienation remains a serious question in modern society. On the other hand, Benjamin keeps reminding us that the artistic exhibitions have lost their cult values and have begun to be displaced by contemporary exhibition values. He says, “by the absolute emphasis on its exhibition value, the work of art becomes a creation with entirely new functions, among which is the one we are conscious of, the artistic function” (225). The result of this process echoes his idea of the “loss of aura” in the age of mechanical reproduction. He uses the unique existence of art in time and space to explain the relationship between artwork and history; he considers that this unique existence of the work of art determines the history to which it is subject throughout the time of its existence. Benjamin’s pessimistic point of view of technological invention is incontrovertible; however, he fails to recognize the Lebenswelt of modernity. The following description seeks to return to the essence of technology in order to discuss the relationship between mechanical technology and the modern Lebenswelt.

Printing technology first became available for human communication by the revolutionary invention of movable type printing by Gutenberg in 1456. The traditional definition of print culture refers to the profound transformations that the discovery, and then the extended application of the new technique for the reproduction of texts, brought to every domain of life from private to public, from material to spiritual (Chartier 1). In addition to printing technology, the accurate image of the physical world became available in the early modern period in the form of the photograph. The photographic camera descended from the camera obscura, and later the camera lucida, which had been
employed by artists, such as Leonardo da Vinci, Jan Vermeer, Honoré Daumier, and other artists since the Renaissance.

In discussing the existence of printing and photographic technologies, we need to distinguish two different aspects in terms of visual expression and visual communication of statements of fact. In other words, there is a great difference between creating something and making a statement about the quality and character of something. This by no means is a significant issue regarding the examination of the existence of mechanical reproductive technology and its application in the modern \textit{Lebenswelt}. That is to say, printing and photographic technologies as art creating media and as the means of making reproductions are two extremely different media.

Concerning printing and photographic technologies as artistic media, we need to first describe their technological essences. Print culture as a new means of communication not only encourages the proliferation of the written word, but also distributes huge quantities of new objects. The work of art also faced this new age of mechanical production. The printed image of artwork became more widespread in the age of print culture. Print culture gave the artwork a more substantial presence and a more familiar reality. Roger Chartier notes that western culture can be considered to be a culture of the printed world after Gutenberg (1).

The introduction of print technology was influenced by the belief in “the prestige of the individual” tradition, which emerged from English empiricism and French rationalism. Print technology encourages the writer to have a fixed point of view and introduces one of the more important principles of Western culture—the idea of discrete authorship. This occurred when the reproduction of written materials began to move
from the copyist’s desk to the printer’s workshop in the late fifteenth century (Eisenstein 3-4) and is due, in large part to Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press. McLuhan, in *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, notes that the correspondence between the fixed point of observation in print and in visual arts changed the literacy tools of the day. He points out that “the world of visual perspective is one of unified and homogeneous space. Such a world is alien to the resonating diversity of spoken words. So language was the last art to accept the visual logic of Gutenberg’s technology” (McLuhan 136). McLuhan’s point of view shows the special problems posed by print culture because the standardized letterform of movable type reduced the use of spoken language. It is impossible to underestimate the historically significant consequences of this fifteenth-century shift in communication. In other words, Gutenberg’s invention of movable print technology advanced science and technology, and this change transformed the condition of humankind’s own craft. The inventions of the movable printing process and other technologies (e.g., telescope and microscope) which were used for scientific methods based on mathematics and empirical observation, shifted humankind’s epistemology of perception toward the world. This empirical observation shows that Gutenberg’s invention of movable type for the printing process became the new medium to garner widespread mass support (Eisenstein 178).

Of course, Gutenberg was not the only inventor who was an empiricist. When we look at the role played by da Vinci who combined scientific and artistic interests, his sharpness and quickness of sight made his eyes almost the equivalent of a microscope or camera. His empirical observation could literally freeze motion; thus, he was able to
analyze the flight of birds and invented flying machines based on the principle of a flapping wing (Mazlish 15).

By stating the “photograph is modern vision in every sense,” Don Slater argues that photography denotes a scientific principle as a basis of knowledge and demystification of the modern world (223). Undoubtedly, since Daguerre built his career by employing the most advanced technical means he could develop exemplified in the early photographic medium, the Daguerreotype, the experience of photography became a fundamentally realistic structure of modern vision. Humans experience an incredible magic of technical power over appearances that show the capacity of the transformation of the material world. This technical achievement of realistic illusions changes people’s perception toward their Lebenswelt. The birth of photography was widely known as a modernization by the success of science and chemistry, and as a machine for the production of a positivist vision of the world (Slater 221-222). Photographs, however, are not just technically realistic images; but they also depict everything and bring everything within the field of the mechanical world.

In the early age of the invention of photography, many critics could not stand for this new technology in their Lebenswelt. Charles Baudelaire expresses his attitude in a diatribe on the role of photography in the arts and society and the public’s lack of imagination. He notes:

Since the photograph gives us every guarantee of exactitude that we could desire (they really believe that, the mad fools), then photography and art are the same thing. From that moment our squalid society rushed, Narcissus to a man, to gaze at its trivial image on a scrap of metal. […]
As the photographic industry was the refuge of every would-be painter, every painter too ill-endowed or too lazy to complete his studies, this universal infatuation bore not only the mark of a blindness, an imbecility, but had also the air of a vengeance. [...] It is time, then, for it to return to its true duty, which is to be the servant of the sciences and the arts—but a very humble servant, like printing or shorthand which have neither created nor supplemented literature. [...] Let it be the secretary and clerk of whoever needs an absolute factual exactitude in his profession. [...] But if it be allowed to encroach upon the domain of the impalpable and the imaginary, upon anything whose value depends solely upon the addition of something of a man’s soul, then it will be so much the worse of us.

(124-125)

Not all critics, however, thought photography was bound by its technical limits. Garry Badger states that the photographic aesthetic demands all respect for the primacy of the object and, in terms of artistic expression demands, an allowance for transcendent experience through the objective significance of the thing itself (499). That is, the existence of photography has its significance in the modern world. Printed and photographic images, like other images, were thought of and used as a significant aid to knowledge and as if they were capable of adequate representation of reality (Chartier 6). Since then, we have shared a desire to understand the use of the materials we are investigating within the precise, local, specific context (e.g., ritual, political, religious, or national) that gave them meanings.
While considering printed and photographic technologies as the means of mechanical reproduction, we shall consider their “thing-technology-Lebenswelt” relation. The photograph made it possible for the first time in history to get a visual record of an object or a work of art that could be used as a means to study many of the qualities of the particular object or work of art itself (Ivins 389). In this aspect, the photograph has become a modern method for the study of art. As Walter Benjamin has claimed, photography has “transformed the entire nature of art,” destroying its semblance of autonomy in relation to social and political process, and liquidating “the traditional value of the culture heritage” (226-227; 231). Photography for him cannot be invested with the aura of timelessness and sanctity, which is essential to Classical artwork. There is no doubt of the validity of Benjamin’s concerns.

What Benjamin does not see, however, or perhaps ignores, is that the “art—world” relation has been replaced by the “art-technology-world.” That is to say, the photograph not only signals a different relationship to and over humans’ Lebenswelt, it denotes a sense of power in the way that seeks to order and constrict the world around us. Photography’s mode of representation has changed the way humans perceive time and space. The world now has to render itself static in front of the camera, and the result is that the act of being photographed supersedes the experience of being photographed (Clarke 15). This sense of perpetual technological change has been endemic from its beginning. Basically, a photograph functions as a picture, or a likeness of an object. Depending on its context, a photograph as a fixed image is subject to a continuous state of transformation and metamorphosis (Clarke 19). Clarke points out:
The intelligibility of the photograph is no simple thing; photographs are texts inscribed in terms of what we may call ‘photographic discourse,’ but this discourse […] engages discourse beyond itself, the ‘photographic text,’ […] is the site of a complex intertextuality, an overlapping series of previous text […] at a particular cultural and historical conjuncture. (27)

This central statement shows how we perceive the photograph as a meaningful text and challenges our experiences of reality. In “The Photographic Message,” Roland Barthes argues that the important distinction between the relative meanings of different elements within a photographic frame is termed the denotative and the connotative. The photographic image thus needs to be perceived both in literal and in a contextual meaning, underlying the process of signification within the culture (15-31). Therefore, to perceive a photographic image is to enter into a series of hidden relationships. We need to both see the image and to read it as an active visual image because the photographic image exists within a wider body of reference and relates to a series of cultural, social, and aesthetic history. Obviously, Barthes has established a way to read the photograph. We can read a photograph within its own terms of reference, seeing it not so much as the reflection of a “real” world as an interpretation of that world (Clarke 33). In short, the photograph offers an opportunity to construct meanings, changes our perceptions of the Lebenswelt, and gives us an exemplary image.

Both printing and photographic technologies reflect the mechanical potential of their periods and a response to the requirements of their times (Benjamin, One Way Street, 384). Needless to say, these two mechanical technologies are unique products which
reflect a new cultural position within the world. It is no accident that their rises in popularity are related to a particular culture of modernity.

1.3 Media Ages

The expression of the mass media denotes certain modern systems of communication. The term mass media generally refers to cinema, radio, television, video, newspapers, magazines, music, and advertising. A common characteristic of mass media is the use of modern machines (e.g., cameras, printing, computers, and satellites) to record and disseminate images and information, which can make cultural products cheap, plentiful, widely available, and rapidly distributed (Walker 8-9). In these circumstances, works of art have become ubiquitous in mass media. The focus of the following discussion is on the dynamic relations between art and mass media in comprehending the existence of artwork in the modern media environment.

Since the mid-twentieth century, the increasing commercialization of the cultural sector of society and the parallel development of the new technologies of communication have projected culture into the heart of industrial structures in the high modernist period. Meanwhile, the relationship between art and commercialization has also gradually been added to a debate centered on culture and industry. In the age of high modernism, the networks of mass-cultural production and distribution were immediately integrated into a market philosophy. That is, an increasing commercialization process is more likely to be a context of the people’ Lebenswelt. To this extent, the relationship between art and

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4 The period of high modernism is referred to the period from early twentieth to mid-twentieth century. Because of high-developed capitalism, a large number of artists, musicians, and writers, who sought to represent the flux, incoherence, conflicts, and alienation of modern life, and the psychological depth of human thought by experimenting with new art forms and aesthetics during this period. For example, Joyce’s Ulysses is a depiction of the life of an ordinary advertising salesman that is told in shifting and incoherent styles. See Jeff Lewis, Cultural Studies: The Basic (London: Sage, 2003) 20-24.
commercial mass media is controversial. In describing the relationship between art and mass media, there are two concepts that need to be discussed. One is art’s use of mass culture; and the other is mass media’s use of art.

The most significant example of the interaction of art and mass media is the Pop Art movement, typified in the work of Andy Warhol. Because of the emergence of capitalist-consumerism, more and more standardized mass productions delivered via mass media have filled Americans’ everyday life. With the booming of industrialized society, mechanization also increased leisure time. This enabled Americans to enjoy their prosperity. Artists, more often than not, worked for commercial media to create artistically styled commercial design in the second half of the twentieth century. The Pop artist in New York took American popular culture and created a brand new style of art. They looked out onto the world, and saw that art had become extremely unrealistic as it was feeding on the abstract style of Cézanne, and they became determined to depict formerly worthless items (Lippard 85-86). Accepting their consumerist surroundings, Pop artists used advertising, magazines, and newspapers for inspiration (Lippard 82).

Nonetheless, the Pop artists did not simply portray common objects or take stylistic guides from folk culture (Lippard 90), but chose symbols for their economic influence on the average consumer. Warhol provided an ideological justification for his interest in such mundane objects:

What's great about this country is that American started the tradition where the richest consumers buy essentially the same things as the poorest. You can be watching TV and see Coca-Cola, and you know the President drinks Coke, Liz Taylor drinks Coke, and just drink, you can drink Coke
too. A Coke is a Coke and no amount of money can get you a better Coke than the bum on the corner is drinking. All the Cokes are the same and all are good. Liz Taylor knows it, the bum knows it, and you know it.

(Warhol, Philosophy, 100-101)

He has a significant point: “factories and machine manufacturing allow consumer goods to be mass produced and this ensures an enormous increase in quantity plus a standardization of quality. Warhol was one of few artists who acknowledge the capitalist nature of art under capitalism” (Walker 38-44), and this is the reason why Warhol reduplicates the images in his serial approach.

In 1962, the early period of Warhol’s career, he established his style by duplicating the images of Coca-Cola Bottles, Campbell’s Soup Cans, and Marilyn Monroe. Green Coca-Cola Bottles (1962, Fig. 1) and 100 Campbell’s Soup Cans (1962, Fig. 2). Each consists of one hundred copies of the same icons, with ten bottles to a side. Warhol arranged his images so they did not align perfectly with the colored shapes to give each work its own individual characteristic, despite being part of a repetitive series of images. Marilyn Monroe (1962, Fig. 3) represents a different approach to a series in Warhol’s works. In this work, the same cropped image of Monroe is repeated and only the color is varied. The same approach became the foundation of all of his Monroe portraits. In August of 1962, when Marilyn Monroe was found dead, Warhol began to duplicate her images from an original postcard and people were fascinated by the portrait. He also intended to emphasize the notion of a celebrity as a manufactured commodity. Warhol wanted to portray Monroe as a contemporary sex goddess packaged as a consumer item. All these images are perfect examples of mechanical reproduction that Warhol repeated thousands of times and in dozens of formats.
Warhol said: “Pop comes from the outside” (Warhol and Hackett 16). Differing from traditional art, Warhol created his art by having it correspond to mass culture, including commodities and personalities. Even though he constructs works out a variety of objects found in mass society, all of the images are related to popular culture. In order to explore the mechanisms at work in a capitalist-consumerist society, Warhol explored the silkscreen and duplication image via the use of machinery. Mechanical reproduction could become a major feature in postmodernist art presentation. Warhol applied the techniques of stencils and rubber stamps because painting was too difficult for him, and these techniques fit in with his interest in showing the mechanical mode (Bourdon 140).

The reverse relationship wherein mass media employs the fine arts is a phenomenon of the twentieth century. John Walker elaborates in his exploration of how artists responded to the imagery of the mass media, and what social roles remain for art. He examines this controversial relationship between art and mass media, and the interactions between high and low culture. Walker explores a variety of ways in which modern artists have responded to the arrival of new mass media. He specifically points out that mass media routinely employ the fine arts in various ways such as subject-matter, as a source of styles and formal innovations, and artists as a pool of skilled labor in the twentieth-century (Walker 51-70).

Obviously, many advertising images took works of art as themes without any manipulation and change in twentieth-century mass media (Fig. 4). In this ABN-AMRO Bank advertisement from Taiwan, Van Gogh’s painting has become appropriate as a symbol or an image of a bank. Van Gogh’s *Café Terrace, Arles at Night* (1888) becomes
the scenery of Netherlands, and the campaign even shows that Van Gogh’s painting is reproduced on a mobile phone. The slogan tells consumers that you can make your life different if you own this “Van Gogh Card.” Clearly Van Gogh’s painting is only a symbol for consumption.

Another type of appropriation of artistic imagery is the mimicry of the composition from a work of art. Sometimes, the characters or figures in the paintings are played by actors. In an album cover of Bow Wow Wow, Manet’s ‘Le déjeuner sur l’herbe’ (1862-63) becomes a compositional idea for a commercial product entitled Bow Wow Wow ‘Go Wild in the Country’ (1981, Fig. 5). The photo shows members of the band in the same compositional setting as Manet’s famous painting. All the figures are replaced by actors in order to make this album look more familiar to the consumer’s life. The gestures and positions are exactly the same as Manet’s painting. Shock attended both the appearance of the Manet in 1863 and the release of the record in 1981. In this aspect, we can see that the advertisers and designers use famous art images in advertisements and commercials to endorse products, services, and corporations, and the participation of a work of art in the mass media is merely a tool, a subject-matter, for promoting a better life and a higher value of commodity.

The second type of relationship between art and mass media is that art becomes a source of styles and formal innovations. Advertising is used to borrowing artistic style as a source for design in order to stimulate consumers’ visual perceptions and their desires for consumption. Thus, many modern artistic styles are incorporated into the field of advertisement. For instance, Lichtenstein’s pop style was employed on a cover design.
His cover illustration (1978) for *Time Out* magazine represents his comic-strip style (Fig. 6).

The last type of relationship demonstrates that artists become skilled laborers. Artists working for mass media are not a new phenomenon. Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec was an artist who drew posters for a living. Lautrec designed many lithographic posters for advertisements of a popular nightclub. *Jane Avril* (1893, Fig. 7) denotes the originality of creation to an essentially commercial project (Stokstad 1042).

The three types of relationship discussed above show that works of art have been rapidly incorporated into mass society in the twentieth century. Whatever the relationship, it shows that the logic of the commodified form has become aestheticized by incorporating artworks, and this logic not only allows for a more imaginative view of commodities, but it also transfers artworks into the symbolic order of objects.

1.4 The Internet as A New Means

It is axiomatic in digital culture that the virtual world gives rise to a new space of electronic existence. The development of new information technology is influenced by political, economic and military powers (Betting 138-157). The predecessor of the Internet, ARPANET, is a useful example. It was a part of a military strategy and was established upon the communication technology of a packet-switching system. This system enabled ARPANET to function independently, to ensure that communication could be available in a worst case nuclear scenario. With the closure of the Cold War and the progress of computer technology, the use of the Internet has gradually become a communication tool to which the public is accustomed. Therefore, in discussing the logic of development of technology, one major factor cannot be ignored: the operating logic of capitalism.
Following the emergence of industry, machinery, electronics and computers, digital technology has predominated human life, not only in the design of commodities and consumer products as a whole, but also in the world of art. Digitized art has overthrown the mode of representation in traditional art, and virtual imagery has become a new distribution channel for the arts. People’s lives will be different in the coming digital era, in which it will be important to have the ability to select and obtain desired information and materials in a context where aesthetic elements are being reconstructed. In this manner, the Internet has changed traditional interactions among the spectator, the artwork, and perceived world. The topic of the following description is cyberspace as the second media age and will examine new “art-technology” relations.

The relationship between digital technology and a work of art is twofold: “digital art” suggests that the artwork is digital and produced for a digital medium; and “digitized art” refers to art that is reproduced in a digital form. The focus of this study as mentioned in the first chapter is on examination of authentic art that is reproduced in a digital format. Currently, the tide of communication technology that predominates consumption and fashion all over the world also sweeps away the last bit of the ivory tower of fine art, ripping off the eminence of artists completely. Moreover, with the rise of consumerism, the display of artworks is on the decline, and artworks are now materials commonly used in the daily application of digital technology.

Although the underlying connotation for digital technology is the free flow of information and the increase of artistic creativity, if we look into the operation, we would find that art education is being practiced in the mode of production-consumption. When
artworks go online, they are incorporated in the operation of the industrial mode, or rather, the Internet accelerates the operation of this cultural industry in which artworks are commercialized and priced for the public to bid for. “Pop online” services of some museums are meant to provide viewers with artwork replicas, which are reproduced limitlessly to complete one-on-one consumption on the Internet. Therefore, the Internet in this process is regarded as merely a distribution channel that connects the global capitalistic system. Apart from the direct consumption of artwork reproductions, digital technology also continuously stimulates the spectators’ desire for authentic artworks and traditional values. That is to say, with the endless reproduction and dissemination of art imagery, consumption becomes the value exchange based wholly on symbolic signs, and weaves the illusion that consumers are never satisfied.

We have seen from the discussion above, the philosophical tradition of imitation was the dominant thinking among the different aspects of the Lebenswelt in Antiquity. In the age of mechanical reproduction, printed and photographic technologies have a close connection with our Lebenswelt. These two modern technologies brought us a new perceptual world after the Industrial Revolution. In the mass media age, more and more art imagery has become one of the sugar coats on commodities in the market place. Art imagery aestheticizes commodities and gives those manufactured goods more precious appearances. The three types of relationship between art and mass media discussed previously indicate that works of art are rapidly incorporated into consumer society in the high modernism period. They denote the logic of commodity in the consumer society. This logic not only provides a more imaginative view of commodities, but also transfers meaningful artworks into the symbolic order of the object. Contemporary information
society enhances another type of existence of art. The Internet becomes one site among many in everyday life or a particular inflection of virtuality, cyberspace, or computer-mediated communication. Digitized art imagery thus is a product of a market-driven economic system that can exploit modern technology. The capitalist forces seek to sell products (replica) and values by feeding on and establishing desire, expectations and consumerism.

Based on a phenomenological description, the following discussion seeks to return description to its essence in order to examine the meaning and influences of technological transformation on the existence of art.

2. Phenomenological Reduction: From “Human-Lebenswelt” to “Human-Technology-Lebenswelt”

There are two ways to look at the world. The first is to study things in themselves, examining their causes, the laws that govern them, and the transformations they undergo, and looking at them in an objective manner: such is the goal of Natural Philosophy. The second way is to present them in relation to ourselves, depicting them as happy or sad, agreeable or unpleasant, beautiful or ugly, in other words in a more embodied manner, and such is the goal of art (Henry 953). The phenomenological reduction as mentioned in the former chapter is to return description to an essence that is a fundamental account of how description has meaning. Thus, this study seeks to reduce previous descriptions in order to allow technological, philosophical, and historical transformations of art to be present in experiences. As Monika Langer points out, “we are primordially of the natural world and therefore fundamentally at home in it; that we similarly enjoy a pre-reflective
bond with others and the human world; that by our daily lives we participate in shaping our world and determining the course of our joint history (151).

Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological description of the communication act is the propagation and reception of signs-as-meaningful (Lanigan, *Phenomenology*, 46). This procedure allows the body-subject to be conscious of the reality that is lived in the many acts of personal becoming. In other words, meaning takes on reality by functioning as an orientation in a person’s *Lebenswelt*, and “phenomena become meaningful when experienced-as-lived, experienced-as-signs” (Lanigan, *Phenomenology*, 47). Through the examination of phenomenological description, we have seen that humans’ *Lebenswelt*, artistic expression, and technological transformation cannot be separated. That is to say, we need to look at them as a unity, perceiving artwork as creation within the world, considering technological inventions are related elements of our *Lebenswelt*. We cannot decontextualize any of them to be independent of each other.

The culture of imitation, or reproduction, actually began with the ancient Greeks, and this culture has been a very powerful cultural force in every period of art history. The attitude toward the notion of reproduction has also been a changing idea in the history of art because this notion, the duplication of an original, has different intentions. That is, the cultural landscape has changed and continues to change. In this part of phenomenological reduction, the study attempts to reduce these descriptions to show how the previous description is meaningful.

Before the age of mechanical reproduction, duplicates of exceptional works of art were only made by hand. Artists themselves often created several versions of the same artwork. Ancient civilization interacted with its world by imitating the natural world.
The ancient civilizations employed their imaginations to create mythological gods and goddesses. These actualized figures are significant signs in their lives. In the case of the Gorgon, the appearance of the Gorgon not only reflected contemporary political and social conditions in which the Greeks were seeking an order from chaos during the Archaic period, but it also mirrored thoughts of Pre-Socratic philosophers and a use of artistic design (narrative performance) to construct architectural sculptures. In the Medieval period, Christian civilization created scriptoria to imitate and embellish the word of God, contemplating religious mysticism. The notion that images could overcome the barriers separating the visible and the invisible, the physical and the spiritual, was slow in taking hold and subject to constant suspicion (Hamburger 4). In the church, where the monastic liturgy took place, the environment created by an emotional reaction to colored light and to bright, shining surfaces evoked an abstract, metaphysical response. They created the difference between the material world of their cognitive experiences and the immaterial universe of celestial hierarchies in order to achieve the experience of mysticism. These practices within their living experiences denote an “imitation-Lebenswelt” relation.

After machines invaded human life, human perception was forced to change to a “human-technology-Lebenswelt” relation. Modern technology changes not only cultural landscape, but also human relations. Susan Sontag declares, “the photograph is a thin slice of space as well as time” after years of studying photographic images (22). Henri Cartier-Bresson, as a photographer, realizes there is no possible way to avoid technological invasion. Technological visual perception has become the way modern human beings perceive this world. He expresses an embodied relationship with
technology by saying “I […] discovered the Lecia. It became the extension of my eye, and I have never been separated from it since I found it” (qtd. in Sontag 185).

Later, the modern capitalist spirit commercialized technology as a means to the human in the modern market place. The modern cultural industry has incorporated art images to be aesthetic resources in creating stylistic commodities. Tradition has been disrupted by the advent of capitalism, with its foundation in industrial mass production in the modern world. Printed and photographic reproduction now decreases the distance from artworks by removing them from the special context of museums or palaces to an image form at our disposal for use on souvenirs, posters, greeting cards, and wrapping paper. The image has now become a vehicle of capitalism, a mask of a set of distorted social relations, and a benign vision of totalitarian power. The foremost, the reproductive image gives a commodity its identity, which itself is a spectacle, sugar coated by the doctrine of capitalism.

The logic of the commodity form came to the center of cultural debate starting with the Industrial Revolution. In this logic of commodification, works of art have also been commercialized by market forces because capitalism forcefully incorporated art imagery into its economic sector, and separated artwork from the traditional art world. In the early 1960s, Guy Debord observed the exuberance of capitalist society as spectacle. Commodities and images have permeated into all areas of life. In The Society of Spectacle, Debord proclaims that spectacle is capital accumulated to the point where it becomes images. He writes, “the whole life of those societies in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. All that was directly lived has become mere representation” (12). For him, the power of
spectacle and image is mostly realized in the form of commodity. The critical instrument of Debord’s writing relies primarily on his inimitable criticism of the perpetuated, alienated relations of production in contemporary capitalist society. The economic growth and technological achievements do not liberate people from the notion Marxists have developed—alienation. Even though this statement is critical, we still find a parallel relationship to the world of art both in the use of image from mass media and in the commodified art imagery of mass media.

