(Re)Animating The Image

Staging Media in Romeo Castellucci's *M.#10 Marseille*

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In the last three decades, there has been an interesting shift toward the visual within theater practice and an explicit attention for the importance of the image in theater discourse. Already in 1977, Bonnie Marranca published *The Theatre of Images,* in which she documents and analyzes how American avant-garde artists like Robert Wilson and Richard Foreman treat text in theater merely as pretext (xi) in creating a theater of images, a theater of high visuality that shows influences from both visual arts, film, dance, and particularly painting (xii). She notices a shift away from the dominance of the theater text and foregrounds how Wilson, Foreman and others start an exploration of the potency of images within theater. In her account, theater is no longer only a medium that is defined by its live interaction with the audience but that is also explicitly visual: a medium generating images. In *Postdramatic Theatre*, Hans-Thies Lehmann takes up the changing status of the text as a central issue, arguing that "staged text […] is merely a component with equal rights in a gestic, musical, visual, etc., total composition" (46). Expanding on the visual component of such composition, Lehmann affirms theater's liberation from the logocentric hierarchy, arguing that the visual aspects of postdramatic theater have become self-sufficient in practices of visual dramaturgy that "[are] not subordinated to the text and can therefore freely develop [their] own logic" (93).

Since the turn of the millennium, theater studies has picked up visuality in the theater as a central topic of investigation. Venturing to understand the role of the image in theater, theater scholars turned to visual studies, a recent field of academic research that is grounded in the idea that visual experience (vision) is not an objective and stable relation between the spectator and the seen. Instead, it is a "historically specific experience, mediated by new technologies and the individual and social formations they enable", making it necessary to study images not only for their esthetic qualities, but also for their role in generating meaning and defining specific visual experiences (Schwartz and Przyblyski qtd. in Leonhardt 29). As such, visual studies propounds a broadening of the concept of the image, including not only images in art and painting, but also digital and immaterial manifestations of the image in both high and low culture. Moreover,

visual studies introduces a new concept of the image as an active agent in modes of meaning-making, thus acknowledging the performativity of images. This conception stresses that images are not merely objects, but instead *happen,* providing theater studies with the necessary impulse to reconsider theater as an intermedial visual event (Jackob and Röttger, *Theater, Bild und Vorstellung* 38).

In this article, we will delve into this line of reasoning, arguing that the cross-pollination between theater studies and visual studies is productive to analyze contemporary visual dramaturgies. Specifically, we will look into Kati Röttger and Alexander Jackob's account of theater as an image-producing medium (2003) and into Maaike Bleeker's concept of theater as a critical vision machine (2011). Both accounts, in their own right, focus on theater's capacity to engage with the medial operations at the bases of image-making (and theater-making) critically and self-reflectively. As such, they offer critical insights to understand contemporary theater practices that actively stage the image within the theater, such as Romeo Castellucci's *M.#10 Marseille* (2004). In the performance, Castellucci brings to the stage a confrontation between different media in a visual dramaturgy that moves to abstraction more and more as the performance progresses. We will look into how Castellucci's theater images operate and how they perform visuality *as an event*; as an unstable relation between the spectator and what is seen. Specifically, we will see how visuality in theater operates not as an abstract theoretical notion, but as a process unfolding in the real time and space of the theater, scrutinizing its consequences for spectatorial processes.
We will, however, also shed light on the magical side of staging the image in theater, probing W.J.T. Mitchell's concept of the image as a living organism (2005). As visual dramaturgies provide a stage to bring the image to life, they are not only self-critical reflections on the underlying operations of image-making, but they also experiment with a promising animistic attitude toward the image.

Theater and Visuality

In recent years, significant research has been done to explore this intrinsic relation of theater with images. In these accounts, theater is regarded as a medium that *produces* images (Jackob and Röttger, *Ab Der Schwelle Zum Sichtbaren* 246) but at the same time also makes visible its own operation as a medium. In "Who Owns the Image? Image Politics and Media Criticism in Theater: A Separation of Powers" (2007)[1], Kati Röttger and Alexander Jackob argue that theater is capable of making visible image politics. Their analysis shows

how contemporary skepticism toward the image as an entity that possibly alters reality instead of merely representing it, is misdirected. Rather, "it is not the images that alter reality but the (invisible) mechanisms of their medial distribution" (Ibid. 2). These invisible mechanisms are what they call the "violence of media", in contrast with the "power of images".

> Instead of revealing their own violence, media, especially electronic media, direct one's gaze to an apparent violence of images that hides the coherence of medium, material reality, and violence. Consequently […], this leads to a scepticism about the truth of images and not about a truth of media. (Ibid. 5)

Theater, in turn, is a medium that distributes images and at the same time allows its audience to participate in that distribution by showing these medial mechanisms. This way, theater provides "a stage for image politics" (Ibid. 3), critically exposing the Medusa-effect of images; the capacity of images to arrest the gaze, to freeze and 'blind' its viewer. As a result, "the audience becomes an active part of the decision-making process regarding the specific violence or power of media and images" (Ibid. 5). In this account, theater is a self-critical medium that distributes images while at the same time examining its own medial operations. Not coincidentally, these accounts are grounded in a concept of visuality that is not only defined by the spectator and what is seen but also takes into account an important third factor: the mediator between the subject and object of vision. Elsewhere, Jackob and Röttger stress that the image in theater should be understood as "[…] a *relation* of the staged gaze (through the medium), what is seen (image) and the spectator (human body)" (Jackob and Röttger, *Ab Der Schwelle Zum Sichtbaren* 243, original emphasis, my translation).[2]

In *Visuality in the Theatre*, Maaike Bleeker investigates different "practices of looking" in theater and introduces a similar threefold division in the process of visuality: the subject seen, the subject seeing, and the subject of vision mediating between the two. In her opinion, it is necessary to locate "[…] vision within a specific historical and cultural situation" (1). Following the main line of thought of visual studies, these historically and culturally specific manifestations of visual experience are what Bleeker calls "visuality". Here, "visuality" serves as a theoretical notion to approach different modes of looking throughout history, rather than as a practical notion that refers to visual aspects of performance.

Bleeker's main ambition is to criticize "[...] the modern fable of vision as true and objective, of the possibility of seeing it 'as it is'", thereby repudiating looking as a neutral, disembodied and non-subjective process (5). In essence, her analysis aims to demonstrate how visual experience is far from transparent or neutral, and needs to be understood as a "[…] product of vision 'taking place' according to the tacit rules of a specific scopic regime and within a relationship between the one seeing and what is seen" (2). In order to historicize visual experience, Bleeker distinguishes between three influential factors, the first and second one being the *individual seeing* and *the seen* on the micro-level, and the third being the specific cultural practices in which visual experience is taking place on a macro-level (*scopic regime*).[3] Bleeker's analysis (re)values the subjective aspects of vision (that are specific and personal for each person looking) and the intersubjective aspects of vision (that are shared within a specific culture and consequently differ from others).

The argument says that the critical analysis of how visual experience is embedded within a broader social, cultural and historical context unveils how vision, which is traditionally thought of as the ultimate sensorial input to find 'truth', is in itself already relative. Consequently, this realization creates an awareness that visual experience is far from universal, and thus opens up possibilities to look differently. But Bleeker's argument is more far-reaching than that. In the different chapters of her book, Bleeker explores several crucial intersubjective factors that inform visual experience in a non-neutral way, such as gender aspects, sexuality and cultural difference. In her chapter on the retheatricalization of sexuality in the field of vision (98-119), she explicitly refers to Peggy Phelan's concept of the "unmarked" to understand these underlying factors of visuality that oftentimes remain hidden, but nonetheless deneutralize visual experience (100), emphasizing not merely the subjectivity of vision, but also the unmarked blind spots of vision that shut the door on the very notion of "objective vision" or seeing "the thing in itself." In that endeavor, theater offers an interesting approach, as its theatricality enables "reflection on what might be called the construction of the real" (7). As such, she does not analyze theatre as a medium that includes performance and the perception of images, but rather as a medium that operates within a certain regime of vision. Consequently, she focuses on performances that use strategies of theatricalization in order to make visible the medial operations that remain invisible in other media. These performances explicitly make the spectator aware of the own implication in what is seen, revealing their inauthentic or false nature (3). As an effect, these performances show the politics of vision and simultaneously undermine its effect (7).

Importantly, the analysis does not aim at offering a unified model or theory of vision – which would, again, be grounded in a false sense of objectivity – but rather aspires to unravel the complexities involved with the processes of looking. This way, the act of looking is revealed to be subjective, context-bound and part of a specific culture of vision.