It is important to realize that the early human beings used technology to provide for their daily needs even though their method was primitive. Through phenomenological reduction, we have found that human beings’ lives cannot exist without technology. To this extent, our lived experiences should be changed to “human-technology-\textit{Lebenswelt}” in order to see through the central issue of our contemporary life. By positing technology into our \textit{Lebenswelt}, the following phenomenological interpenetration proclaims that we are living with technology.

\textbf{3. Phenomenological Interpretation: Living with Technology}

The things of the world are not simply neutral objects which stand before us for our contemplation (Merleau-Ponty, \textit{World}, 63). Merleau-Ponty insists, “the more energetic our intention to see the things themselves, the more the appearances by which they are expressed and the words by which we express them will be interposed between the things and us” (\textit{World}, 20). Here, Merleau-Ponty’s philosophical concern with language is in its modalities of expression and perception. His philosophical regard for language and reality as existential styles of expression and perception is a central issue in
his philosophy. Not only does language need this consideration, but also all things in our lived experience. As mentioned previously, we shall discuss the relationship between art and the Lebenswelt as a model of “art-technology-Lebenswelt.” Therefore, the interpretation employed is a phenomenological attitude. The phenomenological interpretation is implicit practically in the description or why a meaning is manifest by the analysis of the description (Lanigan, *Communicology*, 17).

Contemporary phenomenologist Don Ihde notes a type of human-technology relation the so-called “technics embodied,” which refers to the case where technology is taken into subjective experience as a means of perceiving the world; this relation transforms the subject’s perceptual and bodily sense (Ihde, *Lifeworld*, 72). Ihde employs Galileo’s use of the telescope to demonstrate this relation. He notes that Galileo “embodies his seeing through the telescope thusly: Galileo-telescope-Moon. Equivalently, the wearer of glasses embodies eyeglasses technology: I-glasses-world” (Ihde, *Lifeworld*, 73). In this sense, technology is a position of mediation between the seer and the seen. If we add the position of art into these human-technology relations, we can go further to discuss the “human-technology-art” relations. The interdependence of culture and technology means that the technologies of the pre-modern world, despite being the most logical of crafted objects, nonetheless have to share the cosmic stage with any number of gods, sorceries, and animist powers.

Taking the same examples from Greek and medieval art, we here attempt to interpret an embodied meaning of the existence of art in the Lebenswelt. Temples were significant symbols in the Greek arts. A visual focus on the figure of the Gorgon Medusa is also evident in the special seats that were strictly reserved both for the Greek and the
barbarian. Corfu’s Gorgon (Fig. 8), for example, is a typical example of invisible supernatural power shown in the concept of the immortality of the soul. The Gorgon here is a huge high-relief sculpture that even breaks the pedimental frame. The same meaning, perhaps, is accomplished when the Gorgon is considered evil. When the Gorgon image is shown on the temple, her image no longer represents a monster, but now functions in a positive protective role. Her soul has become a better part: she becomes a goddess to protect the Greeks and creates a supernatural way to overcome chaos because the soul is still there. It seems that the Gorgon is transcending her evil soul. The artist makes the Gorgon face the spectator. The meaning here is more than the original political intent.

Although the Gorgon is a monster that can turn people into stone, the Greeks still needed to borrow her mystic power to conquer others. They perhaps used the Gorgon to express the concept of the immortality of the soul, which the Archaic Greeks believed in. This specific situation lets Pre-Socratic philosophy widely influence later philosophers. The imagery conveys a concept of immortality that was in the process of transformation by attaching the Gorgon’s head on the shield/Aegis of Athena. As Hoffmann demonstrates, “where the Gorgon’s terrifying mask appears it signals her horrifying aspect of death-petrifying fear—which mortals must transcend to become immortal” (Hoffmann 80).

Thus, with regard to the mythology of the Gorgon, the representation of the iconography of the Gorgon could be seen as an iconography of the immortality of the soul.

Additionally, all techniques, narrative stories from the Bible, sacred, liturgies and more importantly, religious philosophy will become a unified whole in medieval theology (Florensky 101-102). A whole program including wall-paintings, Scriptures, sculptures, and so on was used to achieve the mysterious aspect of Christianity. Obviously, the
mystical theology represents a more important role in the medieval mind because, through this, the individual could obtain some experiences of ecstasy and the soul would receive some profound revelations hidden deep in God. Therefore, mystical theology furnishes a mysterious way of knowing God. In addition, the liturgy, the ecclesia and the church are regarded as symbols that are analogous to God. The use of stained glass, for example, reached its climax during the Gothic period. The richness of some of the colors, particularly blue, that was achieved during the Gothic period has yet to be surpassed. From its radiant colors produced by the beautiful stained glass to its exploding supports, St. Denis epitomizes Gothic architecture. During the Middle Ages, religion presented human with authority, which precedes philosophy in social life and naturally obliges it to take into consideration the points of religious doctrine. Through perceiving the image on a stained glass window, one can recognize that medieval images did more than embody doctrinal truth—they also embodied spiritual aspirations. We can also recognize that the language of images is not only the rhetoric of visual images but also the ideology of image. The image reflected by stained glass windows insisted that the vision of God was a vision of the invisible, a supersensory experience. Undoubtedly, the relationship between human and the work of art more than signifies a cultural value. We need to locate the work of art in a historical context, but also in the perspective of aesthetics. By having an encounter with the work of art, the human could return to his original status in history.

During the fifteenth century, European images were printed on sheets of paper, using ink, presses and woodcut blocks, and etched metal plates. We now reach the modern age of mechanical, photographic, and electronic methods of reproduction
(Walker 67). To this extent, the relationship between a reproduction and an original work of art is the perception and expression which is a conjunction such that both are part of the signifying process. If we consider that reproductions are means of interpretation or translations of the originals, the replica has a specific meaning in this situation. The conception of the original depends on the existence of copies and reproduction. We have been examining the relationship between the existence of art and our life-world in the mechanical reproduction and media ages. This means these reproductive means have transformed the way we perceive art objects. In theoretical terms, we need to situate cultural forms within the production and reproduction of capitalist spatiality. To this extent, it is obvious that the existence of art in our life world of the past had only a physical form; however, this solid situation has been changed because of the advancement of communication technologies, especially art in the age of the mass media. Spectators can see many duplicated images that become two-dimensional forms reproduced in print media, or virtual imagery on television. This transformation denotes a more complex condition in discussing the existence of art and its meaning. Not only has the existence of art changed, but also more influential elements are now involved. Thus, we can seek to understand how a capitalist society incorporates art into the commercial system.

Warhol’s *Green Coca-Cola Bottles, 100 Campbell’s Soup Cans*, and *Marilyn Monroe* reflect the situation of symbolic consumption in the late-capitalist period. What did Warhol respond to? And what were the social material conditions of his life? Warhol offered an ironic interpretation of the work, bringing together the human and the
mechanical around the theme of depthlessness. In *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, his volume of anecdotes and observations, the artist shared his thoughts on spaces:

> I really believe in empty spaces, but on the other hand, because I’m still making some art, I’m still making junk for people to put in their spaces that I believe should be empty. […] I go even further in not following my own philosophy, because I can’t even empty my own pace. It’s not that my philosophy is failing me; it’s that I am failing my own philosophy. I reach what I preach more than I practice it. (Warhol, *Philosophy*, 144)

In my interpretation, the concept of empty is represented not only in the aspect of space but also in the aspect of emotion. On the levels of signification, there is no real space in Warhol’s painting. The only space is that of the canvas or sliver screen. Neither is time a reality in Warhol’s art. The only time is that of viewing (Baudrillard, *Consumer*, 120).

Individuals become fragmented pieces in society. All Warhol’s works contain a characteristic of fragmentation because Warhol uses the mechanical process to replace human labor. His works of art have a minimum of content and were made with the simplest techniques. Since Warhol simplified the elements into a single image in each frame, it looks like each single Coca-Cola bottle, Campbell’s soup can, or Marilyn Monroe’s portrait in his serial painting. As Lippard notes, “these paintings mean either nothing or a great deal” (99).

Undoubtedly, Warhol’s selection and use of commodity images were not arbitrary. Warhol was determined to use the approach of series to represent that there are a large number of identical commodities filling out everyday life. For the consumer, the functions of an object are not all important; they also rely on the sign, symbol, or image
to decide what they want. Therefore, they appreciate Coke and Campbell’s Soup, like
Marilyn Monroe. These images that were duplicated by Warhol, however, lack signified
meaning, they only consist of signifier images. They also represent the unemotional.
This situation corresponds to the “empty signified” characteristic in capitalist-
consumerism society. The meaning is not important, for the focus is on the
representative image. Nonetheless, they continue to purchase these kinds of commodities
to satisfy themselves in daily life.

In addition, Warhol signifies the powerful, consumption-orientated socialization
of consumerism—television, everyday life needs, and so on. Because Warhol started
with an image of actual consumer products and made them become ironic icons, these
images became an important manifestation in depicting the situation of de-individuality
in the capitalist-consumerism society. His obsession with repetition and excess emerged
as the most powerful declaration ever made by an American artist on the subject of a
consumer economy (Hughes 90). If we consider the relationship between Pop art and
contemporary historical conditions, this concerns the connection between Pop art
performance and the development of consumer society as these were understood at the
time. Symbolic consumption in the United States has extended beyond the domain of the
visual and into that of the material. Partially in reaction to this decade of burgeoning
materialism, Warhol’s cultural endeavors extended beyond the visual arts and cinema.
He took items from the daily life of middle-class America as his subject matter. He
raided the shelves of the grocery store for ideas and created. These works of art,
duplicated the product named and creatively referred to the growing consumer mentality
of the United States, while also disputing the traditional boundaries of art.
Minor White’s point of view on photographic technology actually echoes Warhol’s spirit. White notes, “the photographer projects himself into everything he sees, identifying himself with everything in order to know it and to feel it better” (cited in Sontag 116). This phenomenological existence of embodiment expresses that we should pay attention to our technological *Lebenswelt*, like the photographer does. The photographer makes “seeing” into a new stage because the characteristic rapidity of the camera recording does not need to contemplate the image as the painter does.

Since the human world changes with the existence of technology, the breakdown of traditional patterns of sense perception brings with it a transformation of visual experience. This is a time when notions of reality change, and it also results in the changing concept of image. Most contemporary expression concerns the idea that an image-world is replacing the real one. Nonetheless, the notions of reproductive images and original works of art are complementary. That means, the concept of reproduction arises because it has its counterpart in origin. We must have a concept of reproductions without an original. Thus, we shall look at reproduction as meaning while the mode of reproduction is part of our *Lebenswelt*.

Contemporary works of art and those from the past currently exist alongside billions of images produced and reproduced with the invention of modern mechanical equipments in the early modern age. Susan Sontag argues that “a capitalist society requires a culture based on images. It needs to furnish vast amounts of entertainment in order to stimulate buying and anesthetize the injuries of class, race, and sex” (178). When authentic arts meet consumer culture, we can see Picasso’s cubic figures and Mondrian’s geometrical designs become decorative images in marketplaces. To this
extent, we realize that the visual image has become deeply rooted in modern society. Photographic and virtual reproduction do not simply reproduce the real; it recycles it. This is a key procedure in contemporary society, and in the form of photographic and virtual reproduction, visual and other forms of art are put to new uses and assigned new meanings that go beyond traditional meanings and functions. It becomes an unlimited relationship of production and consumption of images. Through this relation, we have a consumer’s relation to images, both to images that are part of our experience and to those which are not. The importance of technological transformation is that it has become the medium through which more and more photographic images enter our living experiences.

Within capitalist society, Debord recognizes that the spectacular image finds affinity with commodification. His argument has close links with Marx’s concept of commodity fetishism. He thinks the spectacle is an extension and an expansion of commodity-form. Behind the totalitarian form of image, “pseudo-need” is imposed by “the reign of modern consumption with any authentic need or desire” (44), and once the exchange value claims its triumph over use value, the art image, and even the whole society, has submitted itself to the spectacle. To this extent, the authentic arts in the media age are undoubtedly spectacle. The reproductive art images aestheticize commodities. Those commodities carry artistic spectacle, and create the desire of commodity fetishism. As the modern society evolves with the high level of economic and technological progress, Debord’s notion of spectacle in relation to the reproduction of art image becomes the delicate façade of capitalism. While spectacle constantly works through art image, it cannot be reduced to image. Rather, it is a set of social relation. Debord clearly states, “the spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social
relationship among people, mediated by images” (4). The spectacle represents the world to us in a certain way, changing the real world into a simple mechanical mediated world which is filled with images. It is therefore unsurprising that vision is today the privileged sense and serves in this process of generalized abstraction.

4. Art-in-the-world

When you are the camera and the camera is you

Minolta advertisement (1976)\(^5\)

Minolta’s advertisement clearly expresses a “human-technology-Lebenswelt” relation. Every age has its unique culture and its special technique of reproduction. The mode of humans’ sensory perception has also changed with humanity’s entire mode of existence (Benjamin 222). Don Ihde suggests that human beings’ use of technology should be acknowledged as an existential interaction with use-objects or equipment, rather than simply knowing or interacting with objects of knowledge (Lifeworld, 30). Ihde applies Heidegger’s hammer analysis to demonstrate human-technology relations. In such a technological context, Heidegger brings up the concept of “Being-in-the-world.” Merleau-Ponty also argues the same existential body-world correlation. By using metaphors of “feather in woman’s hat” and “the blind man’s cane,” Merleau-Ponty indicates a strict phenomenological correlation between a lived body and the perceived world. He thinks that the lifeworld perception is perception that always implicates the body-in-action (Ihde, Lifeworld, 39-40; Merleau-Ponty, Perception, 52-53). A lived or virtual body as an experienced bodily spatiality can be extended through artificial means.

He notes:

A woman may, without any calculation, keep a safe distance between the feather in her hat and things which might break it off. She feels where the feather is just as we feel where our hand is. [...] The blind man’s stick has ceased to be an object for him and is no longer perceived for itself; its point has become an area of sensitivity, extending the scope and active radius of touch and providing a parallel to sigh. (*Perception*, 143)

In Merleau-Ponty’s metaphors, he goes further in bringing equipment and technology into our lived-experiences. He defines a perceptualist scheme as the interrelation between sensory perception and the role of culture, which is an “embodiment relation.”

As mentioned previously, Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenologist tradition consists of a very straight three-step discursive tradition, which is antithesis (denial of traditional Cartesian dualist point of view), thesis (statement of the importance of body), and synthesis (phenomenologist discourse of being-in-the-world). In this chapter, we have described the relationship between humans’ *Lebenswelt* and the existence of art. By denying the traditional Cartesian’s split, this chapter has found an embodied relationship, that is, placing the art within the world. The work of art is important because the artwork is a sign vehicle expressing the living meaning of human beings.

The phenomenological strategy in this chapter aims to show the importance of technology and brings the world into the most contemporary vision. Modern technology changes our living space, giving the world a new meaning. We need to pay more attention to the existence of art in this changing world. In this complex contemporary world, the existence of art has three spaces in terms of traditional physical space (museum or gallery), modern physical space (printed and photographic reproduction),
and virtual space (image’s simulacra on television and cyberspace). The focus of chapter three hence is on examining spatial transformation and the existence of art, and concentrates specifically on art in cyberspace.
Chapter Two

Perceiving the Space

There is some phenomenal justification for regarding the _extensio_ as a basic characteristic of the “world,” even if by recourse to this neither the spatiality of the world nor that of the beings we encounter in our environment…can be conceived ontologically.

Martin Heidegger, _Being and Time_\(^6\)

In recent years, the combination of computers and the Internet has become a main subject of contemporary thinking. This combination is not only part of a large-scale cultural movement, but is also a property of a new cognitive method. The humanities, as a discipline, has been extraordinary influenced by this new technological form. With a focus on the field of arts, the first important related concept that comes to my mind is the question of the existence of a work of art that has been changed because of these combinational technologies, the computer and the Internet. In the previous chapter, the concept of “art-in-the-world” has been discussed in order to demonstrate the technological transformation and historical existence of art. Continuing that argument, this chapter attempts to concentrate on another aspect of phenomenological discussion, namely the existence of art and its spatial relationship with technology. This is an important issue to address in order to examine how the existence of art has been challenged by advanced technology.

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On one hand, spectators have to move physically through the Internet, from one computer server to the next in today’s Lebenswelt. Spectators must know where to find the information they are looking for. Places, movement, traveling, navigating: a spatial concept seems to be the easiest way to understand the structure of such a network. When each spectator enters a gateway, however, it is controversial whether the spectator still stays within the Lebenswelt or steps into a “nonspace.” So it is with art. Spectators can easily have digitized image of authentic art when the existence of art moves from the physical to the virtual world. Thus, this chapter seeks a phenomenological comprehension of art in cyberspace and the spectator’s perception of a work of art in different perceptual spaces. In other words, a central purpose of this chapter is to build up an understanding of the existence of art within spectators’ spatial comprehension, representing their individual entry points to the space of the Internet or what they might associate with it. Issues such as the relationship between the arts, meaning and existence, cyber-experience as spectacle, embodiment of power and being within the world, will be the concern of this chapter.

1. Phenomenological Description: The Concepts of Space and Its Transformations

Since this chapter seeks a phenomenological comprehension of art in cyberspace and the spectator’s perception of a work of art in different spatial experiences, we shall seek an understanding of the concept of space and its transformations first. Taking the relation of human to his world as a point of departure, the first step of this description is devoted to the conceptual framework of the relationship between human and space in order to discuss the spatial aspects of technological transformation.
1.1 Perceiving Space

Space is one of the key concepts by which human and the world are correlated. To conceive of space, in any way, always presupposes human’s engagement with the world and other beings therein. In viewing space relations, Descartes’s empirical dualistic separation of mind and body remains a significant factor in the early modern Enlightenment period. In *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, Descartes notes that the world of a physical object, specifically matter (contra mind), can be known in its truth by way of those objects’ “simple natures…that are wholly free from falsity” (243). He attempts to locate human’s subjectivity in the *cogito*. He proposes that reality is separated into two distinct realms: a physically extended realm of matter in motion and an immaterial realm of thoughts, feelings, and spiritual experience (Wertheim 36).

According to Merleau-Ponty, Descartes’ philosophy clearly denotes that understanding knows that it is itself incapable of knowing the union of soul and body and leaves this knowledge for life to achieve (*Perception*, 42). The Cartesian grid measures three-dimensional space along three axes, which become a rationalist and scientific way of conceiving space (Sturken 80). This empiricism sees the perception of space as an internalizing of real, external space. Obviously, this Cartesian version of space and body finds strong support in the natural sciences, and thus has a significant influence on thinking in the modern period. Since Descartes, the purpose of the modern philosophy (e.g., empiricism and rationalism) is to describe only the actions of material bodies in physical space. Since the scientific revolution, this has resulted in a problematic dualistic mechanism of the annihilation of soul and spirit as categories of reality.
By denying the Cartesian mechanism, Merleau-Ponty establishes his radical Existential Phenomenology. He insists that modern philosophy is based on a clear distinction between space and the physical world; therefore, space is the uniform medium in which things are arranged in different dimensions and in which they remain the same regardless of the position they occupy (World, 50). Moreover, he states that this world can no longer describe our Lebenswelt. We cannot depict an absolute distinction between space and the things that occupy it. This idea echoes what Heidegger has said:

World is never an object that stands before us and can be seen. World is the ever-nonobjective to which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse transport us into Being. (Work of Art, 170)

Additionally, the pure idea of space and the concrete spectacle it presents to our senses cannot be drawn. Merleau-Ponty sees the perception of direction as a certain gearing to the world, and the visual field provides anchoring points that demand the gearing of the body (Perception, 249). Hence, man inhabits the new spatial level with his body, which for Merleau-Ponty is a possibility of action, his way of being-in-the-world. Actually, he has emphasized from the beginning the importance of signification, claiming that the world is replete with meaning and that perception is the ground of communication (Jay 323). Since early modern science gained its new vision of the world through optical technologies, the process of embodiment itself is pervasive and common. To embody one’s praxis through technologies is ultimately an existential relation with the world, something that is always being done by humans (Ihde, Technology, 72). That is to say, subjectivity and objectivity become more merged after technological embodiment than
they were in the past. What is growing instead is the expanding scale at which humans and nonhumans are connected together (Latour 181).

As Merleau-Ponty notes in his phenomenological discourse, the body is the vehicle of being in the world, and having a body, for a living creature, means to be involved in a definite environment, to identify oneself with certain projects, and to be continually committed to them (Merleau-Ponty, *Perception*, 82). We have a world in which objects cannot be considered to be entirely self-identical, one in which it seems as though form and content are mixed, the boundary between them blurred (Merleau-Ponty, *World*, 51). Instead of a clear distinctive relation between objectivity and subjectivity, imbroglios of humans and nonhumans on an increasing scale are embodied because of the invasion of technology.

By examining modern Cartesian dualism and Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological concept of being-in-the-world, we find that the concept of space is a changing idea. The following discussion attempts to concentrate on the existence of art and its relationship with spatial transformation.

1.2 Art within Space

Space, as one of the more important concepts in phenomenology, is a social phenomenon with which humans produce interactive meanings. Heidegger, who perceives the arts as the focus and origin of the world’s meaning, points out the importance of space where humans inhabit. We, therefore, need to consider that the museum undoubtedly is a unique social construction of space. Heidegger’s important term “being-in-the-world” is used to characterize humans’ basic state. The concept of “in” is not simply a reference to position in space, but the idea of involvement where
there is no presumption of difference between entity and environment (Coyne 504). To this extent, being-in-the-world involves the transparent and unreflective use of equipment, as in our habitual use of a computer or other technological devices. Humans’ involvement with equipment or technology has always been common in our daily lives. Ihde points out an important phenomenological concept of the “(I-technics)-world” relation to demonstrate the concept of “technics embodied” (Lifeworld, 72-73). This embodied (or existential) relation has been practiced from ancient Greece to modern times.

Looking back to the example, the Temple of Artemis was one of the masterpieces of early Archaic Greek art in which a more agreeable balance of contradictory (e.g., hope and fear) was achieved. The pedimental sculpture of the temple of Artemis at Corfu is shown in group sculptures (Fig. 8). Most of the triangular space is taken up by a huge central Gorgon figure, almost 10 feet tall, flanked by Pegasus and Chrysaor, the children born at the moment of her death. This is a so-called heraldic motif in which the Gorgon and her children are flanked in turn by leopards, who represent the guardians of the temple. They are depicted as squatting in order to adapt to the incline of the pediment (Woodfort 29). With the Gorgon occupying the midst of the high triangle as an apotropaic symbol, her appearance was thought to hold back the evils that tried to invade the temple. Because of this, the Gorgon’s function is more meaningful than just being a guardian for the Greeks. The gesture of the Gorgon’s bending of the knee at the joint indicates that the Gorgon wants to escape Perseus’ fatal blow.

Although theatrical entertainment was not invented during the Archaic period of Greece, the Greeks still created many works of art that are similar to theatrical
entertainment. This also shows that the Greeks employed a mathematical method and native technology to achieve these kinds of theatrical effects. Greek sculptors and architects functioned as scenic designers and were responsible for the visual appearance and function of the scenic and property elements used in a production. Translating the scenic design from concept to the stage and presenting works of art on the architectural sculptures have significant parallels. The temple designers produced colored sketches or renderings of the sets and properties, scale models of the various sets, and scale mechanical drawings that fully described the setting (Gillette 12). It is obvious that the temple pediment, functioning like a theatrical stage, allows the people who walk around the temple as spectators to imagine the relationship between the images appearing in the pediment and themselves. Because the pediment is an obtuse triangle, it is not easy to arrange portraits harmoniously and to deliver a message or expound a story completely. When using a huge statue to decorate Corfu’s Temple of Artemis, the Greek civilization perhaps encountered this problem. The Gorgon metaphorically appeared in the theatrical stage in a scene very similar to scenes on other later Greek theaters. The presentation of high-relief sculptures also creates a lighting effect naturally. At different times and in different kinds of sunlight, sculptures can display different highlighted parts and shadowed areas. People who walk around the temple can experience different feelings due to differences in lighting effects. The high-relief sculpture also gives an impression of performance. It is not only a work about a Greek myth, but also a sculpture with dramatic tension. The dramatic size of a ten-feet tall terracotta Gorgon in the Corfu pediment makes it seems more horrible.
While the Greeks created these iconographies by use of dramatic scenic effects, the embodied relation between them and their Lebenswelt is presented as “(I-mathematics)-Lebenswelt.” They employed highly developed mathematic devices to make sure that the Gorgon conveyed some political and religious messages, and some philosophical thoughts that were underlying the image of the Gorgon. Consequently, it is obvious that mathematics mediated between the Greeks and their creation of works of art and imitation of their Lebenswelt. Here, we can see that traditional spatial existence of art still can be understood through the phenomenon of being-in-the-world. Humans are with each other or with a thing insofar as we have concerns that require or involve the other or the thing. The Greeks interacted with their Lebenswelt through the supernatural power of their belief. When artistic creations leave their original space and become cultural heritage, the existing space of artworks also changes. The modern museum then becomes a unique space for art’s existence. This spatial transformation is significant in the history of art. Since this chapter deals with the relationship between humans and space, and further employs this relationship to discuss the existence of art and its spatial correlation, we cannot avoid examining the unique space of a museum as a location for collecting works of art. It is necessary to study the spatial aspects of the discourse organizing museums’ display of artworks.