Both the accounts of Röttger and Jackob and of Bleeker show a far-reaching dialogue between visual studies and theater studies. As such, they propose to look at theater as an image-producing medium that is embedded in cultural practices of looking while at the same time critically engaging with these ways of seeing. In other words, they propose visuality (both within and outside of theater) as a process, as an *event* that is constituted by the spectator, by what is seen and by the medial interventions between both (Bleeker *Visualität Als Ereignis*; and more specifically Jackob and Röttger, *Theater, Bild Und Vorstellung* 37-39). The relevance of this branch of theater discourse for the endeavor at hand is that it offers productive insight into the performance of images and, conversely, into the images of performance. In this account, both the theater performance and the image are events that produce specific conditions of seeing while also critically reflecting on these conditions. As a result, theater becomes a self-reflective device; a "critical vision machine" (Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre* 9).

Staging Media in *#M.10 Marseille*

In order to probe this concept of visuality as an event, let us look at Romeo Castellucci's *#M.10 Marseille* (2004), a performance in which visuality (understood as the visual event of theater) takes central stage. The performance is the tenth episode of Socìetas Raffaello Sanzio's *Tragedia Endogonidia* cycle, a fundamentally hybrid theater project with a range of different media and technologies used on the stage. The grand project consists of a total of eleven performances, each performed in a different city throughout Europe, the first one premiering in January 2002 and the last one in October 2004. Castellucci's work has been characterized as highly visual and spectacular, and has in this regard been brought in connection with baroque esthetics and epistemologies (See also Crombez; Coppens). Furthermore, its iconoclastic stances have been studied extensively (Calchi Novati) and also Castellucci's relation between word and image has been under wide academic scrutiny (Holdsworth; Van Baarle). In the following, we will zoom in on *#M.10 Marseille*, looking at how the radical visual dramaturgy of the performance proposes a model of visual experience that is

radically subjective and look at its relation with the macro-level of scopic regimes, of cultured ways of looking that correspond with historical but also medial conditions. To do so, we will consider in depth how Castellucci uses theater as an image-producing medium and closely look at how different media are staged to interact and conflict with each other in the performance.

The performance *#M.10 Marseille* (2004) is constructed as a diptych, the first part playing at the Théâtre des Bernardines and the second part at the Théâtre du Gymnase in Marseille, and takes photography as its subject matter. Initially, the first part of the diptych takes the form of a traditional dramatic theater play, staging a conversation between a married couple. The conversation is visually interspersed in some instances, presenting *tableau*-like scenes of a group of men and women that are clothed in nineteenth-century fashion. Then, the performance results in a series of "photographic compositions" (Duneuskaya 50), each separated from the other by the closing and opening of the black theater drapes. The compositions consist of a black horse onstage being washed with milk, a white ladder and a woman who exposes her genitals in a way similar to Gustave Courbet's controversial painting *L'Origine du Monde* (1866). These scenes are interlaced time and again with the appearance and disappearance of a photographer handling an antique daguerreotype camera on a wooden tripod. The first part closes with that camera onstage, facing the audience. Different panes of glass are lowered from the ceiling, hanging between the spectators and the daguerreotype camera at eye level. Suddenly, the glass panes break into smithereens and the stage fades to black.

In the second part of *M.#10 Marseille*, taking place at the Théâtre du Gymnase, we encounter an intricate choreography of light and abstract objects, obscured by a semi-transparent veil that separates the audience from the stage and accompanied by Scott Gibbons' soundscape. Initially, the second part starts with a suggestive scenography of light in varying colors, shapes and positions. Then, the light turns yellow-grayish, facing the audience, and what appears to be like snow flakes start falling down behind the curtain. Simultaneously, different semi-transparent panes in varying sizes are lowered from the ceiling, which seem to either intensify in shape or completely dissolve depending on the intensity of light. Consequently, these objects resist any easy and univocal identification. André Eiermann describes the confusing effects of the different moving panes and their interaction with the light poignantly:

> What at one moment seems to be a plain wall, appears as an illumination or even as a mere shadow in the next moment. What first seems to be very close to the veil, shortly thereafter turns into a far removed appearance or vice versa. (Eiermann 230, my translation)[4]

In a final move of the performance, Gibbons' soundtrack intensifies to enticing levels and after another dazzling scenography of yellow and blue light rays, the veil that separated the audience from the stage is exchanged for an immense projection screen. First, the audience sees what appears to be an aquarium filled with swirling water. Subsequently, the projection resembles the abstract forms and shapes of the former scene, although this time not as objects moving and interacting live onstage but as a virtual emanation of that same esthetic. The visual montage flashes intensely and brightly, shifting in different colors and shapes, at times making it hard to keep watching the almost blinding excess of light. Then, the eyes of the spectator are granted some rest when the screen shortly turns to black, flickering up with white light every few seconds and revealing a human figure in front of the screen. The intense soundtrack fades away and a more serene projection of abstract forms and figures sets in, as Lavinia Bertotti sings operatic variations on the works of Thomas Tallis and John Dowland. Finally, the theater curtains start closing, gradually hiding the projection screen behind their black fabric. Bertotti, still in the center of the stage, reaches out her hands and draws the immense curtains shut.

It is interesting that *M.#10 Marseille* takes the traditional psychological drama in the form of a conversation between a married couple as its starting point. The opening scene is characterized by the dominance of the drama text, accessible and relatable characters and above all a clear narrative progression. The ensuing scenes of the first and the second part can be understood as a systematic critique and disruption of this dramatic, frontal and static mode of representation. In the following analysis, we will look into the visuality at work in the different scenes and anchor them in the intermedial transmissions (Röttger 5)[5] between the different media that are staged in *M.#10 Marseille*'s visual dramaturgy.

At a certain point during the first scene, the dramatic exchange between both characters is visually interrupted by a number of *tableaux vivants*, living images enacted onstage by a group of men and women, sometimes alternating and sometimes together. The first *tableau* interrupting the couple's dialogue shows a 20 seconds still image of women in a fixed, theatrical pose. Later on in the conversation, the couple is interrupted again while the woman is cutting the

toenails of her partner. This *tableau* stages ten theatrically but frozen men and women, some of which show clear signs of arrested movement (for instance a raised arm, an unfinished gesture or an open mouth). The opening scene ends with an enacted dinner with the participants of the *tableaux*, although this time they do show modest movement. Castellucci's choice for the esthetics of the *tableau* is interesting because it combines two media, theater and painting, and their respective practices of looking.

Working with the *tableau* in theatrical settings, however, is far from new. In medieval Joyous Entries, the *tableau vivant* was already extensively used as a means for theatrical communication (Bussels and Van Oostveldt) and in eighteenth-century theater, the tableau became a particularly popular strategy for the theater stage. Diderot has been crucial in this development, as he proposed a theater esthetic of true-to-life imitation in which the *tableau* played a crucial part. As it is a concentrated living image, the *tableau* has the capacity to highlight and intensify the dramatic action while stimulating a direct experience that absorbs the spectator (Van Oostveldt 140-143). Whereas Diderot recognized the *tableau* as a form to increase the naturalness of theater, Castellucci interestingly uses it to achieve a quite different effect. His *tableau vivants* still highlight and intensify the events on stage, but also introduce an important rupture in ways of seeing. Specifically, the *tableau*-esthetics imports into the theater a temporality of seeing that is not characteristic for the theater: the temporality of time frozen, of motionless and 'actionless' time passing by in the theater. Whereas the *tableau* in painting obviously freezes movement and time in a still image, this stillness goes against theater's way of looking, as it introduces the phenomenon of looking at arrested time and movement floating by lively in the theater, as if it were a painting.

This temporality of arrested time and movement is intensified even further in the photographic compositions that follow in the second scene. Here, theater and photography interact with each other in a way that contrasts theater's live nature with photography's ontology of fossilization.[6] The different scenes consist of photogenic scenes (the washing of the horse, the ladder and the woman exposing herself) that are all fundamentally theatrical: they are staged with the intention and function of being looked at, lively, in the context of theater as they combine time, (slight) movement and performance. At several times during these photographic constellations, the photographer with the daguerrotype camera shows up, takes a picture (during which the theater lights are used as an artificial flash) and freezes theater in time, petrifying the event and arresting performative movement.

As such, the first part of the performance stages intermedial transmissions between theater, painting and photography, their respective modes of operation, and their respective ways of looking. In this transmission, the spatially and temporally located logic of theater is put in sharp contrast with painting and photography's temporality of arrested time. The transmissions between these media have important consequences for both the visuality and the modes of spectatorship at work in *M.#10 Marseille*. By staging theater as painting and as photography, the performance also stages their respective temporalities, confronting the audience with arrested time not only *in* but also *as* performance. Consequently, this clash of temporalities opens an "in-between" position, staging visuality as an unstable event that is profoundly shaped by medial conventions. As a result, the performance challenges traditional modes of looking at theater and pulls the audience out of its comfort zone. This becomes even clearer in the second part of *M.#10 Marseille*.