1.3 Modern Museum: A Unique Space for the Arts

Traditionally museums are perceived as authoritative apparatuses for collecting works of art and as educational institutions for public service. Although these purposes still remain very important, the meaning of this place for exhibiting art has been radically changed. Tony Bennett argues that the tension between the democratic rhetoric
governing the conception of museums as vehicles for popular education and their actual functioning as instruments for the reform of public manners leads to a public rights issue that demands that museums should be equally open and accessible to all (Birth, 24). The account of the establishment of the museum thus arises from a long-standing dilemma in the sociological literature on cultural production, concerning the nature of the popular as an ideological, economic, and/or aesthetic construction. Today’s museums have been placed in a curious position by technological transformations. Museums now are in a new dilemma in regards to collection and spatial exhibition. Museums are more than places to store and display art in the world; they are the sanctioned locations for storing and displaying art originals. That is to say, a museum, as an architectural form, has a metaphoric meaning for social construction (Bataille, 2-23). Georges Bataille notes:

Museums have clearly developed beyond even the most optimistic hopes of the founders. It is not just that the museums of the world, as a whole, today represent a colossal accumulation of riches, but that all those who visit the museums of the world represent without doubt the most grandiose spectacle of a humanity freed from material concerns, and devoted to contemplation. (22)

Space clearly is a social phenomenon with which humans produce interactive meanings. We need to consider that the museum is a unique social construction of space. The physical fabric of a museum is the embodiment of social, political, and cultural values.

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While a modern museum displays its logic on the visible surface of things, its connections that bind those things into power relations of genealogy and descent are invisible (Bennett, *Memory*, 161). Museums are specifically significant sites for the study of the operation of power because architecture may condition social behaviour. Architecture has the authority to command and prohibit, but is also a manifestation of social values. To control museums means to control the representations of communities and their highest cultural values and truths (Duncan 8). To this extent, the modern museum has moved into the world of spectacle, of the popular fair and mass entertainment. Andreas Huyssen explains that banners and billboards on museum fronts indicate how close the museum has moved towards the world of spectacle (21). Thus, we can realize that a museum is not only thought of as a gallery for the display of masterpieces, or as a visual reference collection of cultural history, but a museum is also an extremely politicized space in modern society.

Arthur Danto borrows a fictional character, Adam Verver, from Henry James’s *The Golden Bowl* to demonstrate the emergence of the museum as an institutional place of social practice for the public. In this novel, Verver aims to establish a museum of museums: “a house on a hill from whose doors and windows, opens to grateful, thirsty millions, the higher, highest, knowledge, would shine out to bless the land” (Danto 175). Danto notes that the Brooklyn Museum, which opened in 1897 for educating the public and enriching their knowledge of beauty, is a perfect example of releasing the public from “the bondage of ugliness” and “the bondage of ignorance” (175). Danto speaks about the establishment of the great museums erected in the United States in the beginning of twentieth century. He notes:
That is knowledge of a different order altogether than art appreciation of the sort transmitted by docents, or by art historians, or by the art education curriculum. [...] The experiences belong to philosophy and to religion, to the vehicles through which the meaning of life is transmitted to people in their dimension as human beings. [...] In my view, what we all thirst for is meaning: the kind of meaning that religion was capable of providing, or philosophy, or finally art. [...] I think it was the perception of artworks as fulcrums of meaning that inspired the temple like architectures of the great museums [...] and it was their affinity with religion and philosophy that was sensed as conveying knowledge. (187-188)

This situation actually echoes John Berger’s point of view. Berger’s famous book, *Ways of Seeing*, explains the politics of modern museums by using two versions of Leonardo da Vinci’s famous painting *The Virgin of the Rocks*. Berger notes that in front of *The Virgin of the Rocks*, a spectator would be stimulated in many ways. This spectator probably has already heard or read a lot about this painting, so he/she perhaps thinks, “I’m standing in front of it. I saw it. This painting of Leonardo da Vinci is different from the rest of others in the world. This one in the National Gallery is the authentic one. If I can appreciate this work with full concentration, I can more or less feel the authenticity. This piece is authentic; therefore, it is beautiful” (Berger 21). Such feelings correspond to the sophisticated culture of art experts, for whom the brochures of the National Gallery are written. The brochure for *The Virgin of the Rocks*, the thickest one published by the gallery, contains 14 pages.
The content of the brochure, however, does not deal with the meaning of the image. Instead, it provides information about which patron requisitioned the painting, legal disputes, who the owners were, when they owned the painting, the background of the owners, etc. Behind the information in the pamphlet are many years of research with the objective of ridding all doubt that it is the authentic work of Leonardo da Vinci. In addition, the research also proves that the almost identical painting in the Louvre is actually a replica of this authentic work (Berger 22). The museum thus is a specifically significant site for the studying the operation of power because it, as architectural form, may condition social behaviour. It has the authority to command and prohibit exhibiting works of art, and it manifests social values (Duncan 8). In other words, the authorities of museums show their power to control the highest cultural values and truths of communities. That is, the physical fabric of the museum is the embodiment of social, political, and cultural values.

On the other hand, the status of authentic works today is the perfect and reasonable consequence of a new means of reproduction, yet it is also at this key point that the process of mystification appears. The value of the authentic works does not lie in what the work uniquely conveys, but in what the works uniquely are. Value is assigned to artworks because of their rarity, and is determined by the price of the artworks on the market. At the same time, artworks are “the arts,” which are considered more refined than commerce, so the prices also reflect the spiritual value of the artworks. The spiritual value of a work, however, can be explained only through means of magic or religion, which are no longer absolute powers in a modern society. Because counterfeiting has become a common practice, artworks are viewed as sacred relics for discussion and exhibition (Berger 21).
Obviously, the museum is never a neutral space. It is an architectural site constructed by humans, and its meaning as a place is also created by humans. Its spatial arrangement, collection policy, and invisible politics are embodied both inside the museum and outside its walls. The museum obviously is not simply a place for collecting artworks; the museum also evolves with the political aim to establish its authority. Additionally, Berger’s political interpretation also brings out an issue, namely that the work of art not only exists within the museum’s walls, but also inside the printed brochure that acts as a guidebook for the public.

Concerning artificial construction, it becomes impossible to avoid discussing technology. From the beginning of mechanical reproduction, criticism has concerned itself, above all, with what constitutes the unique properties of the medium. Following tendencies in different disciplines, especially in linguistics and in literary and art criticism, critics have recently put aside the traditional quest for an absolute definition of mechanical reproduction, especially photographs, and have turned instead to questions of the actual experience of these new means of reproduction, attempting to locate the meaning in the viewer’s response. Thus, the technological spatial existence of works of art has its significance.

1.4 Technological Space

Because of the proliferation of printing and photographic technologies, the physical existence of the arts has been changed. The work of art now has two appearances: one is the authentic form protected by museums or galleries; the other is a

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8 Continuing from Chapter Two, printing technology here refers to mechanical processes that are able to rapidly reproduce images or text and have large capacities of production.
reproduced form as a two-dimensional image made by modern technology. In other words, technological embodiment indeed changes the way we perceive the arts and their spatial existence. This “(art-technology)-Lebenswelt” relation makes wide proliferation of art images possible. The arts within this combined space (physical space and two-dimensional mechanical reproductive space) present themselves as immediate prior to any consideration of how we measure their spatial distance from us. This mode of being is not simply one in which we consider a subjective sense of spatial distance. Rather, it is a two-layered spatial concept (authentic spatial existence and reproduced spatial existence).

To this extent, modern technology is often recognized as an extension of the body \(^9\) (McLuham’s term). It is thus a means through which the body can be strengthened. What we can understand about its relation to the body is perhaps the greatest embodied concept of technology. A work of art originally belongs to its unique here-and-now place; however, it was moved and placed in the museum for the purpose of collection, as was discussed above. Currently, the existence of art is not only a physical collective matter; it is also transferred into a technological space of printed, photographic, and virtual reproductions with the ever-increasing rate of technological change. Central to human’s understanding and use of technology is the sense of human action engaged with, through, and among concrete artifacts or material entities. Ihde points out that Marx’s historical materialism has noted that human beings interact with their environment and with each

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\(^9\) McLuhan examines the effects of electronic media on the human body. He sees the media as “extensions of man,” which means that all media extend human perception. For example, a book is an extension of the eye, a car is an extension of the leg, and clothes are an extension of the skin. McLuhan asserts that the image of electronic media as extensions of the human nervous system is a highly useful metaphor for thinking about the social effects of a global computer network. He posits that the media of a given society play a fundamental role in defining it and determining human behaviour.
other within some fundamental set of productive relations and actions (Ihde, *Existential*, 9). Alongside this argument, we have seen that technology has played a major role in contemporary society in which human activities involve the application of technologies. New technology for the distribution of the arts, therefore, has allowed individuals to personalize their art consumption and the ways in which they participate in the arts. To this extent, technology is changing the behavior of the organizations that produce, present, distribute, market, and collect art by expanding both the size and the geographic spread of the arts and entertainment market. Hence, understanding the relationship between the existence of art and the role of technology is important because of the rapid pace of technological change and the increasing role of technology in the world of art. As this study has proclaimed, technology must be understood “phenomenologically” because the nature and significance of this artificial aid has been rooted in human activity. It should be viewed as belonging to our experience in different ways, and the use of technologies should be conceived of as human-technology relations, rather than abstractly as mere objects (Ihde, *Postphenomenology*, 34).

Moreover, technology has also played a major role in shaping how works of art are duplicated and distributed. In Benjamin’s observations, technology has made the arts accessible to mass audiences in ways that were difficult or impossible before technological advances such as photography and film. That is to say, these modern technologies have changed the human experience of the reproducibility of the arts. In this circumstance, new technology has expanded public access to the arts far beyond the reach of traditional venues such as museums and theaters, and has freed the arts from the geographic limitations imposed by the needs of a market to support production and
distribution. The introduction of printing and photographic technologies, for example, was instrumental in the decline of live proprietary theaters during the first few decades of the twentieth century (McCarthy and Ondaatje 19-20). In turn, recorded music, radio, and television each played an influential role in transforming how works of art are reproduced and distributed. Use of the Internet as a medium for transmitting recorded music, film, and visual art to consumers has already begun to alter the role of intermediaries in the performing, literary, and visual arts. In the previous chapter, we noted Benjamin’s criticism of how technology transforms the entire nature of art, how an individual experiences them, and that these effects are manifested in the size and character of the audience of the arts.

The convergence of artworks and mass media has become more significant in the media age. By concentrating on how the mass media use works of art as inspiration (see Fig. 4, 5), we can see how the artwork has been commercialized within this technological space. The art image now is a sign of nobility, a symbol of a good life. The original meaning of the artwork has changed, and the most important reason that mass media uses an art image is because “it is art.” Within a capitalist society, we can realize that the visual image has become deeply rooted in modern society. We can see spectacular exhibitions of Picasso’s figures or Mondrian’s designs on commodities in the marketplace. For example, we can see that there are a lot of mechanical reproduction products (postcards, posters, and printed categories) in the gift shops of museums and galleries. As a result, the existence of art in the technological space becomes a sign for symbolic consumption.
This “technology transfer”\(^{10}\) is significant in our *Lebenswelt* because another way to reach the work of art outside the museum walls is through this transformation caused by technological media (e.g., printing, photography, and audiovisual media). By that I mean works of art as material artifacts are shifted out of their original context of human praxes or techniques into some other cultural context. While technology has played a significant role in our daily lives, the concept of space has also been challenged by the proliferation of technology. In discussing the relationship between technological space and the modern mass media (e.g., radio and television), Paddy Scannel employs the concept of the “doubling of space” to suggest that these modern media serve to “double” reality in late modern life (172). He notes that public events now occur in two different places simultaneously: the place of the event itself and that in which it is watched and heard. The modern audio-visual technology mediates between these two sites (Scannel 76). In proposing a phenomenological approach to examining modern mass media that is concerned in part with the ways of being in the world, Scannel goes further to argue that there are transformed “possibilities of being: of being in two places at once” (91). That is, although an individual can be in one place at a time physically, modern mass media permits a live witnessing of remote happenings that can bring these events experientially close or within range, thereby removing their farness (Scannel 167). Scannel explores how the concept of space has changed to be a multiple-layered concept. That is to say, the development of media technology has challenged the traditional concept of time-space, and transforms the time-space relation into a more controversial term.

\(^{10}\) “Technology transfer” here means that some set of material artifacts are moved out of their original context of human practice and into some other cultural context. Such a transfer is recognized as the spread of advanced technologies, through which different people and different cultures encounter each other. The term is borrowed from Ihde’s article entitled “Technology as Cultural Instrument.” See Don Ihde, *Postphenomenology* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1993) 32-42.
Electronic media affect us by changing the situational geography of social life (Meyrowitz 37-38). This time-space transformation not only occurs on experienced events, but also influences the world of art. Technologically influenced changes in contemporary art aesthetics have shifted our perceptions from viewing art as an object to experiencing it interactively. This transformation of the artistic experience now is most pronounced in certain forms of digitized art. Here, the arts exist not to be viewed in the sense of temporal succession within the architectural space, but digitized images are produced by the asynchronous interaction of the spectator with the computer program created by the computer specialist. As discussed previously, modern museums control the experience of artworks in certain time-space arrangement in order to show the authority and politics of museum management. Now, the borrowing of art images on television commercials both frees the limited time-space experience and allows art to exist as a multilayer concept of time and space.

Furthermore, we have seen how the development and integration of digital techniques within established media forms has had an impact on the field of art history. Yet, even though digital imaging technology is new, the aesthetic use and cultural values they are put to and the forms they take are not –at least, not in the same radical way. Within this technological cyberworld, space is no longer a medium of simultaneous objects capable of being apprehended by an absolute observer who is equally close to them all, a medium without a point of view, without a physical body and without a spatial position. Hence, a so-called virtual space or cyberspace as the most recent technological advancements in computers and the Internet needs to be discussed.
1.5 Cyber-space

In *Neuromancer*, William Gibson first coined the term “cyberspace” with a novelist’s imagination (51). His version of cyberspace is the intersection of virtual space and virtual reality; an intersection where the subjective sensory and bodily engagement gains a strong presence in a virtual reality that is also fully networked and plugged into cyberspace (Lee 5). That is, the concept of cyberspace designates the universe of digital networks as a world of interaction and a new cultural frontier. Since Gibson elucidated the concept of cyberspace, this term has become the most debatable question in the philosophy of technology. Whether cyberspace can function as a space in our *Lebenswelt* or not is still an ongoing argument. The presence of space on the screen and in those places in which the screen is viewed and interacted with has become an unknown factor in contemporary society. Nonetheless, what we can be sure of is that a new era of computerized textuality has begun.

Technological space, as mentioned previously, is caused by technology transfer; such transfer is commonly recognized as the spread of advanced technology. When a technology transfer occurs, it is known that more than a simple transfer of some artifact is involved. Furthermore, recent innovations in the technologies of information and communication affect our use of space and the way we perceive and think about our environment. With the emergence of cybernetics in the contemporary world, the concept of the body in relation to technology has begun to change. The new media now are associated with a range of spatial mutations, especially technology induced change in physical forms. Machines and computers are gradually seen as embodying human characteristics. Since technology has transformed the audience for art and transformed
the ways in which individuals participate in the artistic experience, it has also changed
the audience’s role to be more accurately described as “users” rather than viewers. In
virtual environments, we are participants in the world that surrounds us. With virtual
reality technologies, the spectator enters virtual space and a new framework for action
and experience (Strauss, Fleischmann, and Bohn 632). A work of art now is virtualized
by a computer machine, and the spectator communicates with the work of art via this
machine created vision. A machine that thus interacts with the spectator even at a very
minimal level can produce a feeling that it is alive, a sense of the machine’s agency, and
even of a subjective encounter responsiveness (Morse 15).

A new “cyber” space is growing at an unexpected rate, increasing its volume in an
ever-widening sphere in modern days. A further aspect of cyberspace that warrants our
attention is the emphasis increasingly placed on images. With the advanced technology
of Web-based tools such as Java, the future of cyberspace is in pictures (Wertheim 27).
Wertheim demonstrates that cyberspace is destined to become the very font of knowledge.
As ever more libraries, databases, and information resources are made available online,
the promise of god-like omniscience shimmers over the digital horizon (Wertheim 28).
Locking in on this ocean of images, museums and galleries are beginning to envision the
virtual environment of their physical collections. In other words, digital technologies
have transformed the storage, circulation, and retrieval of information by transforming
information of all kinds into a binary form and reducing matter into silicon and liquid
crystal. Perhaps the most striking transformation affected by these technologies is the
change in our perceptions of materiality, space, and information, which are bound
directly or indirectly to affect how we understand the arts. These changes are most
apparent in the development of complex systems of simulation, storage, and circulation of information and representation now labeled cyberspace and virtual reality. Cyberspace is generated and sustained by global communications networks and computers linking disparate physical spaces and individuals through a shared virtual space, the space of linked, networked computers and their users. The contours of this virtual space and its various contents can be generated, manipulated, and to some extent controlled in ways unheard of in the spaces that we normally take for granted, which I will describe as live, everyday space, and part of our *Lebenswelt* (Grosz 75-76). We need an approach to the study of technology in the present period that is eclectic and open-mined, offering a perspective that is based on the contemporary cultural experiences of everyday life. Thus, we need to perceive the Internet as a productive cultural site and element of social relations.

Regarding the phenomenon of digitized museums in cyberspace, the arts have a new spatial existence. Digitized reproductions of artworks and related information shown on screens become flat sequences of data. Compared to the original artworks in crates strictly collected in museum, they traditionally appear to be quite insignificant. They even sometimes create new meanings when these reproduced images are placed with different objects, such as commodity goods. Many contemporary philosophers, such as Jean Baudrillard, think that the reproduction of the digitized artwork is a simulation without the original. Such a means of reproduction is quite susceptible to market

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11 Baudrillard’s concept of simulation is the creation of the real through conceptual models that have no connection to origin in reality. The model becomes the determinant of our perception of reality. Art, music, fashion, and relationships become dictated by their ideal models presented through the media. Thus the boundary between the image, or simulation, and reality breaks down. This creates a hyperreal world (hyperreality) where the distinctions between real and unreal are blurred. See, Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, tran. Shella Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994) 1-42.
operation and very likely to become the practice of value exchange, because objects appear in the form of signs and messages and turn into a mode of signification or a mode of sign exchange and communication. Objects are more than manufactured products or goods in economic exchange, for they have been transformed from merchandise to signs or objects with symbolic value. On the other hand, the system of meaning constructed with signs and the referred cultural context and society are now the reference structure for the consumption of goods (Baudrillard, *Simulation*, 185).

This point of view brings out a question, that is, why are consumers confronted with a vast array of ideas, concepts, objects, and elements on duplicated art images if their consumable meanings do not refer back to authentic artworks? The meaning of an authentic art involves both an authentic one and a reproduction, and this embodied relationship between originality and replica is crucial. Thus, the following discussion will concentrate on the embodied relationship between man’s perception of digitized art image and its spatial relation.

2. **Phenomenological Reduction: Seeing through Space**

Through the description above we have seen that the concept of space is a changing idea in human history. The spectator perceives artworks in different spatial contexts. In antiquity, humans had a closer relationship with works of art because artistic creations existed in their life world and were associated with their political, religious, and cultural lives. When the modern museum emerged, the artworks were collected in different spaces, the artificial human constructions of museums that fulfill authoritative and political aims. A Museum’s walls became the boundary for artworks. Later, because
of the rapid proliferation of modern technology, the process of mechanical reproduction forced the work of art to face its own replica. Since then, art has existed in two different spaces: the original existing space, and the two-dimensional reproductive space of printing, photographic, and television media. Moreover, in the contemporary information society, the work of art again faces another more advanced reproductive technology. Cyberspace allows for all physical objects to be transferred to digital forms. Human life can no longer be separated from techno-culture. To this extent, we can summarize this spatial transformation into two concepts in terms of the physical spatial existence and virtual spatial one. In the history of spatial transformation, human perception is also changing; yet, human still lives with the concept of space. By borrowing the phenomenological term, we can state that “spatial Dasein”\(^{12}\) remains a significant concept in human’s \textit{Lebenswelt}.

2.1 Spatial Dasein: The Embodiment of the Cogito and Space

The idea of technologies facilitating connectivity represents an important issue in history. Human life appears to be speeding up and compressing downward at the turn of the twenty-first century, with a sense of decreasing control over the speed of daily life. Technologies, in particular communication technologies, have been central to our \textit{Lebenswelt}. The experience of our \textit{Lebenswelt} has been associated with the emergence of industrial technologies in modern society. It results in the concept that the modern is the mechanical, the industrial, and “modern human beings are technologized subjects,

\(^{12}\) The concept of spatial Dasein is based on Heideggerian notion of space. Dasein is the mode of a human’s being, or subjectivity. He notes that space can only be understood by going back to the world. That is, space as well as its being, spatiality, has to be comprehended through the world. This world is not meant to be a Cartesian reality independent of and isolated from the subject in its distanced perception. This world is spatial because it is that in which the spatial Dasein dwells; and Dasein is spatial because its being is “being in the world.” Spatial Dasein thus means that the practical subject is involved in the world of things not through pure thinking, but through its practice of utilizing them.
whose worldview, way of being, and daily life is shaped by the integration of technology into the fabric of life” (Sturken 72).

As mentioned in Chapter Two, the convergence of technology and human life is nothing new in the modern cultural context. Artists, such as Leonardo da Vinci, Albrecht Dürer, Honoré Daumier, and other artists since the Renaissance, have always designed their own tools for creating two-dimensional illusions on paper or canvas of what they see. Albrecht Dürer’s woodcut (Fig. 9) demonstrates that the artist’s depiction of the object is correlated with the space between the subject and the object, which indicates an embodied relation of the subject, the object, and the space in-between. Later, the camera obscura and the camera lucida as technological means created the same technological space within the human Lebenswelt (Fig. 10, 11, 12). When an image of an illuminated object passes through a small round hole into a very dark room, or via a lens arrangement, the artist can see the image on the paper or canvas in its natural shapes and colors. These illustrating technologies enable artists to view subjects and drawing paper in the same frame, and the image that was projected on the paper could be simply outlined (Lovejoy 16-20). Obviously, the work of art is created via a technological vision. This situation denotes that Dasein’s being in the world comprises more than its physical existence in the world, but also its existential connection to the world. The subject, the object, and the space in-between have been embodied in the relation of the cogito and space. That is to say, space as well as its being, spatiality, has to be understood through the world. This world, however, is not meant to be the Cartesian reality independent of and isolated from the subject in its distanced theoretical gaze (Lee 15). The world is spatial, as it were,
because it is that in which the spatial Dasein dwells; and Dasein is spatial because its being is being-in-the-world. Heidegger states:

Space can only be understood by going back to the world. [...] Spatiality can be discovered in general only on the basis of the world in such a way that space, after all, also constitutes the world in accordance with the essential spatiality of Da-sein itself with regard to its fundamental constitution of being-in-the-world. (Being, 113)

By applying this argument to contemporary digital culture, Karen Franck’s idea of the blurring of the boundary between objects and subjects echoes the concept of spatial Dasein. In “When I Enter Virtual Reality, What Body Will I Leave Behind?” Karen Franck suggests that we adopt a partial or split physiology in cyberspace, rather than totally losing our worldly bodies. She argues that many pieces of our body come with us into virtual reality; it is indeed these parts and biological processes that allow us to experience that other space. Franck posits the notion that virtual experience rearticulates the established social boundaries of “me and not-me.” She notes:

My experience of virtual reality depends upon my physical body’s movement. To see I must move my head. To act upon and do things in a virtual world I must bend, reach, walk, grasp, turn around and manipulate objects. Movements of the physical body, or commands, can translate to very different virtual movements. (240)

That is to say, virtual existence never leaves the physical substance behind. She goes further to explain the concept of “me and not-me.” She states that humans structure the world in a fundamental way by making a boundary between us as human beings and the
other, that is, the things we make, the places we inhabit, and the world as given. The fundamental typological distinction between us and not-us not only structures the material world, but also frames the way we think about and re-present this world. The boundary secures us, places us in our habitats; it infuses the world and us with meaning (Franck 41). Franck uses this notion to explain the blurring of boundary between objects and subjects. The virtually immersed part of the body actually exists within all of us.

The contemporary world is increasingly defined by the digital, the computer, and the virtual. Whereas the modern was mechanical, the postmodern is decidedly electronic or digital. The worldview of most of the industrialized world remains relentlessly modern in its valuing of science, technology, and progress. These modern sensibilities are now integrated with an increasingly postmodern sensibility, which is usually described as a sense of cynicism and fatigue with modernity’s hurtling forward into the future (Sturken 72). More significantly, these technologies did not create the condition of modernity; rather they emerged from the changing set of social relations that constituted this condition. With the intensity of technological change, more advanced technologies, such as satellites, digital imaging, and the Internet, have changed the contemporary worldview. Today’s world is understood in terms of the post-industrial, globalization, and media convergence (Sturken 73).

Thus, taking a departure from the point of view of “spatial Dasein,” we can go further to discuss technological space and its relation to the existence of art. Turning back to the discussion of the museum, we have seen that different social groups perceive museums according to their own social backgrounds and cultural experiences. It makes the experiences of art more unpredictable. These experiences are contingent on some
antecedent state of mind, and the same work does not affect different spectators in the same way. Even the same spectator has different responses toward the same work of art on different occasions. There are, however, still some political issues within this broad museological landscape. Here, we need to discuss some of the most detailed descriptions of our experiences in and around the architectural physicality of the museum. Merleau-Ponty’s influence has been to emphasize the role of body in our experience of space. He reminds us that man’s interaction with architecture exists at a level of bodily experience that is prior to our analysis of museum spaces.

In this phenomenological reduction, the invisible (exhibitionary) politics of the museum underlying the exhibition of art and spectators’ experiences need to be synthesized. The museum has been essential to the production of the art book at the time of an elitist, specialist press; we are now experiencing this logic turning back on itself as we watch how the mass-market art book is crucial to the conception of the new museum.

By adopting Foucault’s concept of the prison as institutional articulation of power and knowledge relations, Tony Bennett goes further to state that the museum is another such institution in our daily lives. In discussing the political relationality of the museum. He says:

For the emergence of the art museum was closely related to that of a wider range of institutions—history and natural-science museums, dioramas and panoramas, national and, later, international exhibitions, arcades and department stores—which served as linked sites for the development and circulation of new disciplinary (history, biology, art history, anthropology)
and their discursive formations (the pasts, evolution, aesthetics, Man) as well as for the development of new technologies of vision. (Exhibitionary, 81)

The exhibitionary space clearly was shaped by the relation between an array of new disciplines including history, art history, archaeology, geology, biology, and anthropology.

Moreover, this exhibitionary space is involved in the transfer of artworks and bodies from the enclosed and private domains in which they had previously been displayed into progressively more open and public arenas. In modern times, museums are typically located at the centre of cities where they stand as embodiments, physically and symbolically, of power (Bennett, Exhibitionary, 109). That is to say, museums have enclosed works of art within walls, yet their doors open to the general public. Such principles of classification and display of artworks and other human artifacts exemplify the presence of power as spectacular displays (Bennett, Exhibitionary, 97, 82).

Rosalind Krauss echoes this concept by using the example of the Renaissance oil painting. She notes that oil painting is the privileged technique of expression in Italian classicism, and these paintings, prized and collected from the Renaissance onward, became the very objects that were given a place of pride in the nineteenth-century museum (342). Needless to say, the museum as a new house for works of art is rooted in its design policy statement. The existence of art now is arranged based on museum’s design (e.g., historically, chronologically, or thematically). The temporal and spatial elements of artworks are no longer connected with their originality, but with a new narrative design and with compression of time and space in the museum. In the
museum’s existing displays, the stress is placed on the purely practical principle of classification. Thus, museums’ walls function as impermeable divides, and also demonstrates the countervailing tendency in which the walls are viewed as surfaces on which to arrange artworks so that their effects will be carried back out into the world, and enable them to act on it (Bennett, *Acting*, 1424).

The collection of works of art has never stopped in the nineteenth-century sense. Technological advancement helps works of art and their reproductive images rapidly proliferate around the world. The traditional linear connection between displays, which was achieved thematically, chronologically or by object type, was consciously rejected at the Internet browsing level. The archives of digitally processed images and text-based information involve issues of authorship and reproduction that exhibit completely different qualities and formats from the act of collecting artworks in a physical space. The digital archive of a museum (i.e., a cyber-museum) indeed reveals a reverse projection of the perceived spaces created by museums as facilities for collecting art.

### 2.2 Cyberspace: From Social Impossibility to Social Possibility

Since Gibson’s version of cyberspace, the proposition that cyberspace is non-spatial sets the basic tone for many a discourse trying to explain human’s relation to cyberspace. The contemporary notion of virtual reality as a subset of cyberspace is an extreme example of the substitution of the physical world for a non-physical and symbolic one. This virtual relation becomes increasingly elaborated in the shift to utterly artificial realms of “nonspace.” In other words, the virtuality of cyberspace is a dematerialized and, for that reason, ontologically uncertain mode of presence. In a world undergoing a process of dematerialization, the virtuality of cyberspace does not
necessarily represent reality in ways we have come to expect from traditional Cartesian philosophers (Morse 24-35). These scholars wonder if virtuality will replace the physicality in everyday life, differentiating access to information or symbolic processing resulting in the actual, physical segregation of society. They insist that virtual reality forces the Renaissance space to turn inside out. It involves the mapping of some sensory and kinesthetic properties of the body onto the image surrounding it, and its purity is a consequence of interfaces that block the user from the physical world, giving the virtual image world absolute authority over the physical one. Margaret Morse points out:

In virtual reality taken on its own terms, any sort of interaction is morally acceptable because there is no one actually in its hallucinatory space. […] The result is the virtual immersion of the body and its capability of interacting with the display—not apparently a place of dialogue or confrontation with other subjects. […] It is almost an alibi, a voiding of responsibility for what goes on within nonspace. (29)

It is curious, however, that we have evolved a popular language for digital technology—the Net, the Site, the Web, and the computer for the new social arrangements that are occurring among those who use these technologies. I would argue that the experience of virtual space, and the related experience of simulation, establishes a significant shift from the modern worldview to postmodern experience. Additionally, this is not a simple shift because these spaces are increasingly important to our social interactions and to the way we perceive our Lebenswelt.

The image in cyberspace is always framed off from everyday life, like phenomenological bracketing. Actually, the cyber-world and the material-world are two
related concepts. There are not merely two worlds, virtual and physical; space that is traveled through or traversed by wires is compressed and takes on a different form. It becomes an “in-between space.” Such space can no longer be depicted as a distance between virtual and physical; rather, it is a space between virtual and physical. That is to say, the collapsing of space and the emergence of in-between space demonstrates, in many ways, the overlapping concepts of space in contemporary society (Sturken 77-80). The contemporary concept of the in-between space thus bears an associated relationship to phenomenological sense of spatial existence as embodied, compressed, traveled through, and removed from actual places. The experience of in-between space is not simply one distraction or detachment, but a concept of extended spatialization.

To this extent, the concept of “cyberworld” still follows the meaning of Lebenswelt. That is to say, the world is the space we live in, rather than an abstract and objective world. Traditionally, the place is understood to mean social position and physical location; however, this place is transformed into an electronically mediated space, which transcends the boundaries of physical settings (Meyrowitz 169-170, 308). Because of the proliferation of modern advanced technology, virtual and Internet apparatuses have fundamentally influenced our lives and our understanding of the world. Via the Internet, there is a creation of what has been called virtual space in cyberworld. Additionally, the virtual technology changes the constructed meanings of our Lebenswelt. Thus, we should establish more obviously the fact that our Lebenswelt has transformed into the cyberworld, and that the “human-cyberworld” relation can be seen as part of the “human-Lebenswelt” relation. This media setting for social interaction might best be imagined as overlaying the physical locations of those computer users who access them.
Thus, the digitized art image in cyberspace has a significant meaning, which reflects itself in the physical part of the *Lebenswelt*. Taking an example from a museum, future art historians will mark the 1994-95 season as the year the art world went on-line because there were more than 5,000 artists, museums, galleries, and other arts organizations around the world that staked out sites on the Internet. In this phenomenal case, we can see that museums, galleries, and art institutions extended their spatial existences for the arts and themselves in order to establish their fame. In other words, museums and galleries have already been significantly affected by the new communication technology. Most famous museums and galleries construct their own websites in order to make their collections more widespread. Thus, a work of art has its own virtual part of existence in cyberspace.

Consequently, the boundaries of place are certainly more permeable or open. It results in a transformation from the “being-in-the-world” to “being-in-the-cyberworld,” and the boundary between real world and virtual space has blurred. The blurring of the spaces of the real and virtual world here actually revolves around the use of computer technology. To this extent, the body becomes the key connection between human existence and the cyberworld, and the relationship between humans and the cyberworld is established on bodily senses through which the world can be experienced. As a result, traditional borders (i.e., physical borders such as walls and distances, or imaginative borders such as cultural borders and national frontiers) are blurred and weakening. Virtual reality gives a feeling of reality without its physical existence in the traditional form.
Cyberculture, therefore, is built upon a proliferation of “nows” in diverse modalities and inflections, and “heres” in multiple, discontinuous, and virtual realities (Morse 15). The observation is that a significant aesthetic space or preserve has now opened up with a mainstream digital visual culture that is largely given over to surface play and the production of imagery and that lacks traditional depth cues in digitalized surroundings. Yet, as we have begun to see, this is not straightforwardly so. A digitized art image that exists as a dimension within mass visual culture also has more localized, or specific expressions. When looking at digitized art image and new forms of simulation experience, we need to frame the discussion more directly through the lens of spectatorship. The following section will focus on how the spectator perceives digitized images.

Through the discussion above, we have seen that the concept of space can no longer be identified with physical space, and our recognition of Lebenswelt now is extended from physicality into virtuality. That is, our living space is a combination of the physical part and the virtual part of Lebenswelt. This Lebenswelt is now identified both physically and virtually. Art’s bodily existence is not identical to the pure physical aggregate that can be restored to its original state. The original state of the bodily existence of art is difficult to restore because the virtualization has already permeated its physical factuality (Lee 63-64). In other words, human living space dissolved into geographical space in the modern era, and geographical dissolves into virtual in the digital age. The movement toward artifice is not only toward abstraction; rather it extends our perception of space. Phenomenology teaches us that the mind is not bounded by the body, but reaches out into the world, and is in turn touched by it (Merleau-Ponty,
The material environment enters into the mental as perceptions of the physical world. From the point of view of digital technology, there is a new vision or visual display to translate from machine perception to visual construction which is a further level of world space. Because we have considered the relationship between human and machine as an embodied instrumental relationship, even more because we have created them in the image of an ideally reflected individual, we cannot deny our computer or today’s Internet that has shifted their “not-us” (virtuality) into an embodied relationship.

The existence of art in human history is dependent on the human perception and creation of space. While the human Lebenswelt keeps becoming more modern, more mechanical, and more artificial, the existence of art also faces this extended spatialization. Through the examination above, we have seen the existing space of art has changed from a natural world space, to artificially constructed museum space, then to mechanical-technological space in terms of printing, photographic, and media spaces, and finally coming into the virtual environment of digital space. The concept of space then becomes thicker and more artificial because each technological space is built upon the former one. By applying Ihde’s concept of “technic embodied” to examine the existence of art in different spatial experiences, we can understand the “(art-technological space)-world” relation. The mechanical reproduction and digitization of artwork is not limited to simple duplication; rather it demonstrates that the existence of art in the worldly space has been extended.

Traditional thoughts on absence, abstraction, and non-physical characteristics of digitized art images in technological space can no longer satisfy us in perceiving this
phenomenon. This means that artworks are subject to a technological vision, but far more, they are mediated through machines and embodied with technological space. Human space now cannot be mapped because the concept of space has been extended and keeps extending through technological advancement. Extended spatialization exerts unending territorializing effects since it comes to the scene simultaneously with the subject’s primary substantiality, within which itself requires the subject to keep seeking a socially re-territorialized identity. Alongside this identity, we can attempt to interpret the meaning of digitized art image in cyberspace.

3. Phenomenological Interpretation: Freedom and Image Politics

While stepping back slightly from the rather close previous examinations to consider more generally how all the forms of visual or digital culture under consideration are related to this new aesthetic space: cyberspace. If the forms of visual digital image are themselves exemplars of this distinctive space, then how might they be further distinguished from preceding movements and their aesthetic regimes? Referring at different moments to examples from our constellation (historical and spatial transformations), I shall now introduce and explore the characteristics and aesthetic dimension of contemporary visual digital culture that interests us here.

3.1 Digitized Art in Cyberspace

The digital techniques entering contemporary fields of image production are furthering the expansion and refinement of the culture of image and form, and are bringing a culture of symbolic exhibition and consumption (Darley 129). As a result, the physical bodily existence of originality, of the digitized virtual image, and of the space in
between are central to examination. As mentioned previously, cyberspace is the world of a communication system that is no longer “out there.” We interact with this world through technical properties that allow us to describe regular patterns of behavior and to predict the future outcomes of events. The technical world of cyberspace can successfully be acted upon when we are involved in practical action aimed in part at communication and agreement. Morse notes, “the here-and-now concept of art and reception beyond the frame became a rich object of theoretical investigation and a critique of representation in contemporary philosophy and in cultural and film studies, as well as in art” (Darley 160). Consequently, the development of cyberspace as a new spatial frame for the existence of art represents an important dimension in the discussion of mechanical reproducibility.

Here, I am concerned with drawing attention to the specific ways in which the digital image is taking its place within and is constitutive of aesthetic forms that markedly differ from their counterparts of originality. For the most part, the new characteristics of contemporary culture that revolve around repetition and its allied concepts have been discussed in relation to established forms such as film and television, and now in digital cyberculture (Darley 125). “Repetition” is a notion that carries enormous import for grasping what it is that makes contemporary visual culture so distinctive. Benjamin’s mechanical reproducibility actually implies a sense of repetition as copying or replication. That is, technological reproducibility (first mechanical, then electronic, and now digital) involves repetition as replication, the capacity to produce sets of identical copies of works or images by mechanical processes. We may think that there is only one authentic work of art in the physical world, but that there are many digitized images in cyberspace. This
phenomenon is obvious if we visit Google’s website and type “Van Gogh’s *Starry Night*” in the search engine. We see a large numbers of images appear in the browser. This phenomenon demonstrates that a crucial factor in the growing self-referential character of the digitized image has been the accelerating growth and proliferation and the reproductive ability of those means. This increasing proliferation of signs, or images, is a vital consideration in the increasing dominion that artistic form has assumed in many mass cultural aesthetic practices (Darley 126). As a result, this phenomenon, quantitative expansion of digital reproducibility, is beginning to produce mutations with significant qualities of artworks.

In addition, “intertextuality” also characterizes the digitized images. Intertextuality originally accounted for the role of a text and extra-textual materials apart from traditional notions of authorship. The emergence of digital technology for the mediation and reproduction of images introduces a hitherto unprecedented potential for aesthetic developments along the line of a heightened form of mimeticism. At the same time it also leads to unprecedented developments in modes of image-text, or image-image juxtaposition. The juxtaposition of different artworks, or artworks with introductory information, is a significant mode of presence. Obviously, the whole new culture of the image, with already existing images and image forms, begins to elevate intertextual references to a more central position within many visual cultural practices (Darley 130-134). That is to say, the Internet’s digital technology provides ways of enhancing both intertextual forms and mimetic forms, and increasingly begins to combine both in the same text. Digitized art images introduce distinctive potentialities of image combination and recombination that may involve combining imagery specifically produced for the
purpose, imagery from the archive, or a mixture of both. Thus, digital technology, as techniques, not only enhances new abilities with regard to the established means of image production, it also introduces completely new possibilities of juxtaposed visual communication approaches.

Through integration into established forms, already existing techniques such as editing and programming make new existing space for artworks. New characteristics of presence inherent within still developing technologies of digital imaging not only conform to, but also enlarge and intensify already established modes of self-referential or intertextual production. The digitized art image in cyberspace enlarges the storage capacity of the physical space. It also facilitates unpredictable image combinations.

If we consider that the culture of digitized art images is significant, then the expressions of visual digital culture under consideration here are prime examples of what this might mean for aesthetic reception. We can begin a discussion of what this involves and how it affects the forms of visual digital culture by looking initially at digitalized works of art. After searching exploration of the aesthetic characteristics of the digitizing mode, it is necessary to consider more broadly spectatorship and consumption relationships in contemporary cyber visual culture.

### 3.2 Perceiving Images

Since digital technology plays a vital role in perceiving works of art, the spectatorship in order to comprehend the relationship between the spectator and digitized image. We live in a culture in which we are surrounded on all sides by reproduced images, an extremely new visual culture. Foucault echoes Merleau-Ponty’s idea indicating that vision should be incorporated into and understood phenomenologically,
taking into account the lived spatial experience that emerged from the body’s intertwining with the world (Jay 386-387). To this extent, in the digital world spectators become navigators winding their way through a variety of interactive experiences, and images become spaces of visualization with more and more intelligence programmed into the fabric of communication processes. Now the technical discourses about the shape of digitized art in the information society is framed in turn by a vision of the future that uses metaphors taken from the past—e.g., information superhighways, virtual communities, and digital libraries and museums (Lyman 201). By focusing on digitized art in cyberspace, we may ask how the authentic artwork provides a useful model for digital reproduction with a global scale and potentially encompassing all digital information, and how the spectator perceives these digitized images. These are the most debatable questions in the discussion of digitized images in cyberspace.

Regarding the spectator’s response, Wolfgang Iser’s Reception Theory draws a phenomenological framework for the reader’s perception in the literary tradition. What has interested Iser is the question of how and under what conditions a text has meaning for a reader. Iser proposes what is essentially a phenomenology of reading, insisting that the study of literature should be concerned not only with the text but also equally with the consciousness of the reader in responding to the text. This reader-response criticism claims that the meaning of questions cannot be derived solely from the words of texts; the meaning of a text is never completely formulated, but rather activated or realized through the reader’s involvement (Regan 141). This phenomenological attitude is useful in ascertaining the extent of the reader’s freedom in realizing the potential meanings of the text. Iser advocates that the text should be seen as a framework of “schematized aspects
or schemata” that must be actualized or concretized by the cognitive activity of the reader (Holub 84). Underlying Iser’s theory is a conviction that literature “tells us something about reality” by arranging its formal and structural devices in a way that will encourage the reader to reflect upon prevailing social and cultural norms. This formal selection and presentation of thought systems is what Iser called the “repertoire” of the text (Regaon 144). He notes:

A text should be understood as a reaction to the thoughts systems which it has chosen and incorporated in its own repertoire. For literature provides possibilities that have been excluded by the prevalent systems, enabling readers to see what they cannot normally see in the ordinary process of day-to-day living. (72-74)

In other words, to complement the repertoire and strategies that make up the functionalist model of a literary text, Iser develops his concomitant phenomenology of reading. To this extent, if we consider that the digitized image in cyberspace is a constructed and formatted device for our socio-cultural context, we then need to comprehend the spectator’s response in order to gain more precise meaning from the spectators’ point of view. According to Iser’s point of view, the literary work is a virtual work, in which the gaps and blanks of the text give rise to communication in the reading process, in the sense of its unrealized potential for meaning. This indeterminacy of the text increases the variety of communication possible. Iser wants to understand meaning as the result of interaction between text and reader, as an effect to be experienced (Iser, Reading, 10).

Thus, we now need to examine the reading process of the spectators. For some Internet searchers (readers), digital reproduction is one of the most commonly used techniques for
exhibiting artworks today. Whether they like it or not, they have seen that digital reproduction is one of the most influential innovations in contemporary society. I here take a few examples from my interviews with students at Ohio University to demonstrate how the spectator perceives authentic art and reproduced images.13 My investigations demonstrate that spectators have a variety of points of view toward digitized art:

I believe that reproducing art in such a manner takes away from original art itself and makes it not as valuable. Once art is accessible to more people, its value depreciates. Pieces of art that were once extremely expensive and unique lose these traits. Art on the Internet not only loses monetary value, it loses emotional value also. (Student No. 1)

The mass production of such wonderful pieces and being able to show them to the world is only a good thing. It gets people going in the art world and gives those who do not live surroundings a taste of what is out there. It also provides us with the chance to share such art with other, such as with postcards. […] The mass reproduction of art also ties in with digital imagery of art, such as online. I feel that any way found to get art out there is a good way and is necessary to educate people about art. (Student No. 2)

My feelings towards mechanical reproduction aren’t the same as they are for authentic work. I can’t say that I don’t enjoy the works of mechanical reproduction, because I do. I even have many posters and different

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13 The interviews are taken from Iart 117 classes from 2002 to 2004.
pictures up on the walls of both my dorm room and my room back at home. Even though mechanical reproduction is nowhere near the same as authentic work and they may not produce the same feelings that you may get when you view authentic work, I still like the work from mechanical reproduction. It’s different, but it’s still good. (Student No. 3)

Obviously, original pieces of artwork have a greater effect on the spectators when they recognize that they are truly originals. Most spectators make comparisons between authentic works of art and reproduced images in cyberspace. In addition, spectators address more serious considerations about the processes of mechanical reproduction (both printing and digital), and their relation with this mechanical Lebenswelt in their personal experiences:

A machine must be considered as a stage of production between the artist and artwork. This is advantageous in that people can view magnificent pieces of work even if it is across the world; however, it does not give the viewer a feeling of right. […] New technology has now allowed us to digitalize imageries of artwork. Digital media for the home can encourage more exhibition of artwork, but some aspects get lost, such as the original color, tone and sound. For artwork the original color gets lost as does all the artist’s feelings they put into the work. Museums use this new technology to display their works online as a way to attract people into their museums to see the authentic works. (Student No. 4)
I have also visited *Fallingwater*, which is a house in western Pennsylvania built by Frank Lloyd Wright. To experience the house in person is nothing like you could imagine if you have not. I had first seen pictures of the house, but going there and being able to actually see the waterfalls inside the house and outside was amazing. The construction of the house was like none other, and I had no idea it was such a landmark before I went. (Student No. 5)

Here, we have seen that they think that paintings along with other types of art such as sculptures and architecture can be reproduced through digital photography. The artwork can be reproduced and displayed through pictures in books and online on websites, such as the Metropolitan museum’s website. Although all of these types of reproduction still give off the same image, the feelings these forms generated is just not the same as the original one. Most of them still believe that the original works of art convey a much greater meanings and feelings than any replication could ever mirror:

> There is nothing like going to a museum or wherever, and getting close to a painting. That is an experience you hold with you for the rest of your life, especially if you end up at the Louvre or any famous museum like such. When you get a replication of whatever painting you saw, it seems like it cheapens the moment. I mean, you can look at it and say that you’ve been there to see it, but it’s not the same. (Student No. 6)

Digital would be the one that I would be more against, because in reality it does take away from that pictures authenticity and value because anyone
can exactly replicate something original with the help of a mouse and computer software. [...] I think it’s amazing what today’s technology can do with art from hundreds of years ago as far as recopying it, but I don’t think it is always right. (Student No. 7)

Consequently, we have realized that, in an image, there is a rich world of symbols since the sign often tends to be structured in an indefinite number of variants, individual and super-segmental, that in the world of meaning gives rise to a continuum on the content. For the translation from one context into another, we should establish a relation of signification between them. In other words, visual communication, according to the specific communicative aims, is based on cultural context, the identification of which allows us to realize representations that favor some aspects of the communication process more than others. We, therefore, should turn back to the issue regarding the spatial existence of artworks.

The human’s existing space has been extended from the natural sense of space, to the technological space, then finally to the virtual digital space. The determination of extended spatialization derives from the primary substantiality of human’s primitive and extended body, which signifies human factual existence (Lee 90). Although the work of art lacks material presence in virtual space, its constitutive force will persist, especially when this electronic space starts undergoing definite socialization. The spatialization of artwork thus primarily depends on it as the subject written in an original lack which opens up, and lends access to freedom. This situation helps constitute the subject’s existential factuality lying next to or going beyond the subject’s manifest objective factuality. Whereas extended spatialization delimits cyberspace as a social possibility,
existential spatialization enables cyberspace to cross over, even momentarily, the limit of its social impossibility. Artwork now participates in this existential spatialization, and we have seen its spatialization extend from mechanical to digital space. It, therefore, must be devoted discussions to this existential spatialization of digitized artwork and its relative meaning.

### 3.3 Freedom and Image Politics

The advent of digital technology does not challenge the social relations within the economic framework of capitalism. It not only associates with capitalist rationalizations, but also reinforces them and expands the scale on which they operate. At the same time, it is important to know that entry into the digital enclosure promises to reinforce social values of capitalism, which tends to commodify freedom by transforming it into a space that can be monitored, recorded, repackaged, and sold (Andrejwvic 193-199).

Lévy notes that politics and aesthetics confront one another within the unbounded construction site of cyberspace (336). By employing transmission model of communication, he demonstrates that artistic phenomena traditionally have been presented roughly as a person (artists) signs an object or individual message (the work), which an other person (recipients, the public) perceives, appreciates, reads, interprets, or evaluates (Lévy 340). The emerging techno-cultural environment, however, encourages the development of new kinds of relationships, ignoring the separation between these components because computerized images demand new modes of reading, perceiving, and thinking. Consequently, it is reasonable to speak of a work of art in the context of cyberspace because a mutation has occurred in a socio-technical environment in which works of art proliferate and are distributed (Lévy 340). The boundaries between the
image and the authentic artwork should be abandoned. Thus, the embodiment of image and artwork should now be the central subject of perception.

In the matter of the digital exhibition of art, the uniqueness of the original works comes from which they are the source of all the replicas. Their primary meaning lies not in what they say, but what they are. The status of the original work today is, therefore, the perfect and reasonable consequence of a new means of reproduction (Berger 15). Although the new means of reproduction Berger mentioned is not digital technology, we still can infer that the reproduction of artistic images in digital museums, is, in fact, a perfect and reasonable consequence of the means of reproduction. In other words, artistic images in digital museums are continuously reproduced, and, with the operation of the culture industry, sold as a kind of merchandise. The images can be reproduced limitlessly, but the reproduced images and signs directly refer to the original, which also carries a price on the market. The original artworks (or as Berger says, objects) are mystified during the process of pricing and turn out to be tokens of physical museums’ sales and displays.

When art becomes merchandise in the culture industry, it no longer possesses the essence of art and it loses its aesthetic value (Adorno 17). Just like the art images represented in digital museums, even though they provide us with an experience of beauty, they keep us from distinguishing between the genuine and the shams, virtual and real. Moreover, by reducing art into signs and pure symbols, consumptive art is mystified to become a cultural symbol that stands for a social rank and status. Such manipulations are based on the capitalist operation of value exchange. It is because consumptive art has become a symbol of social status or taste that the prices of artworks increase with their rarity, which adds to the mysteriousness of authentic works.
According to Merleau-Ponty, we can only appreciate a certain artistic work or natural scenery in a one-and-only place where our ceremonial operation of the appreciated object determines its value because the body subject creates meanings in the present. The uniqueness of an artwork has the power of “watching”—the power to get our attention when we watch it—and that is the interaction between body subject (spectator) and the work of art. This is why Benjamin claims that art in the era of mechanical reproduction suffocates the aura of traditional art. However, as a successor of Marxism, he optimistically thinks that it is good to bring art, unavailable to the public in the past, to the general people by means of reproductions that transport art to places where the original works were unattainable. He further states that due to the continual progress of reproduction technology, the exhibitive value of artworks grows stronger. That is, spectators care not only how admirable the artworks are, but also how well they fit in exhibitions. This is the emergence of the art with a whole new vision, “the art of mechanical reproduction.”

We have noted that, on the web, virtual museums and theaters are established, and in this techno-cultural space, physical artworks can go beyond the limitation of time and space and reach regions where the authentic works are unavailable. With this virtual representation, an artwork can get to the terminal devices in every household connected to the Internet, anywhere, anytime. On the surface, this is the embodiment of the popularization of art, but in reality, the representation of the visual art has lost its historical connotations. The virtual representation of artwork in the museums is no more than a graphic representation (Rusky 116), while the authentic artworks in physical
museums are imbued with more cultural value and aura. As a result, every year, millions of people have a “pilgrimage” to the Musee d’Orsay, the Louvre, or the British Museum, even though they can only have a three-second glance at the authentic artworks. The cultural value and the aura of authentic works are thus once again stressed.

4. Art in the Age of Digitized Culture

The proliferation of repetitively regulated signs has become the most significant phenomenon of today’s media-dominated world. The digitized visual art here not looks to the world itself; rather to already existing techniques of mediation and to the further stylization and exaggeration of the different kinds of wrapping they have accrued (Darley 140). In other words, the computer and the Internet property’s enhanced techniques of image combination and manipulation and its powerful simulation capabilities have pushed this aesthetic further towards emphasizing the fabric of embodied art itself. Our enhanced sense both of the presence in and manipulation of the digitized image appears to lead us closer to absorption within the physical substance of originality.

In this chapter, we have examined the relationship between the bodily existence of an artwork and its spatial transformation within the Lebenswelt. We have also examined the spectator’s perception toward this digitized phenomenon. There are three significant explorations. First, the technological embodiment of human perception has caused an extremely different living experience in our Lebenswelt. Technological innovations force humans to consider how to live with machines. Humans also have varying attitudes toward the employment of technological means in creating art. As a result, technological versions of art face challenges to their socio-cultural meaning.
This phenomenon, furthermore, raises the question: what gives these reproduced images social values? Images do not have values in and of themselves. They are awarded different kinds of value in monetary, social, and political terms and in a particular social context. In a digital technological society, both humans’ living environments and the existence of artwork have extended to the virtual world. The technological version of the artwork is valued because it can be reproduced for popular consumption endlessly on posters, postcards, coffee mugs, and T-shirts. Consumers can own a copy of the highly symbolically valued originals. The value of the original results not only from its uniqueness, but from its being the source from which reproductions are made. To this extent, the reproduced or digitized works of art are not meaningless; rather, their existence in our *Lebenswelt* provides another meaning both for originality and to us. Finally, we might assume that a work of art is valuable simply because it is on display in a prestigious space as is the case with a certain number of very famous images. Such images could include Van Gogh’s *Irises* or Leonardo da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa*, because these famous works of art were duplicated in different mechanical forms. The one that is displayed behind the protective walls of a museum and surrounded by crowds of onlookers becomes more precious. That means, the spatial transformation of the existence of art has its own significant meaning.

The world of images that we interact with on a daily basis is caught up in the power relations of the societies in which we live. Images are also elements within the power relations between human subjects, and between individuals and institutions. Images are representations and producers of the ideologies of their time, they are also factors in relations of power. The next chapter of phenomenological investigation of
digitized art in cyberspace, therefore, attempts to concentrate on the image politics of
digitized art in cyberspace to clarify the meaning of its existence in our Lebenswelt.
Chapter Three
Blurred Boundaries and Return to Authenticity

We have a world in which objects cannot be considered to be entirely self-identical, one in which it seems as though form and content are mixed, the boundary between them blurred.

Merleau-Ponty, *The World of Perception*

For every symbol is a living thing, in a very strict sense that is no mere figure of speech.

Charles S. Peirce, *Collected Papers*

As Merleau-Ponty points out, classical science is based on a clear distinction between space and the physical world; therefore, space is the uniform medium in which things are arranged, and in which they remain the same regardless of the position they occupy (*World*, 50). He, however, insists that the empirical world can no longer describe our *Lebenswelt*. We cannot measure an absolute distinction between space and the things that occupy it. Additionally, the distinction between the pure idea of space and the concrete spectacle it presents to our senses cannot be drawn. I have examined that the aesthetic make-up and operation of several of the constitutive expressions of digital visual culture and digitized artworks, which demonstrate details how various technological spaces exemplify a neo-spectacle. Guy Debord states that the society whose modernization has reached the stage of the integrated spectacle is characterized by the combined effect of five principle features: incessant technological renewal; integration of state and economy; generalized secrecy; unanswerable lies; and an eternal
present (Comments, 11-12). As we have seen, the development and integration of digital
techniques within established media forms have affected the field of art history. Yet even
though digital imaging technology is new, the aesthetic use and cultural values they are
put to and the forms they take are not – at least, not in the same radical way. Within this
technological cyberworld, space is no longer a medium of simultaneous objects capable
of being apprehended by an absolute observer who is equally close to them all, a medium
without a point of view, without physical body, and without spatial position.

1. Phenomenological Description: The Digital Embodied Space

We have extended Merleau-Ponty’s idea of space to the technological concept of
space; moreover, we employed the significant phenomenological concept of
“embodiment” to elaborate the relationship between the human Lebenswelt, digitized
artwork, and the role of technology. Technology is something that we cannot ignore in
our Lebenswelt, especially in contemporary society. It is not only a storage device
transforming books into photography, then into computer disks, but also allows us to
increase both the size of our memory and the time-scales over which information is
collected. Technology extends the range and power of our ordinary Lebenswelt, and has
a profound effect on the way humans perceive space and time. Thus, we must more
deeply consider the role of technology. Postmodern embodiment is not a singularly
discursive condition. What becomes obvious during this new era is that the study of new
reproductive technologies enables new visualization of our perceptual relationships.
1.1 Technological Embodiment

Space is historically associated with Being, implying a kind of fixity and stasis, as opposed to time, which is conceived of as becoming, as active progress. Space, however, is not so passive, fixed, or absolute; it is a relational concept which depends on the position of objects contained within it. Elizabeth Grosz notes, “space makes possible different kinds of relations but in turn is transformed according to the subject’s affective and instrumental relations with it” (92). There is undoubtedly a contingent coherence afforded by the subject’s temporal movement through space, which becomes a constituent of it. Grosz uses the example of the body, which through a perception of itself as a spatial entity, is able to manifest and manipulate its corporality. In other words, a body is what a body can do, and this act depends on its intention in space.

Technological inventions doubtlessly change our perception of space. The distinct zones of public/private space, physical space, psychological space, and even performative space have been changed. As a result, each reflects the different spatial awareness of certain users that have emerged in our Lebenswelt. New media technologies, for example, function by appropriating space as a framing metaphor to enable consumption and use. Visual technologies such as printing, photography, and digital means provide spaces of meaning for us to occupy, in which we interact through processes of identification and subjection. We thus need to investigate how we use notions of space to appropriate novel technologies and to translate them into extensions of ourselves and embodiments of our cultural life.

Significantly, at the momentary intersection of the human being and the machine there is a spatial praxis, which is the so-called technospace. This technospace is
embodied in fluctuations of human-machine interaction. The preceding discussions have tried to bring the world of perception (Merleau-Ponty’s term) back to human life. The world of perception is hidden from us beneath all the sediment of knowledge and social living. We encounter objects that do not pass quickly before our eyes in this digital world; on the contrary, we hold our gazes on and ask questions of them. They convey to us, in a bizarre fashion, the very secret of their substance and the different forms of their material and non-material existences which allow them to recover their dignity and will incline us to accept them in their purity (Merleau-Ponty, *World*, 93-95). When we perceive a digitized image of a work of art, we do not withdraw our interests because of the particular way it has of performing its function as a digitized form. How is this form supported, for this is different with every different form? What interests us is the unique movement from originality to digitization; that is what makes each existence of form different from the next, yet still related to each other.

Here, I attempt to bring Don Ihde’s elaboration of embodiment in explaining the phenomenon of digital embodiment. Ihde specifies the place and role of technology in the *Lebenswelt* in a phenomenological sense. He distinguishes four types of human-technology relations: embodiment relations, hermeneutic relations, alterity relations, and background relations (*Technology*, 73, 80, 97, 108). In discussing the relationship between digitized art and human experience, the first type, which Ihde calls “embodiment relations” is referring to the case where technology is taken into subjective experience as a means of perception of the world, thus transforming the subjects’ perceptual and bodily sense (e.g., the blind man’s cane and the woman’s feathered hat). We add the position of art into these human-technology relations, and go further to discuss “human-technology-
art” relations. Digitized images are one of the most fundamental grounds upon which humans build notions of embodiment (Burnett 20). Images, for this reason, are never simply framed by their content. The excess that this process is a direct result of what humans do with digitized images, as they incorporate digitized images into their identities and emotions. Digitized images are used as props to construct and maintain the legitimacy of originality by humankind. It is as if original works of art could not exist without the duplicated images that surround most cultures. The translation of human sight into various forms of expression suggests that vision and images are interdependent.

This “human-technology-art” relation is undoubtedly represented in the digitized form of artwork because new digital communications technologies initiate new spatial practices. Digital imaging capabilities open up unprecedented critical challenges to the visual field. The computer can produce completely artificial images that provide a logical model of visual experience and are indistinguishable in appearance from photographs.

Concerning the existentiality of our technologies, particularly those that implicate embodiment, Ihde has made an interesting point:

The direction of desire opened by embodied technologies also has its positive and negative thrusts. Instrumentation in the knowledge activities, notably science, is the gradual extension of perception into new realms. The desire is to see, but seeing is seeing through instrumentation. Negatively, the desire for pure transparency is the wish to escape the limitations of the material technology. It is a Platonism, returned in a new form, the desire to escape the newly extended body of technological engagement. In the wish there remains the contradiction: the user both
wants and does not want the technology. The user wants what the technology gives but does not want the limits, the transformations that a technologically extended body implies. There is a fundamental ambivalence toward the very human creation of our own earthly tools.

(Technology, 75-76)

Digital technology obviously is rooted in our Lebenswelt. Visual art scholars and other art viewers who are facing this challenge of digital technology may both like and dislike, or agree and disagree about, this most current means of reproduction. Most people like digital images because those images can easily be reproduced and viewed around the world. The same group of people, however, dislikes the limitation of digitized images because their visual presences somehow are not accurate, such as colors and scales of artworks are changed. As a result, visualization technology such as computers and other graphic tools make up one of the most developed areas of digital tools, and are the fundamental technologies usable to convert this expanded sensation to a form that the human being can access. The digital simulation capabilities of the computer create a break with the paradigm of representation we have followed since the Renaissance. The digitized form has the capability of combining sound, text, and image within a single database. The image no longer resides in the visual field but in the database of cyberspace, and this system represents a major advance in providing new visualization in our contemporary Lebenswelt.

1.2 Digital Version and Digital Vision

Let us now move from our examination of space to the objects that fill this space. Traditionally, humans have thought that an object is a system of properties that present
themselves to our various senses and that are united by an act of intellectual synthesis. From this point of view, however, it is not clear how each of these qualities or properties is related to the others. Our experience contains numerous qualities that would be devoid of meaning if considered separately from the reactions they provoke in our bodies (Merleau-Ponty, *World*, 60). Viewed in this way, every quality is related to qualities associated with other senses. That is to say, the experience is to describe a particular relationship between the object and us.

The image itself is a phenomenon that can be seen. What is seen, however, must be analyzed within its own context and field, within which it presents itself—it has its own repetitive mode of positive presentation. This factor is one of the subtlest in the phenomenology of the image itself. Ihde notes that the first step in establishing the non-neutrality of image technologies with respect to traditional cultures will be a brief phenomenology of the structural features of technologically transformed perceptions (*Postphenomenology*, 45). Irrespectively, a digital image is just a collection of 1’s and 0’s that flow through circuits at high speed, digital images are meant to retain and have enough qualities to be viewed (Burnett 201). The mathematics of digital construction aside, the purpose is to create an image for viewing and possible visualization. As Ron Burnett points out, visualization is about embodiment and the transformation of information into knowledge and understanding through human activity and the conversion of information into knowledge and knowledge by humans into material and aesthetic forms (202). In this context, the role of a digitized image is as a provider of meaning and as an aesthetic object. Images are mediators between all the different layers of what are increasingly complex image-worlds. No technology has had a greater
influence on this unfolding history of images than digital form. Digitization of artwork combines all media forms and is a synthesis of language, discourse, and viewing. A digitized art image is not one isolated expression among many and is certainly not just an object or sign. In other words, digitized art images are the outcome of vast and interconnected image-worlds. Digitized art becomes controversial because of this problem that arises when the physical body of an artwork is thought about as a series of codes, pixels, and signals.

Yet phenomenologically, this technological space is a small step from the previous, more passive audiovisual situation. Certain visual technologies, such as the camera obscura, had become an object of fascination as early as the Renaissance. I have deliberately chosen da Vinci’s Mona Lisa (1503-6, Fig. 13) as a representative example because of its fame. This high Renaissance painting embodies a kind of spatial perspective in its reflected images through da Vinci’s perception. The Mona Lisa has been “remade” by several modern artists. In 1919, Marcel Duchamp drew a moustache and goatee on this famous portrait in the satirical irreverence that characterizes Dada art. Duchamp named it L.H.O.O.Q (Fig. 14), which pronounced in French means “she has a hot ass” (Sturken and Cartwright 129). Warhol creates thirty copies of the original entitled Thirty Are Better than One (1963, Fig. 15). His appropriation of the most famous cultural icon of all time is a comment on the power of reproductive media to promote celebrity. Additionally, Warhol’s creation signifies that photography is not simply a visual medium, but is also a photomechanical tool, a means of reproducing endless copies from a single original. This is an aspect that Benjamin acknowledged as the major factor affecting art in its relation to the age of mechanical reproduction. Moreover, digital
technology increases the capacity of mechanical reproduction. Jean-Pierre Yvaral digitized Mona Lisa by combining photographic reproductive images to create new images with the aid of special computer programs. His work, *Mona Lisa Synthetisee*, (date unknown, Fig. 16) shows a five-color combination in three-dimensional computer graphic art. Yvaral’s *Mona Lisa Synthetisee* has a twofold significance: both the digital reproduction of authentic art and authentic creation of computer graphic art by borrowing da Vinci’s original *Mona Lisa* are significant. Whatever dimensions we discuss, the *Mona Lisa* has become a reproduced image in cyberspace. Actually, as early as 1965, the *Mona Lisa* was scanned and digitally reproduced on the computer. The computer scientist Norbert Wiener even has copied this digitized image and sells it on a website where the image is described as “unique.” Andrew Patros shows us a close-up of this early digital reproduction (Fig. 17, 18).

As digitized works, the *Mona Lisa* images remain frozen as these images were at the time of their digitization and bear the marks of the methods used at the time; the time of creation of the work of art and the time of their digitization would both play a part in the appearance of a digitally stored work of art. The appearance of the *Mona Lisa* on the Web is not accidental, but it is evidence of the extraordinary and sustained involvement of Western culture with images. The extent to which history and the history of images generally are folded into every action and thought governing human activity is often underestimated. This underestimation is linked to how a variety of visual forms move into and out of the world of human events and practices. The authentic body of artwork creates possibilities for traveling in cyberspace. All reproduced images, however, including da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa* only come alive through the process of engaging in
viewing. From the beginnings of mechanical reproduction, criticism has concerned itself, above all, with what it took to be the unique inherent properties of the medium. Following tendencies in different disciplines, especially in linguistics and in literary and art criticism, critics have recently put aside the traditional quest for an absolute definition of mechanical reproduction, especially photographs, and have turned instead to questions of the actual experience of these new means, attempting to locate the meaning in the viewer’s response.

As a contrast to the digitization of a work of art in cyberspace, it is necessary to discuss digital art, which was born as a virtual form with its own aura within the image-human relationship. The employment of digital technologies as an artistic medium implies that the work exclusively uses a digital platform from production to presentation (Paul 70). It is, however, problematic to claim that all digital artworks can be clearly categorized according to set criteria because, most of the time, these arts combine various elements, such as physical installations with sound and Internet components. As such they defy a purely formal/traditional classification. Thus, in speaking of digital art here, I am referring to the original creation of the art work as a digital form which can range from a simple two-dimensional presentation in cyberspace to an interactive design in which the spectator needs to wear a virtual reality helmet, gloves, projectors, or computer-driven sensory devices to respond with movement to the digital environment in which the spectator is immersed.

By comparing authentic art, mechanically reproduced/digitized art images, and digital art, one can realize that authentic art derives its value from its cultural uniqueness. Mechanically reproduced/digitized art images derive their value from their ability to be
rapidly reproduced and effectively distributed. Digital art, however, gains its value from its accessibility, malleability, and information status (Sturken and Cartwright 138-9). Because a digital form does not have an existential relationship (physical existence in time and space), it cannot be said to have a presence in the real world, and it does not refer to an actual moment in mechanical time (Sturken and Cartwright 140). This means that the spatial existence of digital art was determined when it was created; however, the temporal existence of this art cannot be determined until the spectator takes part in an interaction with it. To this extent, the manipulation, creation, and perception of this digital form of art create a broad array of images that defy traditional notions of time.

Digital art images differ from photographically reproduced images in that they are computer generated or computer enhanced. Whereas digitized art images still bear a physical correspondence with their material referents, digital arts are encoded as original/unique forms. Additionally, any experience of digital art is interactive, relying on a complex interactivity between contexts and productions of meaning at the spectator’s end. This interactivity, however, remains a mental event in the spectator’s mind in digital interactive art compared to experiencing traditional art forms, which do not physically change in front of spectator’s eye (Paul 67). Because digital art creations are created as a set of encoded computer languages, the idea of the difference between a reproduced image and an original authentic artwork has no meaning. To this extent, the presence of a digital art image is exactly like the original creation carrying its aura and authenticity. Nonetheless, while spectators are viewing such digital art, their engagement with its virtual presence still needs to be enhanced by the assistance of a physical apparatus (e.g., computer screens or virtual reality props). Even though the spectator has
been surrounded by interfaces for experiencing digital interactive arts, it is important to be aware of the formal aspects upon which the art is based. By this, I mean that the interface serves as a navigational device and as translator between digital art and spectators, making each of them perceptible to the other. In discussing digital art, Jay David Bolter and Diane Gromala have noted that “because the computer as a medium is part of our physical and social world, digital design must always be grounded in the appropriate physical and cultural environment” (122). Digital art therefore cannot exist only in a virtual state; rather, its existence is an embodied design of virtual creation in conjunction with physical props.

Moreover, although the uniqueness of digital art was born with its own aura and authenticity, one still cannot ignore that the digital image has been visualized by referring to a physical part of the world. Without a means of visualizing these computer codes, digital art has no perceptible visual image. The visualization of computer codes creates the materiality of digital art in both figurative and abstract images. In other words, digital images still cannot exist without referencing back to the shape of objects (a bird, a person, or a landscape) in our physical-material lifeworld.

Phenomenologically, the spectator constantly experiences media multi-dimensionally; thus, the monosensory quality of these media easily reveals the technological reductions that are simultaneous with the more dramatic amplifications and magnifications that occur within the visual digital form of media. In viewing a digitized work of art, the viewer is seated in front of the screen in a fixed position, but the imaged world is liquidly and referentially aimed at the viewer. The bodily sensory and its cultural dimensions demonstrate that there is always perception. In an embodied position
it is possible to see what the examples chosen above have in common with respect to the transformation of seeing. Merleau-Ponty states that the work of art resembles the object of perception: its nature is to be seen or heard and one should not attempt to define or analyze it. In most cases, a painting represents objects, and their meanings would lie entirely beyond the canvas in the objects it signifies (World, 95). He says, “painting does not imitate the world but is a world of its own. This means that, in our encounter with a painting, at no stage are we sent back to the natural object” (96). Similarly, even when digitized art images refer to originals, their aims are never to evoke the object itself, but to create on the screen a spectacle. To this extent, the original and digitized forms of the artwork cannot exist separately from one another.

The new visualization develops a new way of connecting the environment to the human senses. The digitized artwork has significant characteristics by nature of its form. The computer digitizes electronically scanned information about a work of art and transforms it into numerical data, which can be made visible as imagery. In other words, a digitized work of art is then a representation made through encoding information about the lights, darks, and colors of reality captured and digitized through any kind of lens or scanning procedure. Once the lights and darks of a digitized artwork have been reproduced by the computer into its numerical data space, its picture elements or pixels can be controlled individually. They can be altered, manipulated, weighted, warped, or repositioned to create not only a simulation of originality, but also an artificial or parallel “virtual” reality. As a form of digitization, the digitized art image in cyberspace is the object it signifies in its subjects, which is beyond the screen, pixels, and virtual environment. As in the perception of digitized images themselves, it is a matter of
contemplating, of perceiving the digitized work of art by way of the silent signals that come at us from its every part. These signals emanate from the traces of the image set down on the digital archive, until such time as that they come to form a tightly programmatic structured arrangement in which one has the distinct feeling that nothing is arbitrary. Thus, we cannot simply say that digitized art production exists only as an immaterial image structure or accumulation of data, without physical substance, because digitized artwork leads necessarily to the physical form of the artwork and maintains a physical presence within a perceptual field. A digitized artwork provides a logical model of visual experience. To this extent, the artwork itself is embedded in digital data and software in the digitized form of art, and it is embedded in the technological surrounding that is directly accessible to the human senses.

The aim of mechanical reproduction doubtlessly is to produce copies that are indistinguishable from an original in as many ways as possible. The gallery or the museum is fascinated by this technological advancement. The proliferation of mechanical reproduction helps these institutions reproduce art images. The spectator sees more advanced technology in today’s Internet. Digitized artworks give spectators more opportunities for seeing practice. The rise of seeing practice was also accompanied by the increasing emphasis on the visual since the end of the modern era. Within seeing practice of phenomenological perception, this seeing practice demands a bodily motion, a temporal fixed place for the object, an enhancement of the visual, and the privileging of an elevated visual position. This seeing practice is implicitly taught and followed, but is never explicit. It becomes a way of “being-in-the-world,” especially within digital visual culture. We have seen this seeing practice as a proliferation of ways of viewing, and it
now becomes metaphorical of the image technologies of the present (Ihde, *Postphenomenology*, 86-87). Because there is a contingent coherence afforded by the subject’s temporal movement through space, it is necessary to discuss the temporal dimension of the technospace.

2. Phenomenological Reduction: Postmodern Virtuality

Postmodernism, as Margot Lovejoy notes, presents a global shift toward a more pluralistic way of seeing with a broader perspective on political and cultural possibility (270). Artists then become part of a rapidly expanding cultural exchange of exhibitions, performances, and special projects, a response to the worldwide public need for communicated aesthetic experience created by the new, more democratic conditions of the electronic age. That is to say, the expanded public need for art imagery has been created by the electronic conditions of the postmodern era. As David Harvey argues, the shift in the perception of space and time in this era gave rise to modernism. Postmodernism then logically follows as a reaction to the modernism restructuring of the capitalist system. The annihilation of space through time, achieved by transportation advances in the nineteenth century, is intensified, but this time through communication breakthroughs (240-292). Improved communication and broadcasting technologies (satellites, mobile phones, e-mail, and the Internet) create the apparent effect of an ever-shrinking world.

Regarding the postmodern temporality, Harvey defines the idea of compression in time and space in the late-capitalist era. Harvey has pointed out that the concept of compression in time and space is one of the more important characteristics in the
postmodern era; therefore, it is worth looking at his *The Condition of Postmodernity* and moving beyond those sections that deal with modernist and postmodernist phenomena to those that explore the more general implications of what he refers to as “time-space compression.” Harvey states, “the central value system […] is dematerialized and shifting, time horizons are collapsing, and it is hard to tell exactly what space we are in when it comes to assessing causes and effects, meanings or values” (298). Harvey argues that the traditional perception of time and space as measurable; objective phenomena are far too simplistic: rather, time and space are constructed by “material practices and processes that serve to reproduce social life” (204). In other words, since different societies organize themselves in different ways, the perception of time and space will be perceived differently. An agrarian society, for example, will put a great emphasis on seasonal cycles, which are of only trivial importance in an advanced capitalist society. This concept echoes what Benjamin states in his article on mechanical reproduction while he is discussing the cinematic art form. He says:

The film, on the one hand, extends our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives; on the other hand, it manages to assure is of an immense and unexpected field of action. Our taverns and our metropolitan streets, our offices and furnished rooms, our railroad stations and our factories appeared to have is locked up hopelessly. Then came the film and burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second, so that now, in the midst of its far-flung ruins and debris, we calmly and adventurously go traveling. (238)
Harvey also notes that these perceptions may not be stable in a mode of production such as capitalism since these practices are constantly reformed. The rise of flexible accumulation is, of course, a particularly dramatic example of such a reform and the shifts in the perception of time and space that have accompanied it have therefore been especially dramatic. Individual living spaces thus can become “private museum[s] to guard against the ravages of time-space compression” in the postmodern condition (Harvey 292). These spaces become filled with objects that take on a strongly personal meaning; often, objects will become stand-ins for another person's presence. This time-space compression actually corresponds to the Merleau-Pontean concept of phenomenological temporality. For Merleau-Ponty, time is not a line, but a network of intentionalities, and an object only exists in the present rather than being elsewhere, in the past or in the future. When we say time passes or flows by, we speak of the course of time. While any object that we “take up” by perception is subject to a continual merging and emerging of perspectives, the digitization of artworks affords us an example in which unusually rich resources have been provided for a directed interplay.

2.1 Temporality

The temporal aspect of phenomenological analysis is critical because temporality plays an important role in the establishment of personal perception. The issue of time, according to the Merleau-Pontean phenomenology, is primary because all our experiences are unique; “to analyze time is to gain access, through time, to its concrete structure, seeking it at the intersection of its dimension” (Merleau-Ponty, *Perception*, 410-411). That is, phenomenology has developed a highly articulated theory of time and temporal experience. There are three levels of temporal structure: *world time, internal*
time, and the consciousness of internal time that need to be distinguished. Yet, a living present of a lived body, as the whole, is composed of these three levels of structure that are inseparable. The first level of temporal dimension of digitized art is that this new technique of digital reproduction links their circumstances with late capitalist society, or the so-called postmodern condition. The first level of temporal structure is world time, which is objective time, the time of mechanical clocks and calendars. This world time structure belongs to worldly processes and events. This structure of time needs to be compared to the spatiality of world. In the objective world, we all agree on this mechanical measurement that shows us how long a process takes. That is to say, this world time is public, universal, and verifiable, and is located in the common space (world) we inhabit (Sokolowski 130).

While the first level of temporal structure indicates the public objective time, the second level of this structure indicates private subjective time. It is called internal time, which means that it belongs to the duration and sequence of mental acts and experiences, the events of conscious life. These sequences and durations, however, are not measured by world time. This second level of temporal structure is highly related to human’s experience. An individual’s intentional acts and experiences follow one another. This internal time needs to be compared to the bodily spatiality. Such bodily spatiality experiences from the inside because within a subject one activity or experience can be before (the past), after (the future), or concurrent (the present) with another. Time is, therefore, not a real process, not an actual succession that the spectator is content to record, but arises from the spectator’s relation to things. “Within things themselves, the future and the past are in a kind of eternal state of pre-existence and survival” (Merleau-
Ponty, *Perception*, 412). In other words, time, which is locked into the individual perspective, thus enters into the concreteness of the object. The individual can call back certain prior experiences through memory. For example, a spectator remembers seeing a digitized image of *Mona Lisa* in cyberspace last night, this spectator now reenact the perceptions s/he has then. The way one’s intentions and feelings are temporally ordered, both in regard to one another and in regard to one’s present experiences, takes place in internal time (Sokolowski 130-131). Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology has explicitly rejected the Cartesian understanding of the self and the world, and formulates a radically alternative model of the relation between the self and the world. For phenomenologists, a world is an experiential space and time, which are simultaneously present to us. Merleau-Ponty reminds us how we perceive an object. He uses the terms “grasp” and “take up” to describe our appropriation of various sense data or cues of an object. Here the spectator is the experiencer and the cyberspace is that environment which is experienced. Merleau-Ponty treats time not as the linear link we make between the object and past events but as a network of “intentionalities”\(^{14}\) — or a shape of experience. Intentionality is the key notion used to interpret experience. This intentionality is not only a distance from and involvement in the world, but also reflexive with respect to the

\(^{14}\) The concept of intentionality was introduced by scholastic philosophers in the Middle Ages, and dealt with the mind’s capacity to direct itself to focus on things. The nineteenth century philosopher Franz Brentano revived this concept by characterizing it as the mind’s perception upon an object. He claimed that mental phenomena distinguish themselves from physical phenomena because of intentionality. Brentano’s emphasis provides the background to the phenomenological discussion of intentionality in the twentieth century, especially for Brentano’s student, Husserl. Husserl argues that intentionality is always about the consciousness of something because consciousness constitutes objects, and, in a certain way, brings it about that there are objects. Consciousness is always intentional, always directed towards entities in the world. Influenced by Husserl, Merleau-Ponty notes that the basic form of intentionality is expressed in unreflective but organized bodily movement, and this form needs to be relocated from the personal sphere of explicit thought to the sub-personal domain of bodily movement. In other words, intentionality forces us to acknowledge an imposition of meaning which is not the work of a universal constituting consciousness. See Tim Crane “Intentionality,” Dagfinn Follesdal “Edmund Husserl,” Thomas Baldwin “Maurice Merleau-Ponty,” and Charles Guignon “Existentialism,” ed, Edward. Craig, Routledge *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (London: Routledge, [Online available] March 18, 2005.)
world. Experience is a continual merging and emerging of intentionalities, evolving out of many separate times and thus together referring to many times (Merleau-Ponty, *Perception*, 239-242, 410-433).

The third level of phenomenological temporality is the consciousness of internal time, which is a step beyond the objective and subjective time. This consciousness of internal time is the ultimate context that provides the setting for all particular things and events as phenomena is researched and analyzed. Within this level, whatever we experience, whether things and processes in the world, our experiences as “goings-on,” as passing, as they exist. We remember things or subjective acts and feelings later and recognize them as past, and we anticipate them at a greater distance because these things or subjective acts and feelings come into our perceptions. Our perception would have to be accompanied by acts of immediate memory and acts of proximate anticipation. To this extent, we do not just have frames of presence given to us in our immediate experiences. We have senses of past and future directly given in this consciousness level of temporality (Sokolowski 131-132, 136). That is to say, the shape of our experience is what we eventually come to know of ourselves what is strictly reciprocal with what we come to know of the world (Ihde, *Existential*, 53-63).

In discussing the issue of time, there are two aspects of digitized art: one is the temporality of the digitized art itself, and the other is the spectator’s perception of the digitized art in the concept of temporality. Concerning the first temporal aspect of digitized art in cyberspace, there is no issue of temporality because time is suspended. Digitization, as mentioned through the whole discussion, is always about preservation. Preservation seeks to extend the life of an art object as long as possible through
suspension of time. The artwork itself is thus transferred to another storage device without any loss or sense of decay. Digital preservation differs from the traditional art conservation process, which attempts to preserve the physical object along with the image it contains. The official institution or person digitizes works of art in order to protect *true* and *real* appearances of these cultural heritages. The digitized image of artwork is thus *bracketed* from its original time and space because the flow of time is frozen at the moment of digitization. A digitized work of art, such as the *Mona Lisa*, would remain frozen as it was at the moment of its digitization. The image would bear the marks of the methods used at that moment. That means, digitized artwork will always carry the mark of the time of its digitization with it because of the suspension of time.

The second aspect of temporal relationship is the spectator’s perception of the digitized art. When the spectator looks at a digitized artwork on the computer screen, the issue of temporality once again emerges. The experience, according to Merleau-Ponty, provides our certainty as given by time: “the experience of the present is that of being assured of his existence once and for all” (*Perception*, 44). Merleau-Ponty discovers an understanding of time in which we find a certainty in the enveloping richness and indeterminacy of ongoing becoming. The experience of temporality is the moment that gives itself as having been originated in the unfolding of time, as continually becoming an ineradicable source of later unfoldings and transformations (Mazis 54). In cases of aesthetic experience, we can find what Merleau-Ponty calls “a more occult time than natural time” (Gallagher 95). In artistic expression, as Gary Madison points out, there is a gathering together of the past in order to create a lateral universality. Art institutes a
cultural/historical realm of meaning that is ordered differently than phenomenal seriality. The time of art and culture transcends mere succession. In cultural expression, the past insists on remaining present; also the present may signify the future (80-82).

Experienced sensuality transcends the distinctions between past and present and aesthetically conflates the one into the other. The future will also return to this moment to find it as it was and yet as it never had been until that moment. That is to say, the sense of the present is always overdetermined by the past, and intentional acts have an uneven underside of forgetting and remembering that forms a filter through which pass the effects of a past that configures the present (Gallagher 98). Because the present anticipates the future, which makes it become the past, the anticipation of the past becomes the present. The whole movement of time is about the present, which embodies our perspective that we take up and from which we see things in procession before us.

There are no events without someone to whom they happen and whose finite perspective is the basis of their individuality.

“Time presupposes a view of time” (Merleau-Ponty, *Perception*, 411-412). Time arises from an embodied relation to the world. Merleau-Ponty explicates the thickness of a temporality in which significant experiences are fated to continually return to themselves in an endless circle. This temporal surge and return thus is the becoming of these significant experiences, and the meaning derives from the temporality of the body (Mazis 55). Merleau-Ponty gives an example from Cézanne’s painting of Mount St. Victoire. The sense of reversibility of time emerges between him (the painter) and the landscape (the painted), in which he is now painting the mountain painting itself through him, seeing him as he sees it and seeing itself through his seeing it. There is a folding
back on itself of an unfolding encounter within time. Certainly, there are moments when Cézanne is lost to himself, becoming more mountain than man, his flesh rocklike within a strange resonance in which the perceiver is as potentially perceptible in the same way as the perceived. Therefore, this temporal thickness of acts of perception and expression is now electrified with the charge of later connections (Merleau-Ponty, *Sense*, 9-25; Madison 75-82). Merleau-Ponty states:

This being simultaneously present in experiences which are nevertheless mutually exclusive, this implication of one in the other, this contraction into one perceptual act of a whole possible process, constitute the originality of depth. It is the dimension in which things or elements of things envelop each other, whereas breadth and height are the dimension in which they are juxtaposed. (*Perception*, 264-265)

Such Merleau-Pontean temporality is a concept of reversibility. We are in the world in which both the world and ourselves are at the depths, at interplays, which come together in “their incompossibility in the enlacement of time” (Mazis 63). In other words, the meaning conceived is grounded in the differentiation of objects, the principles of governing their interactions, and the overall world horizon in which they are found. The *Mona Lisa* images, for example, exist in the present and also correlate with the *Mona Lisa* images in the past. The spectator does not bring the *Mona Lisa* images from the past to the present, nor does it perceive the *Mona Lisa* images from the future.

The *Mona Lisa* images that the spectator sees in digitized format were made for certain purposes in cyberspace, with 1’s and 0’s in computer code; they are now in front of the spectator and make their ways toward the fluxing sea of image world into which
they will finally discharge themselves. If time is similar to the process of digitization, it flows from the past towards the present and the future. For, looking at the images themselves, the digitization of artwork and what result from this experience are not successive events, or rather the very notion of event has no place in the objective world. When the spectator says that the day before yesterday the computer technology digitized artwork. Such moment is already passing at this moment. The spectator is tacitly assuming the existence of a witness tied to a certain spot in the world, and the events are shapes cut out by a finite observer from the spatio-temporal totality of the objective world. That is to say, the spectator sees digitized artwork in procession before the other: there are no events without someone to whom they happen and whose finite perspective is the basis of their individuality. The spectators carry this particular significance within themselves. There is merely a thing entirely external to itself, an individuality or interior of the digitization which manifests itself outside (Merleau-Ponty, *Perception*, 411). In this case, the temporal relationships are reversed. The digitization of artwork already carried out is not moving towards the future, but sinking into the past.

When Merleau-Ponty says that a human makes the world to be for him/herself, he asserts that the world is a solid entity, already there before a human makes any observations about it or analyzes it. It is only a humans’ presence that makes the world possible as world: it is the existential subject (Barral 171). Merleau-Ponty has seen the interrelatedness of all phases of human life and their dependence on the body-subject. It is therefore never possible to ascribe to a particular human act or expression a definite intention. To this extent, we can realize that the digitized artwork as an existential body in the postmodern temporality is unique. The embodied relations between the three-layer
bodily existence of digitized artworks and reproductive technologies show us their uniqueness.

2.2 Virtuality and Lebenswelt

Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological account of perception is a bodily experience of being-in-the-world. Because the body is the vehicle for the expression of lived experience, it offers us a basic source of symbols to which significant experience can be attached. I thus attempt to address the statement of virtual bodies in relation to live bodies in the Merleau-Pontean phenomenological sense and the role that is played by the technology, which relates to virtual and lived bodies. “A phenomenological analysis,” says Ihde, “shows a variation between what could be called full or multidimensional experience and a visual objectification of presumed body experience” (Bodies, 4). It shows a partial primacy to the embodied perspective. Ihde clarifies two concepts of the body: the “here-body,” which refers to the full sensory embodiment experience; and the “image-body,” which is a form of virtuality. In chapter two, we pointed out Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty’s attitudes about the concept of technological embodiment. In Heidegger’s tool analysis of the hammer, humans project themselves into work practices, and the hammer withdraws as a separate object and it is taken into the action being performed. Concerning the concept of embodiment, Merleau-Ponty insists that technologies may be embodied because each of the elements can be filled in only by the full bodily sensory awareness that is part of the ordinary experience of the artifact-user’s world.

Alongside this argument, the digitized artwork shows us three correlated bodily existences and their embodied relationship with technology in the context of a
postmodern virtual environment. These bodily existences are authentic, reproduced, and
digitized image bodies. The *authentic bodily existence* doubtlessly is now protected
within museums and galleries’ walls. While considering that the spectators carry this
particular significance within themselves, their perceptions and experiences of digitized
artworks in cyberspace are associated with each type of bodily existence. Most works of
art traditionally have been physical objects, subject to the forces of nature which cause
them to age and decay. Preservation attempts to lengthen the life of the art object for as
long as possible, which is the fundamental aim of modern museums in addition to
showing their authority in exhibiting works of art. The *reproduced bodily existence* has
become an important type of existence since the printing and photographic reproductive
means were rapidly employed. Not only do official institutions and publishers apply
these mechanical productive technologies to proliferate cultural heritages from their
original here-and-now spatio-temporal existence to the different corners of world, but
also capitalism incorporates these cultural heritages into mass marketplaces to make
profits. The work of art, since then, has two aspects of existence; one is authentic, and
the other is replicated or a mechanically reproduced image. The digitized work of art,
however, is stored as information without its physicality. Today’s digital technology
increases the capabilities of collections and creates digital archives. The digitized
artwork remains frozen as it was at the time of its digitization. The work of art becomes
a virtual image within our *Lebenswelt*. This embodied pixel-body can be viewed at
anyplace anytime. By employing this concept of embodiment to the relation between
virtuality and *Lebenswelt*, the ultimate goal of the virtual embodiment of *Lebenswelt* is to
become the perfect simulacrum of full, multisensory bodily actions. As a result, the work
of art increases a thin layer in its spatio-temporal existence: a *digitized image bodily existence*. While the spectator is viewing digitized images, the floating perspective is between “now-me” and the “here-body,” which is embodied in the new position.

Following Merleau-Pontean phenomenology, this digitized form of artwork has a symbolic meaning of form, which implies the intentionality of the conscious being (Merleau-Ponty, *Structure*, 120-124). “The relation of the expression to the expressed, which is one of simple juxtaposition in the parts, is internal and necessary in the wholes” (121). A thing here becomes a symbol, and it can create meaning. To this extent, any aspect of artwork’s bodily existence is one of communication. Forms here are not real properties of things, but are their way of presenting themselves to a perceptual consciousness; they therefore are not real things, but perceived things (Madison 148).

The world also is not the expression of a pre-existing and complete thought, but the actualization of thought itself. It implies an exchange at the bodily level. The body thus is actually the mediator of thought. Through itself, the interior words or exterior communication is established. The existence of a subject is intimately bound up with the world by intentional threads which are nothing other than its body. The body is a way of viewing the world; at the same time, is the way a subjective attitude comes to know itself and express itself (Madison 23). The phenomenal body thus cannot be thought of as an object in itself; rather, it is the way a subject is present in the world and is aware of it.

The body, as understood here, is the human body appearing as a conscious, significant behavior, to other equally conscious significant behaviors. The awareness of the world of which Merleau-Ponty speaks, as deeply rooted in human’s total being, is expressed through the body because the world is the horizon of our perception, a primordial date of
phenomenological reflection. If we stand by our concept of technology as always related to humans, any combinational relationship between human and technology then will depend upon more than mere use, but also upon the latent powers of the particular technology that is involved as related to the complex of possibilities. As technologies are culturally embedded, every aspect of the human-technology equation is one which displays non-neutral transformational possibilities (Ihde, *Philosophy*, 53). We shall then ask what this virtuality means within our *Lebenswelt*. If we considered that the digitization of artwork already carried out is not moving towards the future, but sinking into the past, we can realize that this three-layered bodily existence of artwork ties it to a certain spot in the *Lebenswelt* and correlates each other with its unique context. Clearly, what we so-called “reproduction” cannot exist without the idea of “originality.” We then can comprehend that the work of art as a lived-subject has its three-layered existence in terms of physical bodily existing, technological existing, and virtual existing forms, and all of these forms are existence socially.

### 2.3 Blurred Boundaries

Media blur facts for a variety of reasons, educational, economic, and cultural, but this has not been the only kind of blurring that has gone on. The boundaries between media, and within each medium between the experimental and the established, and in culture between high and low, the comic strip and the illustrated history, have been broken down repeatedly since the 1990s (Briggs and Burke 320). So also have the boundaries between different concepts of space. Modern technology is now a world phenomenon. The embodied relationship between artwork, humans, and technology then
evidences that the boundary between authenticity, reproduction, and digitization are blurred.

I again must bring up the question: is it possible to forget the physical, materialized body when our sensory experiences extend to digitized space? Through the argument above, it is clear that every sensation has a physical origin. We show the possibilities of transformation and correlation between the real body and the virtual body. The virtual body of artwork is, in this case, the extension of the authentic body: in a virtual environment, the virtual body becomes the scope and active radius of experience. Our thinking and perception experienced from the point of view of the virtual body that links back to the authentic body. That is to say, perceptual experiences must be grounded in the physical body. The authentic body of an artwork creates the possibilities for mechanical reproduction and for digitization. The embodied relation of three-layered bodily existence thus plays a crucial role in structuring experiences. Sensory experiences depend on body schemas and on the shape and posture of the body. Any experience, including virtual experiences, is an embodied experience. All sensations are embedded in the body, in the skin and flesh. Our body therefore can incorporate interfaces, mechanical devices, and objects, so that they become an extension of the physical body. That means, bodily experiences, according to a phenomenological perspective, are multi-layered, non-logical, and non-linear. The virtual existence of artwork extensions creates continuity beyond the physical existence, and this external information system logs into the hardware of the authentic body. The diagram below depicts this concept of temporality,
In this diagram, the horizontal line depicts a series of present moments, and the vertical lines represent successive dimensions of the same present moment. I, as a spectator, am at a certain point of horizontal temporal moment now. If A means the existing moment of the authentic artwork, B means the existing moment of the mechanical reproduced image of the artwork, and C means the existing moment of the digitization of the artwork, we then have a successive experience of temporality. Yet, time, according to Merleau-Ponty is not in a linear sense, rather is a network of intentionalities. While I am engaging with digitized artwork at this certain moment, I am perceiving the future of the authentic artwork, which makes the future become the past of my experience; also, I, at this moment, bring the past of the authentic artwork to the present. Because the present anticipates the future that makes it become the past, the anticipation of the past becomes the present. The whole movement of time is about the present, which embodies the perspective that I take up and from which I see things in procession before me. The image in front of me embodies a three-layered appearance: the authentic, reproduced, and digitized image of the artwork come together at this moment to enhance the meaning of

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my experience. If I stand at a certain point after C, my experience of perception of a work of art is an oblique present moment. A (authentic artwork) is no longer at its original temporal occupation, but becomes A”, yet they (A and A”) are still bound up together. At the same moment, I also perceive B (mechanically reproduced image) as B’.

Consequently, the authentic artwork as A is transparently visible through A’ then the two are visible through A” because I recapture time that is lost. The mechanically reproduced image of artwork as B is transparently visible through B’, and the digitized artwork as C may also be transparent at a certain point on the vertical line of C so that we may call it C’. From the moment in question to art’s present, the chain of retentions and the overlapping horizons coming one after the other ensures unbroken boundaries. Thus, there is no need for a synthesis externally binding together the temporality into one single time because each one of the temporal moment was already inclusive beyond itself. The synthesis of apprehension links art to its whole actual past; yet, the meaning of an artwork is not in the past, but now, while perceiving, because I reach it in its recent “now.” Obviously, not only personal histories and physical (embodied) situations, but also other people, political, economic, and cultural practices and structures would require their own existences. We would have to define the complex relations that exist between these dimensions and how they come together in an individual person at any particular time (Gallagher 157). Because of the compression of time and space, the embodied bodily existence, and the reversibility of temporality in the digital era, the boundaries between each bodily presence are blurred.
3. Phenomenological Interpretation: Return to Authenticity

Merleau-Ponty asserts that the theory of the body is already a theory of perception because it is impossible to explain the body without becoming involved in a description of perception in its actuality. It is always through the body that the human makes contacts, either with the world and things in the world, or with other subjects in the world. It is always through perception that humans make these contacts and that humans, therefore, relate to others in a realm which is never purely natural (Barral 175-176). To this extent, when the spectator interacts with digitized artworks, meanings are created.

There have been two innovative discussions about the general conditions of life in the twentieth-first century: one concerns a possible postmodern culture and society; the other concerns broad changes in communications systems (Poster 79). Postmodern culture is often presented as an alternative to existing society which has been discussed previously. The discussion of postmodern culture focuses, to a great extent, on an emerging new subject position and experience in the concept of temporality. The discourse around new communications systems (new technologies) previously attended to the imminent technical increase in information exchange and the embodied relationship between humans and technology. My purpose here is to bring these two dimensions together, to enact a confrontation between them so that the advantages of each may redound to the other.

3.1 Vaporized Authenticity For?

The electronic media in the twentieth century support an equally profound transformation of cultural identity. Radio, film, television, the computer, and now their integration as digital multimedia reconfigure words, sounds and images so as to cultivate
new experiences of individuality (Poster 80). Critical theorists such as Benjamin and McLuhan envisioned the democratic potential of the increased communication capacities of radio, film, and television. Today’s Internet has gone far beyond their imaginations, and has grown enormously in popularity. The digital encoding of sound, text, and image and transformational abilities have a significant impact on humans’ lives. The meaning of digitized art is what is given in our experiences of them.

We have seen Benjamin’s critique of losing aura in the age of mechanical reproduction. He asserts:

Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be. This unique existence of the work of art determined the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence. […] The situations into which the product of mechanical reproduction can be brought may not touch the actual work of art, yet the quality of its presence is always depreciated. […] One might subsume the eliminated element in the term “aura” and go on to say: what which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art. (29-30)

The “loss of aura” in this passage means that the reproduction of art altered the mysteriousness that art used to have. It, however, also implies that the reproduction of art liberates art from conventional authority. Benjamin further connected the concept of “aura” with “cult value” and “authenticity.” “Authenticity,” which is physical, refers to the unique, “one and only” feature of a piece of artwork upon its creation. “Aura,” on the
other hand, is characteristic of traditional art. Benjamin stresses that aura was the basic standard in aesthetics in the era when mechanical reproduction was not predominant (before the nineteenth century), and the source of aura lies in that the artworks are not replicas. The conventional art of aura focuses on cult value, mechanical reproductive art on exhibitive value (Benjamin 226-227). Traditional art emphasizes cult value because it is established on the basis of ceremonies, that is, the wholeness of the structure of conventional art is presented in ceremonies, those of witchcraft or religion. Artworks based on aura cannot be separated from their ceremonial functions. As reproduction technology advanced, artworks however gradually lost their ceremonial functions, and, instead, the exhibitive value of an artwork grew. Benjamin underlines that for the artworks in the age of mechanical reproduction, exhibitive value is absolute the focus, which replaces cult value in every manner (217-251). We have examined the commercialization of artworks and their de-aestheticized consequence in the culture industry, and further explained Benjamin’s viewpoint on how cult value and aura are lost due to reproduction technology. The arts, as products of social culture, have different outlooks because of the changes in communication media and digital technologies. Their meaning, according to Merleau-Ponty, must be accomplished within the digitized form itself, and cannot depend upon a relationship to something extrinsic to this form.

To this extent, the meanings and questions of authorship and artistic ownership, therefore, become even more complex in context where mechanically reproduced or digitized images are widespread. It becomes an issue of profit making in a capitalist society. Not only do consumer products have sugarcoated outlooks in marketplaces, but also consumers are invited to reproduce art masterpieces as their own. We draw pleasure
from the image-making process itself, the glorification of the product by associating it with important social qualities becoming our satisfaction. A commodity-sign hence is complete when we take the sign for what it signifies. For instance, the cross-stitch company Charles Craft sells a fabric reproduction of the *Mona Lisa* in a golden frame (Fig 19). The advertisement suggests that consumers can both own this priceless masterpiece, and create it by hand, and even wear the famous *Mona Lisa* as well (Sturken and Cartwright 128-129). This advertisement shows the logic of commodity, which is a framework within which social practices are defined and enacted.

Three general logical consequences here result from the commodity form in capitalist societies: abstraction, equivalence, and reification. Abstraction has roots in the separation of use value and exchange value brought about by the extension of the commodity form. It is present wherever socially we are encouraged to refer exclusively to the abstract quality of things and people, and are neglected to relate oneself to their concreteness and uniqueness. When an object becomes a commodity, its use value is subordinated to its exchange value. A commodity then enters into formal relations of equivalence with other commodities. Money facilitates commodification because it serves as a universal economic equivalent to express the value of all other commodities. Finally, things produced by human activity take on the appearance of being active agents. Witness the tendency to attribute human qualities to goods for sale and the tendency to endow certain marketed goods with the power to create social situation like a symbolic value of a work of art. Fetishism and totemism go hand in hand here (Goldman 20-23). Within this operational logic of commodity, the tie with the *Mona Lisa* image can be sold in novelty stores, museum shops, and on the Web. Construction of commodity-signs
takes place in the social space where viewers and advertisement come together. There is nothing passive about the reception and assembly of meanings into commodity-signs in ads. The commodities that fill our lives with entertainment and diversion gratify us in a passing and shadowy way. While digitizing artworks via the computer is commonplace, it is also in some sense a commodity for consumption. Although the digitized image of artwork in cyberspace is not always attached to commodities, the logic of viewing digitized artworks as consuming images still goes back to the capitalist logic of commodity.

Consequently, the digitized artwork has become a sign, which is promoting certain novel cultural values in our society. Producing and realizing sign values of artworks begin with the form of digitization, which is a communication form requiring the viewer’s participation in the interpretation of meaning. As a result, the question of artistic ownership becomes increasingly complex in digital media, which makes accessible to the average consumer many of the processes of reproduction. If the symbolic sign value is a concept related to the practice of our socio-cultural life, we now need to consider what digitized artwork as a sign means and how digitized artwork pursues its sign value, which corresponds to the authentic one. The question that needs to be asked here is where did the aura come from? Here is where Benjamin becomes problematic, because the ideas that are at the root of the aura are all based on consensus.

We revere the Mona Lisa as a masterpiece, and we grant to the work some amount of cultural authority based on our collective sense that it embodies genius, uniqueness, etc. The decision to grant such authority is made by consensus; in effect, our culture states, “we believe that da Vinci’s Mona Lisa embodies or extends significant values that are
central to our sense of who we are,” and “if we see aura as a by-product of cultural authority rather than as genius, we will see that mechanical reproduction need not take away from the aura, but today helps to create it” (Frank 30). So do digitized reproductions of artwork. We have seen the logic of embodiment of the three-layered bodily existence of artworks in contemporary society, and how their boundaries have been blurred. Within this embodied relationship, the logic of commodification and mechanical/digital reproductions helps to create aura and authenticity, which returns to the original work of art.

3.2 Return to Authenticity

Undoubtedly, the concept of authenticity is still a necessary condition of aesthetic value. On reading Benjamin in the digital era, we can discover that art and cultural life are not explored from or reducible to either technological or socio-economic divisions and political struggle. Yet, it is more a question of whose realities and reproductions thereof, hold sway in the interaction between the arts, politics, and the vagaries of everyday human sense perception.

The things of the world, as Merleau-Ponty notes, are not simply neutral objects that stand before us for our contemplation (World, 63). Each one of them symbolizes a particular way of behaving, provoking in us reactions which are either favourable or unfavourable. This is why humans’ tastes, character, and the attitude adopted to the world and to specific things that can be deciphered from the objects with which they determine to surround themselves. Today, meaning has become far more rarefied, at least within many of the expressions of mass visual culture. Within this new order of image reproduction and heightened intertextuality with its sophisticated forms and
variations, a concern with technique and form takes precedence over substantive content and the image becomes increasingly controversial. Following the concept of mechanical reproduction, the technology of virtual reality invades our daily life even further. As humankind steps into the twenty-first century, it seems that everything must be tagged as “digital” to be up-to-date. The new technology in this digital revolution provides great opportunities for artists to extend or reconsider the essence of creating, but in terms of the essence of art, the originality of artists is still the most fundamental and indispensable element. Based on this, many discussions gradually look back on the fundamentals of art to seek out its survival. Debbie Hall thinks that in the process of new reproduction technology, not only is the essence of the artwork transformed, but our feelings about the artwork are also changed. The new media and the digital imagination have already become the dominant mechanisms in virtual space, creating a virtual environment in which all abstract visual, auditory and linguistic elements are equivocally consumed, transformed and connected. The general public turns to rely on reproductions to get closer to traditional artworks so that the virtual exhibition space constructs a special environment for everyone to be very easily involved. Yet what Hall worries about is that, on one hand, replicas replace the aura and authenticity of the originals, extend exhibition ceremonies, and eliminate cultural value so that people no longer feel how the texture, line, and color of artworks stimulate our senses; on the other hand, because of replicas, the original works regain their nobleness (Hall 269-278).

Obviously, the work of art remains a cultural myth of time. Myth functions as part of the perceptual system of culture through which unfamiliar situations are interpreted and fitted into old symbolic molds. As with spectacles, we see the world
through the lens of myth, without consciously being aware of the distorting effect of those spectacles (Crane 79). Benjamin feels that the aura of the work of art was withering because of mechanical reproduction; the notion of the aura, however, has been reexamined and critiqued often in recent years. Patrick Frank, who sees aura as based on cultural authority and consensus, notes:

If we see aura as a by-product of cultural authority rather than as genius, we will see that mechanical reproduction need not take away from the aura, but today helps to create it. This seems to be especially true of contemporary art, where consensus is still being formed. The role played by magazines in granting authority or “importance” to artists or styles is a widely accepted fact. […] but reproduction imparts to them a certain legitimacy that lends aura. (30)

Following this argument, digital reproduction of artworks can maintain an aura, which will always involve a connection back to the physical world. The digitized work of art here has two links to the physical world. One is through the media in which the bits comprising the artwork are stored, and the other is the system which recodes, and translates the works into a digital form perceptible to the user (Wolf 68-69). In other words, digitized artwork is powerless to humans without the digital technological linkage of authentic works of art to the human Lebenswelt.

After the discussion on the operational logic of digital exhibition, we understand that in the process of digitization, artistic images are disseminated to every corner of the world by adopting the space characteristics of cyberspace and the operational logic of
capitalism; as a result, art lost the cult value of “here and now” and aura it once had.

During the process of commercialization, however, the authenticity of art as well as the politics regarding authentic artworks is enhanced. In my interview with student No. 1, he said:

Seeing artwork online does not strike emotional chords as seeing a piece of art in person. For example, the painting *Mona Lisa*, housed in the Louvre, is one of the most visited pieces of artwork in the world. Even though there are thousands of reproductions available on mugs, T-shirts, pencils, and other merchandise, millions of people travel to Paris each year to view the painting in person. There is something about seeing a great piece of artwork in person that cannot be replaced by any other form of media. The artwork comes alive: its shadows, cracks, creases, and stroke-lines are more prominent, and pulse in front of you.

Undoubtedly, the influence of technology is not only electronic, but also emotional and spiritual, for technology, art and culture gradually blend with each other in modern society. In this particular phenomenon, electrical media and computer technology combine the cultural/aesthetic form and the concept of data in mechanical reproduction, and culture is constructed as reproducible information or data (Rutsky 121). So far, we can find that ever since mankind stepped into the era of mechanical reproduction, the spread of visual art is more than visual art; we can see the images of artworks everywhere but not authentic ones. From the time when printed media grew popular, capitalists took advantage of artists or artworks to create a specific atmosphere. Then, electronic media once again stimulated people’s senses as a kind of psychological transference in which
visual art becomes a symbolic sign. Finally, such psychological transference came to the twenty-first century in which the Internet is the channel for people to exchange information and seek satisfaction. The representation of visual art even goes beyond the age of mechanical reproduction, for not only are visual artworks reproduced and circulated on the web, but also whole physical museums and theaters now have their virtual counterparts on the web. Reproduction technology improves the popularization of art. Artworks are brought to places where they were previously unattainable. In terms of essence, however, the authenticity and aura lost in replicas can be found in authentic works. Even though the ceremonial meaning is weakened in modern society, the cult value of the aura of traditional art still lies in the original physical sacred ground of art, and mechanically reproduced art, as well as the exhibition of art in the virtual world, still focuses on their exhibitive value to reflect the political connotation and authenticity of the original artworks.

4. The Operation of Power

Merleau-Ponty’s radical statement notes that the perceived world is always the presupposed foundation of all rationality, all value, all existence. He states:

One sees the hardness and brittleness of glass, and when, with a tinkling sound, it breaks, this sound is conveyed by the visible glass. One sees […] the hardness of a plane blade, the softness of shavings. The form of objects is not their geometrical shape. It stands in a certain relation to their specific nature and appeals to all our other senses as well. […] Synaesthetic perception is the rule, and we are unaware of it only because
scientific knowledge shifts the center of gravity of experience, so that we have unlearned how to see, hear, and generally speaking, feel.

(*Perception*, 229-230)

Elements of such experience clearly include one’s knowledge of the world gained through the senses, expression of the self through bodily action and gesture, and awareness of one’s private attitude and sensitivities. In the ordinary *Lebenswelt*, image Technologies produce, deconstruct, and reconstruct in a real/unreal art form, ways of seeing on the cultural plane. We have rediscovered a way of looking at digitized art, and these investigations are succeeded in showing that a digitized work of art is something we perceive, the philosophy of perception is thereby freed at a stroke from certain misunderstandings that might be held against it as objections. The world of perception consists not just of all natural objects, but the objects, associations to one another, creating meanings, immersing them in the world of visual digital culture. This non-neutral, transformative power of humans enhanced by technologies is an essential feature of the human-technology relations we have examined. The amplifying power of technologies has brought to the fore the human-technologies power of a geological force (*Ihde, Postphenomenology*, 51)

Digitized art in cyberspace is a phenomenon that fits neatly into our existential involvement with technologies. Society, as Debord states, has reached the stage of the integrated spectacle and is characterized by the combined effect of principal features of incessant technological renewal (*Comments*, 11-12). Modern technology carries with it the implicit promise: the use of technology indeed advances our daily lives. Today’s Internet brings the world in front of us and shows all famous cultural heritages to us.
Technology promises to bring the forces of nature and culture under control, to liberate us from misery and toil, and to enrich our lives (Borgmann 41). What we have to think about, however, is its ideological context because technology, as we have mentioned, is never a neutral tool. Needless to say, museums, art galleries, mass media, and educational institutions, all recognize how digital reproduction influences the cultural and intellectual realms. Benjamin has stated that “the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice – politics (220). We have seen that the mechanical reproduction of works of art in the modern society was associated with modern capitalism. This complex relationship between profit making and the circulation and reproduction of works of art simply underscores the political and economic dimensions of the debates in what could be called the “age of digital reproduction” (Franklin 592). I have briefly pointed out that in the image politics of digitized works of art, it is evident that digitized art images have their significant functions in themselves and so do the originals. The shape of the art world in the future is surely unclear; nonetheless, technological developments certainly will continue to play a central role in shaping that future. The question here is a deeper one involving our desires and fantasies, which get projected into our technologies. In the following chapter, we attempt to elaborate this image of politics more in depth.
Conclusion

The Phenomenological Experience of Digitized Art in Cyberspace

The analysis must be one which takes into account, not one, but several dimensions of the phenomenon: (a) the nature of the various technologies involved, (b) the relation or range of relations to the humans who use (and design or modify or even discard) them, and (c) the cultural context into which ensembles fit and take shape.

Don Ihde, Philosophy of Technology

In recent years, certain basic differences have been discovered between the ways of managing knowledge and visualization in image culture, and in cultures deeply affected by the use of digital technology. A central theme of this phenomenological investigation of digitized art in cyberspace has been the relationship between digitized art, technology, and human beings. I have also been exploring the idea that digital technologies are contributing to the meaning of art in the human Lebenswelt. I have made the claim that the digital technologies are leading toward a fundamental cultural and social transformation. The term Zeitgeist (the spirit of the age) perhaps provides another way of thinking about the spirit of this digital era. This contemporary digital culture is not merely extending previous technologies and lifestyles, but also is involved in redeveloping some of the most basic notions of what it means to be human and how humans organize themselves with particular reference to the technologies they use and the communities they live in.
This dissertation has claimed that the complexity of human thought can be found in objects, and it is precisely the strength and depth of human thinking that frames the interconnections humans create between images in and outside of cyberspace. I have also suggested that the distinctions between authentic and reproduced images are what drive the fascination humans have with the images they create and view. Meaning and communication are forced to interact with each other and embody one another in image-worlds. The relationship between authentic works of art and digitized images cannot be predicted by their individual characteristics. There is always a process of embodiment at work that frames how meanings circulate through the use and abuse of subject/object relations. Spectators’ perceptions go beyond the boundaries of either image or subject and thereby enhance the thinking process about them. As I have discussed, the power of these embodied relations of intelligence, exchange, and communication, are evidenced in both hybridized relationships between human beings and technologies as described in Chapter Two, and the different bodily existences of artworks as described in Chapter Three. A good example of this process of embodiment at work is the manner in which da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa* becomes popular to the point of being worshipped. This fluidity of reinterpretation is part of the movement of art into the realm of communication systems and new networks of distribution. In this chapter, I attempt to conclude these issues, which I have discussed in great detail, within the context of a phenomenological investigation.
1. Social Practice of Technological Embodiment

I examined the embodied relations of art-technology-\textit{Lebenswelt} in Chapter One by focusing on the relationship between technological transformation and the existence of art. The discussion logically led to the concept of technological embodiment. In Chapter One, I argued that the proliferation of electronic/digital technologies has increased cultural participation of the public in art events. The development of cyberspace has been one of the principle aesthetic and political challenges of our \textit{Lebenswelt}. Since McLuhan, studies in communication have tended to emphasize the technological components of human life, the complex dynamic of discursive rationalization, and spatial transformation. These have been formative in drawing the public exhibition of cultural heritages into commodity markets. As this dissertation has mentioned, the development of today’s Internet was a part of a military strategy and was established upon the communication technology of a packet-switching system. With the closure of the Cold War and the progress of computer technology, the Internet has gradually become a communication tool to which the public has become accustomed. Therefore, in discussing the logic of the development of technology, we cannot ignore one major factor: the operating logic of capitalism. The capacities of the Internet for occupying or producing a commercial space have been readily recognized by marketers. I have advanced this discussion in Chapter One by arguing that the digital image has become deeply rooted in our society. Photographic and virtual reproductions of art images are not merely reproductions; they also recycle these images by assigning new meanings which go beyond the traditional meanings and functions of artworks. In other words, authentic artworks from the past currently coexist with images produced and reproduced...
by modern technology within our Lebenswelt. This is an important phenomenon in contemporary consumer society because reproduced and digitized art images have become one of the important parts in the capitalist logic of production and consumption. These reproduced/digitized artworks become decorative images in marketplaces. Through this relation of commodification, images become part of consumers’ experiences. This means that technological transformation has become the medium through which more and more reproduced and digitized images enter our living experience.

It is in this context, furthermore, that the Internet introduces a specific relationship, strengthening one type of interaction at the expense of others. Because of this new medium, every mediated relationship exists in space and changes its configuration. We do not always want computers and the Internet to be invisible information appliances. A computer, as a digital technology, is a medium that is now taking its place besides other media like printing, photography, and television. The combination of computer and the Internet as a new medium both creates new forms and generates new concepts for artists and the arts.

As this dissertation has noted, a work of art traditionally exists only in one space at any given point in time. That work of art may be physically located in an accessible place, such as a gallery or museum, or may be collected in an inaccessible private house. In order to proliferate this image, the work is often reproduced in another medium form such as a catalog, advertisement, or through new media. The emergence of digital technology has stimulated debate about the power of visualization to dethrone the cultural prominence of the aura of original creations of human beings. Because new media and
digital imagery are becoming the dominant models of visualization in our *Lebenswelt*,
new combinations of elements including sound, texts, symbols, and artworks are
juxtaposed, altered, decomposed, or recombined. These emergent technologies have
produced a new landscape where all elements coincide, are circulated, exchanged, and
consumed.

The relationship between the authentic artwork and a reproduced one nonetheless
is embodied. We have seen that the boundaries between the spheres of the body and of
technology have begun to transgress, overlap, and blur in the digital world of cyberspace.
In Chapter Three, I have again advanced this embodied relationship with a central
question: is it possible to forget the physical, materialized body when our sensory
experiences extend to digitized space? We have seen that the appearance of the *Mona
Lisa* image on the Web shows that images of the physical bodies of artworks are not
subjectively sustained by a variety of strategies that include the pictorial and often rely
upon popularized versions of body functions that have been visualized within mechanical
reproductions and mass culture. That is to say, a dynamic interplay has always existed
between originality and reproduction. These images do not circulate without connections
to a far more complex imaginary and cultural world built on the foundations provided by
the history of images in general. These images, including da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa*, only
come alive through processes of engagement and viewing. A work of art, as Burnett
points out, does not start its life as an image (e.g., a painting); rather it gains the status of
image when it is placed into a context of viewing and visualization (90). This has
implications for definitions of interaction and for the relationship between viewers and
creators. Interactivity becomes possible only when images are used by participants to
change, if not transform, the aim of their viewing experiences. Da Vinci then becomes a historical trace moving from one context to another.

Moreover, we have seen how the capitalist operations incorporate the cultural aspect of our Lebenswelt into marketplaces in modern capitalist societies. The word “image” is in bad repute because we have thoughtlessly believed that “a design was a tracing, a copy, a second thing;” however, “the things have an internal equivalent in the spectator; they arouse in the spectator a carnal formula of their presences” (Merleau-Ponty, Primacy, 164). Merleau-Ponty notes, “every incarnate subject is like an open notebook in which we do not yet know what will be written. Or it is like a new language; we do not know what works it will accomplish but only that, once it has appeared, it cannot fail to say little or much, to have a history and a meaning” (Primacy, 6).

Following Merleau-Ponty’s argument, we can realize that digitized images of artworks that are there before us, are there only because they awaken an echo in our body and because the body welcomes them. There appears a “visual” of the second order of thing, a carnal essence or icon of the originality. It is not a faded copy, or another thing. Digitized artworks in cyberspace are not there in the same way as the 0’s and 1’s involved in its formation are, but they are not elsewhere either. These digitized images pushed forward here, held back there, and are held up by the digital technology the operators use so adroitly. They spread into cyberspace without ever breaking from the original existence of the authentic image.

The discourse of body is always associated with the space of Lebenswelt. The idea of space, according to the Cartesian philosophy, is derived from experiences of spatial relations such as distance, width, and so on. The experience of space however is
not always such a mathematically calculable thing. Space is hardly empty at the level of lived experience before reflection on experience occurs. Frantz Fanon criticizes:

We must leave our dreams and abandon our old beliefs and friendship of the time before life began. Let us waste no time in sterile litanies and nauseating mimicry. Leave this Europe where they are never done talking of Man, yet murder men everywhere they find them, at the corner of every one of their own streets, in all the corners of the globe. For centuries they have stifled almost the whole of humanity in the name of a so-called spiritual experience. Look at them today swaying between atomic and spiritual disintegration. (23)

The general point of this criticism of Cartesian philosophy was not to show that this known and respected philosophical thought is categorically inappropriate in its discussions on the relationship of the subjective and objective world, but that its discussions have not addressed the topic of human perception. Fanon obviously takes a radical step to criticize Cartesian dualism, and questions how to make thought without a body possible. In this dissertation, we have argued that the embodied experience is the proper framework for understanding the perception of digitized art in cyberspace, rather than a de-contextualized, disembodied flow of virtual images. In the world of interactive new media such as digital technology, the image has itself become a process and is irreducibly bound up with the activity of the body. The body acts as a filter to frame the digital image. As I look at digitized images of artworks on the screen, this allegedly empty distance of space is, in a sense, filled with a thousand events from my past which call from my memory and constitute the character of the experience of works of art.
On the other hand, cyberspace, as a kind of social space, is produced and reproduced in connection with the forces of production, and with the relations of production. These forces, as they develop are not taking over a pre-existing, empty or neutral space, or a space determined simply by geography, climate, or anthropology. There is thus no good reason for positing such a radical separation between works of art and their reproductions as to imply the works’ total transcendence of the product. It leaves us some prospect of discovering a dialectical relationship in which artworks are, in a sense, inherent in products, and products do not press all creativity into the service of repetition (Lefebvre 77). As a public space, cyberspace is verifiable by all individual accounts. When the spectator perceives a work of art, for example, and comes to a conclusion regarding its dimensions, this same conclusion cannot be reached by anyone else with the same experience because the temporality of a spectator’s perception is unique.

There is the same logic in a museum’s space. Ultimately nature in its untransformed state is inverted and taken into the totality of technological culture in the form of natural museums. Wilderness areas are functionally large pictures in museums, set aside for temporary enjoyment, research, or relaxation, but episodic with respect to the cultural and normal world of technologically transformed nature. The ultimate victory of technological totalization thus would be this inversion in which nature is itself taken into culture, then technological civilization would be complete, and we would be one with our world (Ihde, Existential, 22). As a result, many spectators go to museums and galleries to perceive authentic artworks as a particular social practice within their Lebenswelt. The technology of digitization from its beginning therefore did not reduce or
alter the authenticity of a work of art, but enhanced it, making it possible to organize the principles or constituents of digitization into the traditional art world, sequentially ordered bodies of expression that show how and why digitization achieved and could be made to achieve its various specific effects. The digitized artwork in cyberspace demonstrates that the social practice within our Lebenswelt is based on a particular embodied relation of human beings and technologies.

2. The Spirit of the Digital Era

The use of digital technologies in almost every aspect of daily life has increased during the past decade, leading to speculations that all forms of artistic media eventually will be absorbed into the digital world, either through digitization or through the use of computers in a specific aspect of processing or production/reproduction. The consumption of space through signs, symbols, and spectacle, however, is by no means a phenomenon developed in the contemporary world. Historical materialism, developed in the Marxist tradition as a method of inquiry that studies the mediations between the material world and social consciousness, has already pointed out the temporal order of social existence. Attempting to assess and capture the complexity and conditions of our time, we need to again raise questions about cultural change in the extreme transition we are experiencing.

Cartesian scientific models have shown a linear temporality of ordinary perception that can only treat time as a succession of moments. This linear concept of time in contemporary society, however, is challenged by digital technologies, such as the Internet. Manuel Castells notes that this linear, irreversible, measurable, predictable time
is being shattered in the network society, in a movement of extraordinary historical significance (433). He uses the concept of timeless time to describe the phenomena of today’s Internet, which brings the concept of time-space compression to our *Lebenswelt*. Arguing from the historical geographic perspective of capitalism, I have seen that Harvey’s depiction of time-space compression that spans into culture, geography, economics and politics offers a solid theoretical basis for understanding the investment and restructuring of social life (Harvey 261). Merleau-Ponty also asserts that beings’ experiences of temporality and spatiality are embedded in the existence of body-subject. The spectator can have asynchronous experiences through surfing in cyberspace. Concerning the phenomenological temporality, one needs to be aware of successive objects, a consciousness that needs to compare the earlier and later objects in an operation that makes the earlier and later simultaneous. That is to say, acts of awareness and their subjects share the same temporality. As I mentioned in Chapter Three, the concept of temporality in the phenomenological tradition is reversible. This reversible temporality of digitized images is sustained by digital technology. Digitized images spread through cyberspace without breaking from the original existence of the authentic one. That is to say, I have seen that the recontextualization of artworks through appropriation or collaging, as well as the embodied relationship between replicas and the original, are all prominent features of the digital medium in today’s Internet world.

I also argued in Chapter Two that the viewing experience is a system of communication based on bodily perception as a vehicle of conscious expression. As Merleau-Ponty has described, the sense of gesture is not given, but understood, that is, seized upon by an act on the spectator’s part (*World*, 185). The spectator’s viewing
experience bridges the physical and the virtual, the digitized images’ presence and the activity of perception and expression. Digitized images transcend the authentic artwork to constitute and locate its own address, its own perceptual and expressive experience of being and becoming. While concentrating on viewing digitized artworks, the spectator embodies with the interface, and the interface becomes partially transparent even though the spectator still needs to look at the interface, not through it, in order to make it function. Consider the computer screen as a window, opening up onto a cyber world that seems to be behind or beyond it. This is the world of visualization that digital technology offers. In Chapter Two, I stated that traditional Cartesian thoughts about absence, abstraction, and non-physical characteristics of the existence of art in technological space can no longer satisfy us in perceiving the phenomenon of visualization. In other words, artworks are not objects of a technological vision, rather these artworks are subjected to it. Furthermore, these images are embodied within technological space through machines.

In Chapter Two, I also suggested that the ideal map of human space can no longer be depicted only in the sense of physicality because the concept of space has extended and keeps being extended by advancing technologies. This extended spatialization exerts unending territorializing effects because it comes to the scene simultaneously with the subject’s primary substantiality, which asks the subject to keep seeking a socially re-territorialized identity. To this extent, within this visualized world, the spectator’s viewing experience must be enhanced by pointing and clicking at headings of interface designs in sites such as tours of art exhibitions, where the spectator goes to a single digitized image of a selected artwork, which can often be enlarged.
Furthermore, the temporal dimension of viewing experience then brings the past (historical artifacts/artworks) to the present, paralleling the mechanical successive linear time experience in the physical part of the Lebenswelt. As a result, the spectator’s temporality of viewing experience is unique. Since the experience of one’s own temporal flow is quite different from the experience of others, one can only grasp his/her own temporal flow in reflection, and, therefore, as already past, whereas one grasps the alter-ego in the simultaneity of a present now.

In Chapter Three, the discussion has tried to bring the world of perception back to human life. The spectator encounters those digitized arts that do not pass quickly before our eyes in the digital world; on the contrary, we hold our gazes on and ask questions of them. They convey to us the very secret of their substance and the different forms of their material and non-material existences that allow them to recover their dignity and will incline us to accept them in their purity. In other words, when spectators perceive digitized images of artworks, they do not really withdraw their interests because of the specific appearance it has of performing its function as a digitized form. This situation makes each existence of form different from the next, yet still related to each other. To this extent, the spectator’s viewing experience creates a one-on-one relationship between the digitized artwork and the spectator and emphasizes the autonomy of both the object and the subject in the relationship of embodiment. This viewing experience suggests that the spectator’s viewing experience is immobile and atemporal.

The digitized artwork therefore is not just one exhibited form, but a series of convergences of temporary and provisional combinations of technologies and forms. Through a kind of “timeless time,” or “reversible time,” it shapes the digitized images. It
conveys and is shaped, in turn, by the physical and cultural worlds in which it functions. The compression of time and space thus is twofold, and both are related to the body-subject. The digitized artwork as an existing body-subject, on the one hand, synthesizes the successive linear temporality of the past, future, and present into a timeless time zone. The spectator’s viewing experience, on the other hand, enhances the reversibility of phenomenological temporality that every spectator’s temporal viewing experience is unique and irreproducible.

3. Image Politics in Cyberspace

I have explored the links between experience, embodiment, and temporality, and then discussed the relevance of this investigation for the understanding of digitized art in cyberspace. With this in mind, I shall move to a discussion of the image politics of digitized art in cyberspace in order to synthesize the phenomenological investigation.

At the turn of the twentieth century, large-scale industrialization and new forms of mechanical reproduction of photography and film were making inroads into the cultural, political and economic realms of Western societies. These reproductions could be distributed at a much higher rate than in the past. A century later, we are now experiencing a digital technological form of reproduction that has taken over the mechanical forms to be one of the mainstream media forms in our society. This cyber, virtual, and digital environment incorporates even more political and economic power with it, and we have seen that these new technical capabilities to represent, reproduce, and distribute images have revolutionary potential. These new spaces and places for human sensory perception are the places for everyday exploitive power relationships to
be challenged through the new effect of art-and-technology embodied relationships. They are filled in their circumstantial links with capitalism and with fundamentalist politics.

Merleau-Ponty has noted that the body itself and the environment with which it interacts, constrain and enable avenues of behavior by their physical structure, allowing for continuity between pre-symbolic and symbolic appearances. It is true that we have entered a new phase of entertainment consumption of cultural products which is sweeping across social landscapes worldwide, and this transformation, as we have discussed, is linked to the commodification of the Lebenswelt. The spectacularization of space is creating a new Lebenswelt landscape filled with images. This includes casinos, megacomplex cinemas, theme parks, museums, shopping malls and spectacular architectures in our surroundings, and then even more spectacular virtual space extended from the physical world in our living room. Harvey notes that the need to accelerate turnover time in consumption has led to a shift of emphasis from production of goods to production of events: the mobilization of spectacle (157). This mobilization of spectacle echoes Debord’s observation in the late 1960s. Debord investigates the phenomenon of the infiltration of image-based commodities in urban-life and claims that capitalist society was being transformed into a vast arrangement of spectacles. The spectacle has become the most significant cultural production of contemporary capitalism (Debord, Spectacle, 35-46). This physical visual image spectacle now has stepped into the virtual space in today’s Internet. Digitized images increase the capacities of contemporary capitalism by accelerating the proliferation of images to every corner of the world. Spectacle for Debord has a twofold character. The spectacle, on the one hand, is the
fetishized world of the commodity form, universalized like never before. On the other hand, it refers to the image-based nature of contemporary life. The complexity and contradictions of life become unified behind the veil of appearance in the spectacle. To this extent, the increasing presence of the spectacle as an ideological expression is the uninterrupted discourse that the present order articulates about itself. In other words, the spectacle should be viewed as an expression of capitalist power relations.

This image-consumer culture undoubtedly has been taken to new levels by the possibilities of manipulation, and collaging enabled by the digitization of artworks. The issue of how politics and aesthetics confront one another within this unbounded construction site of cyberspace has been raised in this dissertation. Regarding the architectural space of a museum where the works of art are collected, for instance, I have pointed out that cultural forms and activities are politicized and the manner in which their politicization is expressed and pursued—are matters which emerge from, and have their conditions of existence within, the way in which those forms and activities have been instrumentally fashioned as a consequence of their governmental deployment for specific social, cultural, or political ends. Museum buildings are mostly based on the white cube model rather than being completely wired and equipped with flexible presentation systems. The success of an exhibit and the audience’s appreciation of the art are invariably dependent on the effort than an institution puts into the exhibition, both in technical and educational respects. As the technology keeps developing rapidly and is increasingly integrated into our daily lives, we are in all likelihood perceiving new ways of interacting with and relating to digitized art images. In the online world, the physical gallery/museum context does not necessarily work as a signifier of status any longer. Yet,
physical art in existing spaces could nonetheless play an important role when it comes to
digitization. The physical part of existence provides a context for the work, chronicles its
developments, and assists in its preservation, as well as expands its audiences.

Benjamin’s focus on the material, symbolic, social, and political dimensions of art,
culture, and technology as they interact still remain powerful. He provides important
entry-points and substantive insights into the psychic-emotional and political economic
tension between how new ways of perceiving the world technically can actually
challenge rather than reproduce the status quo. Foucault has gone further to note that our
society is not only one of spectacle, but also one of surveillance. We are neither in the
amphitheatre, nor on the stage, but in the panoptic machine, invested by its effects of
power, which we bring to ourselves since we are part of its mechanism (*Knowledge*, 217).
Obviously, the cultural landscape of the image-world involves all systems of symbolic
production, including museums, galleries, and artists’ creations. In this symbolic
economy, the digitized artwork in cyberspace is a source of power. In particular, what
has become enhanced is the power of those with the ability to command the production of
space and the production of digitized artworks as symbols.

Without a doubt, the Internet joins in the profit game of mobilization of spectacle.
To keep up with increasing inter-image world competition, official institutions such as
museums, national galleries, and affluent corporations launch their official Websites to
compete in the landscape of power in the global image-world. This suggests a cultural
and economic value, a positive corporate image as well as a developer’s profit. On the
landscape of mobilization of spectacle, themed cyber-museums and galleries are also
introduced for the purpose of physical consumption in urban museums and galleries.
These Websites are now the sites of capital accumulation for their counterparts for physical constructions. Today’s presences of virtuality in cyberspace are spatial extensions of construction of physical architectures, where spectators/consumers come to realize fantasies associated with reproduced cultural products in giftshops/popshops to enhance their different life-styles. The digitized art image spectacle and the cyber-themed environment (e.g., cyber-museums and galleries) demonstrate the significant transformation of our life towards a totality of commodification. In addition to the surface play of spectacle, the power relationship in spatial practice and experience cannot be ignored.

Furthermore, the discourse on power relations of exhibitions in museum now moves forward to cyberspace. Museum politics now links their cyber parts to establish authority of cultural heritages in our spectacular Lebenswelt. Lefebvre posits the concepts of “representations of space” and “representational space” to elaborate on power relations (32-34; 231-233). As representations of space, the concept of landscape encompasses the material basis of signs and their meanings (the totality of built environment), which entails the production of social relations (class and ethnicity, etc.), and shifting capital. As a representational space, landscape is itself a symbolic sign or contains a set of symbolic signs that generate meanings. Power in the form of economics, politics, and culture participates in the landscape and, therefore, reshapes the landscape. With these points, we can realize the ways in which the complexity of physical contexts is mediated and constructed by embedded power relations. The increasing emergence of the enclosed and self-conscious new commercial space – cyberspace – is now interwoven into the fabric of our Lebenswelt.
It is worth interpreting the ways in which the invisible power of the symbolic façade has ruled space. The digitized artwork in cyberspace obviously is more than a vehicle of preservation or a digital archive. Rather, this is an issue about social practice, capitalist profit making, and the power of display.

I have actively adapted Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology to discuss the phenomenon of digitized art in cyberspace, because the central theme of his theory is that a full understanding of the natural and social worlds that we inhabit inevitably leads back to aspects of our experience through which meaning is bestowed upon the objects of experience. To this extent, the experience of looking at digitized artworks in cyberspace, such as on museum sites, eventually has its own power and politics of display. Benjamin’s essay on the impact of reproduction brings attention to the presence of an artwork in time and space. The work of art in the age of digital reproduction now has taken for granted instant copying, without degradation of quality from the original. The digital platform also increases the accessibility of visual material in which images can be easily digitized through scanning and are readily available for copying or dissemination on the Internet. In this dissertation, the phenomenon of the digitization of artwork has been considered, with a special focus on the changes of experience and perception they have brought about in our understanding and reading of the visual image in cyberspace. An obvious characteristic of digitized artworks that focus on aspects of encoding and visualization is that the process and meaning of digitized art images do not always reveal themselves on the visual level. Often they rely on external contextual information held by official institutions to help explain the work of art. The digitized art images do not lose the context of their original, but maintain an embodied relationship with the physical
existence of artworks. Merleau-Ponty, reminding us of the embodiment we have so often neglected in Western philosophy, tells us that meaning already inhabits things. We therefore cannot easily separate them as physical/virtual or real/unreal. Rather, the boundaries between these concepts need to be abandoned. Only with the boundaries blurred, can the meaning of art be returned to originals, and the authenticity of the artwork then returns back to the physical part of the existence of the artwork.

4. Significance/Value: A Self-reflexive Question

Finally, this dissertation leaves us with one more self-reflexive question: what can this dissertation contribute to a community that is facing this new technological challenge, particularly what can it do for the art historian in the digital era? I would answer this question by claiming that this project is a timely engagement with an important issue of our time—cyberspace. In our time, digital technology has been applied as new medium to create so-called digital arts; also, cyberspace, as a virtual environment, has been considered as a new space for exhibitions. Few art historians, however, think about the problem that authentic artworks is again facing, namely a new situation of duplication like what occurred with the invention of mechanical reproduction. This project uses authentic arts to engage in cyberspace from a phenomenological perspective and to explore the essence of digitization of artwork in our time. I examine this question, analyzes it, and opens up a space for informed discussion. The strength of this phenomenological investigation does not lie in its choice of topics, rather its significance comes from the way this dissertation advances this discussion. It is a reconsideration of the digitization of authentic art in cyberspace as an embodied relationship between
artwork, spectatorship, and digital technology. The physical and virtual existence of an artwork cannot be simply separated; rather, the virtual appearance of artwork is grounded in the physical part of its existence. In other words, their relations are embodied.

Furthermore, it is important that this investigation discusses cyberspace as a capitalist battlefield to show the logic of the commodification of artworks in cyberspace. Within this logic of capitalist operation, digitization of authentic art has become a spectacular exhibition which utilizes the political power of art’s original exhibitionary space. Digital technology enhances the accessibility of authentic art, brings it to our domestic spaces, and takes artwork into marketplaces. Digitization of art in cyberspace does not take aura away from an artwork; rather, this process rediscovers the aura in the authentic one. To this extent, one can recognize the interwoven relationship between politics and aesthetics within this unbounded constructed environment of cyberspace.

This dissertation contributes new insight to the discussion of digitized art in cyberspace. The ultimate contribution of this phenomenological investigation is to compel us to move beyond the contemporary conceptualization of cyberspace, and explore possibilities of embodied relations with one another, of significant technological transformation, and of the politics of digitized art in cyberspace. After all, Cyberspace is not a terrain that lacks dimensionality. There may exist no better way for us today to keep ourselves open to future possibilities than to reconsider the relationship between humankinds and their Lebenswelt.
References


Mazis, Glen A. “Merleau-Ponty and the “Backward Flow” of Time: The Reversibility of


Fig. 1. Andy Warhol, *Green Coca-Cola Bottles* (1962)
Fig. 2. Andy Warhol, *100 Campbell’s Soup Cans* (1962)
Fig. 3. Andy Warhol, *Marilyn Monroe* (1962)
Fig. 4. ABN-AMRO Bank Advertisement in Taiwan (2004)
Fig. 5. Nick Egan, *Bow Wow Wow, “Go Wild in the Country”* (1981)
Fig. 6. Roy Lichtenstein, Time Out Magazine Cover Design (1978)
Fig. 7. Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, *Jane Avril* (1893)
Fig. 8. Gorgon Medusa Theme, Temple of Artemis at Corfu (c. 580 BC)
Fig. 9. Albrecht Dürer, *Untitled* (1538)
Fig. 10. Early Camera Obscura (1645)
Fig. 11. Camera Obscura, circa Seventeenth Century
Fig. 12. Camera Lucida, circa Eighteenth Century
Fig. 13. Leonard da Vinci, *Mona Lisa* (1503-6)
Fig. 14. Marcel Duchamp, *L.H.O.O.Q* (1919)
Fig. 15. Andy Warhol, *Thirty Are Better than One* (1963)
Fig. 16. Jean-Pierre Yvaral, *Mona Lisa Synthetisee* (date unknown)
Fig. 17. Andrew Patros Close-up of Early Digital Reproduction of the Mona Lisa (1965)
Fig. 18. Andrew Patros. Detail of Early Digital Reproduction of the Mona Lisa (1965)
Fig. 19. Ralph Marlin, Mona Lisa Tie (1998)
Student No. 1

I feel that all of these new inventions and ways of copying original artwork take away from part of the meaning and feeling that one gets from seeing original artwork itself. Digital reproduction is one of the most commonly used techniques in selling artwork today. I believe that reproducing art in such a manner takes away from original art itself and makes it not as valuable. Once art is accessible to more people, its value depreciates. Pieces of art that were once extremely expensive and unique lose these traits. Art on the Internet not only loses monetary value, it loses emotional value also. Seeing artwork online does not strike emotional chords as seeing a piece of art in person. For example, the painting “Mona Lisa”, housed in the Louvre, is one of the most visited pieces of artwork in the world. Even though there are thousands of reproductions available on mugs, t-shirts, pencils, and other merchandise, millions of people travel to Paris each year to view the painting in person. There is something about seeing a great piece of artwork in person that cannot be replaced by any other form of media. The artwork comes alive: its shadows, cracks, creases, and stroke-lines are more prominent, and pulse in front of you. Although digital reproduction has a few disadvantages, it does have advantages as well. I do not know of many people who can afford to fly around the world to view the great pieces of artwork in their respective museums. Digital reproduction makes artwork more available to people to view. Anyone can find famous and popular paintings and drawings easily on the Internet. Customers can view and purchase reproductions conveniently, making the process less time consuming than
venturing to a department store and searching through stacks of photos and other various artwork. Although one may not get the same feelings when viewing a digital reproduction as opposed to an original piece, people can still feel what the artist was trying to express at the time with digital artwork.

In the movie “Mona Lisa Smile”, Julia Roberts talks about the reproduction of Van Gogh’s works with the paint by numbers. This is an example of mechanical reproduction. Julia Roberts’ character challenges the idea of cheapening art, and asks the question of whether Van Gogh would appreciate his reproductions or not. I hypothesize that Van Gogh would not like that form of reproduction. Mechanical reproduction, as well as digital reproduction, often occurs with artists that are already deceased, or unable to reproduce or create new artwork. I feel as if some artists would not appreciate their artwork being reproduced without their permission, and without the same quality and time that they put into the art when they originally created it. Throughout time there have been many copies of art, music, and books. In the Middle Ages and earlier many books were copied by scribes who would then sometimes reinterpret the original work and alter it. Today, people download movies and music and pirate it from the artists who have made or produced this and don’t get anything for it. Depending on if you are the one who is copying the work or the one who created the original then you may have different feelings towards these things.
Student No. 2

With the times changing fast, new technologies are born into our society and mixed with our everyday lives. These technologies such as digital pictures, mass reproductions and internet access, when placed with art have created a new controversy. Some say that art is meant to be one on one, the canvas and the painter, while others feel that art and technology together make a wonderful, new and excited way to create art.

I think that authentic works of art are wonderful. Anything that adds new and innovative ideas to art, helping it take an extra step up to the next level is fine by me. The only way that art is going to keep progressing and keep up with the times is to use the present resources and new inventions. If everyone shunned this particular use in art and no one used it then imagine all the great and ground breaking works of art that would not exist today and would have an effect on future artists.

The reproduction of art forms, such as in post cards, is an issue that I am totally for. I think that any way possible to show people different art works is good. The mass production of such wonderful pieces and being able to show them to the world is only a good thing. It gets people going in the art world and gives those that live in a not so kind art surroundings a taste of what is out there and without the mass production of them something that they could have quite possibly never laid eyes on. It also provides us with the chance to share such art with other, such as with postcards. On a trip my parents once took to Europe they sent me back a post card with Vincent Van Gogh’s “Starry Night” and it has since been my own personal favorite painting and I’m sure that others may have a similar story to mine.
The mass reproduction of art as mentioned above also ties in with digital imagery of art, such as online. I feel that any way found to get art out there is a good way and is necessary to educate people about art. Without examples and pictures to evaluate then how would we know one type of art from another? It also helps teach people about art. Examples are necessary to learn anything, that is the best way to see and remember something and without any art reproductions of examples if would be near impossible for anyone to grasp the different types and techniques of art, such as how Van Gogh’s famous brush stoke techniques and Michelangelo’s flawless David. I know that without the pictures you put into your lectures I would be totally lost and find it so hard to follow along and understand. Your pictures help me actually see the art, see the brush strokes, see the smoothness and see the colors and without them I would have to rely on my imagination to know what all of these things meant. Also, writing a paper of doing comparison homework with out the pictures at my fingertips would be impossible. For example, the take home midterm we had where we were asked to compare and contrast the two different sculptors. Without both pictures in front of me, on my computer screen I’m sure that I would have received a zero on that question. Explaining such works of art without showing them would be completely non progressive. It is necessary to have pictures of these works of art at our finger tips so that we have the opportunity to grasp them and learn as much as we can about art, so we can make it become more and aid in its growth to reach new heights.
Student No. 3

Personally, I have never given any thought towards the digitalizing imagery of art. I haven’t made the distinction between authentic, digital and mechanical reproduction of art before. To me they all represent the same thing, art. Now, after hearing the lecture in class and seeing the group presentation in class regarding these three subjects, my feelings towards each has changed. I now have a greater appreciation of authentic work.

It’s not that I haven’t appreciated seeing authentic artwork before; it’s just that I’ve never before recognized that appreciation of authentic artwork until now. I can remember back when I was younger visiting the museum; I vividly remember how excited I was just to be there. Being able to see the various artworks and the different exhibits at the museum was great. Now, I still have that appreciation for authentic artwork; I enjoy going to different art shows to view the artwork. I still get that feeling of excitement and take pleasure in seeing the authentic artwork.

My feelings towards mechanical reproduction aren’t the same as they are for authentic work. I can’t say that I don’t enjoy the works of mechanical reproduction, because I do. I even have many posters and different pictures up on the walls of both my dorm room and my room back at home. Even though mechanical reproduction is nowhere near the same as authentic work and even though they may not produce the same feelings that you may get when you view authentic work, I still like the work from mechanical reproduction. It’s different, but it’s still good.

Digital work, I must say, is very convenient. Just with the click of a mouse, you are able to view various artworks on the Internet. I must say that it’s very different from both authentic and mechanical reproduction work in the way that it is both readily
available and in its quality. Some may argue that digital artwork is not true artwork and may perhaps believe in the more traditional artwork, the authentic artwork.

I must say that I prefer authentic artwork myself. Authentic artwork produces different feelings that the digital and mechanical reproduction don’t produce. I think being in the actual presence of the work contributes to the feelings that I feel for the authentic work. Being able to see the work in actuality and being able to be right there with the work provides different feelings which make me prefer the authentic work over the others.

Overall, all three forms are still equally good, but my preference is the authentic artwork. It’s just a personal preference, and others may disagree with me, but I believe that authentic work is great, I feel eager and excited when I see the authentic work.
The world of art and its relation to technology and cyberspace is a topic that is currently a very important part of art for several reasons, including the preservation of art, the mechanical reproduction of art, digitalizing imagery, and the authentic representation of art. Historically, methods for reproducing art were very limited. The development of photography in the early 19th and late 20th centuries was a great step for art reproduction. Mechanical reproduction has its advantages and its disadvantages. A machine must be considered as a stage of production between the artist and artwork. This is advantageous in that people can view magnificent pieces of work even if it is across the world; however, it does not give the viewer a feeling of right. When it comes to art, there is definitely an amount of importance to the original work for the value of uniqueness, which is directly related to authenticity and aura. Reproduction is important to many people because it makes many artworks more accessible, although the emotional and appreciative values are not as high. Mechanical reproduction can do several things. It can put copies of the original in situations out of reach of the original artwork, produce copies more independent of the original artwork, and also depreciate the original piece’s value.

Digitalizing imagery in the world of art is another widely-debated topic in the world of art today. New technology has now allowed us to digitalize imageries of artwork. Digital media for the home can encourage more exhibition of artwork, but some aspects get lost, such as the original color, tone and sound. For artwork the original color gets lost as does all the artist’s feelings they put into the work. Museums use this new technology to display their works online as a way to attract people into their museums to see the
authentic works. In the realm of modern art, this has become one of the most popular and utilized methods of creating art, especially in recent years. Artists practice the technique of digitalizing and manipulating images and placing them into their artworks. Artworks featuring image digitization have had a major impact on modern art. The use of this technique is respectable because digitally placing images within an artwork can help relate stories, adventures, emotions, and ideas to those who view these artworks. The use of photography in portraits is also becoming quite popular. The technique of digitalizing imagery has come to reflect the diverse concepts that have inspired many works in the modern art period.

One of the most controversial issues currently surrounding the world of art is the idea of art preservation. Art preservation is the process of restoring and preserving works of art using professional, highly skilled sculptors and painters. Much of this method lays in the restoration and preservation of damaged murals, paintings, and sculptures in historical objects. This includes the restoring old oil paintings on canvas, cleaning, retouching and preserving priceless frescos, repairing or recreating collapsed ceiling moldings, and restoring the original beauty of damaged or destroyed sculptures. The idea of preserving art is a noble one for several reasons, but there are certain opinions that must be taken into account. Many people believe that the preservation of art, especially restoration, depreciates the aesthetic value of historical and priceless works of art. At the same time, the age and fragility of these weathered works of art has dramatic effects on them, and over time they may not be recognized to be as beautiful or valuable as they once were. This will continue to be a widely debated issue for many years to come.
Student No. 5

Original pieces of artwork have a greater affect on me when I know that they are truly originals. If I look at a piece of art, and I know that it was not copied or redone, then it makes me feel like I can see/feel what the artist really wanted to express. I also think about what the artist was trying to say when they made the art piece. A copy of the work or a picture of it does not have the same affect on me.

There is something about going to a museum to see famous, original paintings that is not the same as seeing it in a textbook or on a slide. There is more depth and meaning to the art when you can see the defined brush stroked and the real size of the piece. For example, I have seen many remakes, pictures, and I have actually copied the famous painting *Haystacks* myself for an art class. Needless to say, Monet’s original *Haystacks* had a very different and significant meaning to me than did the other versions. I have never actually seen the real version in a museum, but the pictures online and in text books just does not express the real meaning behind the painting as well as a painting hanging on a museum wall does.

It is far more interesting for me to go to a museum and look at the art there, rather than look through a textbook of famous paintings. I have been to The Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh. I had never thought I would have enjoyed being there in the least, but I was surprised when I looked at each painting for quite a while. I don’t remember the names of the paintings I liked, but never before have I been able to look at a piece of art work and figured out what the artist was trying to express. I found myself doing this for the first time, and I am sure it was because the art was original and had not been copied. Even if the painting wasn’t a Van Gogh or Monet, the artists still express feeling
in their works, and if you look deep enough into a painting you can come up with the meaning they were shooting for, or even your own.

I have also visited *Fallingwater*, which is a house in western Pennsylvania built by Frank Lloyd Wright. To experience the house in person is nothing like you could imagine if you have not. I had first seen pictures of the house, but going there and being able to actually see the waterfalls inside the house and outside was amazing. The construction of the house was like none other, and I had no idea it was such a landmark before I went. What I have learned, is that you can judge something and think that you won’t be affected by an art piece, sculpture, or building unless you actually experience it in person. This has been proven to me many times.
The Mechanical Reproduction was a period where technologists made attempts to reproduce a series of nearly identical objects. Where before the emphasis was based on quality, it was now based on how many you could make to sell. The public was not exactly sure how to take these new advancements so instead of coming up with individual responses, they looked at the mass audience to gage their reactions before finding some of their own.

When you reproduce a painting or other artwork, you lose the aura it once had. There is nothing like going to a museum or wherever, and getting close to a painting. That is an experience you hold with you for the rest of your life, especially if you end up at the Louvre or any famous museum like such. When you get a replication of whatever painting you saw, it seems like it cheapens the moment. I mean, you can look at it and say that you’ve been there to see it, but it’s not the same. It’s like going to the beach. You can go and feel the wind on your face and the sand and water under your feet. You know exactly how it is and feels. Then when one of your friends send you a postcard from the beach they’re at, it’s not the same. It is almost like a tease, because the picture is not the same as the real thing. There is no authenticity in a replication. All you get is a piece of cardboard with a shiny surface, whereas with a painting, if you are allowed to touch it, a canvas with layers of paint textures. There is no way you can put all the feeling of a painting into a replication. One obvious reason is because you do not have the same feeling in your body as the painter did at the time. The painter put everything he had into that painting, and all the replicator is doing is copying the picture, cheapening
it. Why bother to go see it and make it a wonderful piece when all you can do is go buy an exact copy?

When you talk about digitalizing art, how is it that you are not breaking copyright laws? I know that when you take a senior picture and try to get a copy of it made, you have to have the photographer’s permission to do so first. I am pretty sure that de Vinci is dead, so how can you copy his paintings? A copyright law protects paintings, and while copying art makes it more accessible for people to see the art; it still cheapens the whole affect.

As a final thought, art is a part of your soul. When you make copies of it, it takes a part of your soul away each time. The more copies you make, the less people understand, and they get wrapped up in just having a copy, not to value, but to compete. When you take someone’s soul, you cannot get it back.
Student No. 7

On the subject of art technology recreation, I have mixed feelings of it being right or even ethical. Art is something that someone or a group of some people creates with their minds. No one thinks the exact same thing at the exact same time, especially when creating art work. I think that artwork in its original creation should be left in its original creation so we can appreciate the value of it being the only one of its kind. It doesn’t make a whole lot of sense to price the authentic picture of the Mona Lisa so high and so valuable that is impossible for anyone to obtain, but then make identical copies so everyone can have one in their home. If everyone has one that looks exactly like the original what is the real value in the original and what is the point in traveling to a distant museum just to see this piece of art?

My feelings are also mixed toward the other way in seeing why wouldn’t you want to have the benefit of having something so famous in your household, or on a poster or postcard? It’s kind of like the situation of the Louis Vuitton knock off purses. The people who make the copies make them so well they even use his signature LV. They also make there prices affordable so everyone can afford them just not the famous. This takes away from his business of his original creation.

To me it’s amazing how anyone can take a picture and reproduce an exact replica of anything or even change things that they don’t care for. This is done digitally. Digital would be the one that I would be more against, because in reality it does take away from that pictures authenticity and value because anyone can exactly replicate something original with the help of a mouse and computer software.
Mechanical reproduction is a little different. Mechanical reproduction is someone trying to replicate a work themselves not digitally. This I think could be more acceptable. In this case mechanical reproduction is used in things such as postcards and posters and other souvenirs.

My feelings are mixed on the whole situation. I really do think in certain situations it could go both ways in being right or wrong. I think it’s amazing what today’s technology can do with art form hundreds of years ago as far as recopying it, but I don’t think it is always right. If I were an artist and I created something, even it wasn’t famous it was mine and I wouldn’t want other people recopying or recreating it. Then again if you were an artist and your work was recopied for everyone to have it could be a big compliment because of the popularity of the work.