In the second part of the diptych, taking place at the Théâtre du Gymnase, Castellucci examines the intermedial transmissions between theater and painting even further. In the first scene, Castellucci creates an esthetic similar to the abstract art of Rothko and Malevich, exclusively with theatrical means: the theater machinery of the stage, the side wings, the stage house, ropes, projectors and lighting. As such, the stage is devoid of any human presence, and the moving objects become the visual protagonists of the performance. The backstage crew operates the movement of the objects and the intricate light architecture, but remains hidden until the end of the show, when they appear onstage together with Lavinia Bertotti to greet the audience (Eiermann 231). In carrying to its limits theater's potential to literally revive painting in a live setting, the performance shows great similarities with the Bauhaus idea of the mechanical stage (*Mechanische Bühne*), in which theater becomes a visual scenography of concrete and abstract figures in space (Siebenbrodt and Schöbe 178-179; Bajkay 73-74). Explicitly staging theater as painting, the performance shows an excess of the virtual over the actual (Eiermann 231) in which the semi-transparent veil plays a crucial role. For one, the veil epitomizes the two-dimensionality of painting and photography within the theater space by flattening the stage. In this process, the veil becomes a medium that mediates and transforms the panels that are moving behind it:

> Because something is happening behind it, the veil surfaces as a medium. And because it of this, what happens behind it appears in an object-like way: the moving objects do not present themselves as ecstatically

present things but rather as objects in constant withdrawal. (Eiermann 233, my translation)[7]

This way, the veil becomes an "inconsistent intermediary" (*inkonsistenter Vermittler*) and points to a critique of the spectacle that abandons the hope of an immediate and unmediated access to reality, which André Eiermann connects with the notion of "postspectacular theater"; a kind of theater that critically explores mediation instead of focusing on theater's alleged immediacy (233 and 17).[8] In this sense, the veil visualizes and embodies the intermedial transaction between painting and theater by paradoxically obscuring the theater stage and the moving objects behind it.

In the last scene of the performance, where the live enactment of abstract esthetics is substituted for a virtual cinematic emanation, the traditional dramatic way of seeing from the beginning of the performance is unsettled even further. Whereas the preceding scene still uses the three-dimensionality of the theater space and flattens it by means of the veil, the last part exchanges the semi-transparent veil for a non-transparent projection screen. Here, Castellucci reduces theater to a two-dimensional flat surface, resembling the spatial and spectatorial logics of watching cinema. This specific intermediality of theater and cinema challenges the temporality of theater to a great extent: is it still possible to speak of a live event unfolding in a delineated space and in front of a co-present audience, when the only thing that is visible, is a two-dimensional projection of colors and shapes? This question is not easy to answer, but it is beyond dispute that this scene introduces a cinematic viewing experience within the theater. Importantly, however, it is difficult to reduce this experience to a passive mode of spectatorship, because of the explicit abstraction of the visual projection. This way, Castellucci uses the cinematic way of looking in a context of denarrativization (an aspect we will return to shortly), pushing the spectator into an "in-between" position and obliging him to look subjectively, making subjective connections, associations and dream images with the abstruse nature of the projection. Interestingly, the performance ends with the appearance of singer Lavinia Bertotti (whose role is simply called "The Voice") and in this sense reintroduces a theatrical way of seeing. Bertotti theatrically drawing the theater curtains shut at the end of the performance, epitomizes this confrontation between cinema and theater beautifully.

Generally, *M.#10 Marseille* presents us with a rather radical form of visual dramaturgy, in which the three-dimensional theater stage is gradually reduced to the two-dimensionality of the picture plane and the cinematic screen. In doing so,

the performance stages visuality *as an event*, as a clash of different temporalities, conventions and esthetics that comes forth out of the transactions of different media (theater, painting, photography and cinema).[9] This effectively puts forward the concept of visuality as a process unfolding live, in real time and in front of an audience. As *M.#10 Marseille* combines the temporalities of these different media, the performance furthers an active engagement with the image that is subjective to a considerable extent but that is also shaped by the intersubjective macro-level of specific and historical scopic regimes.

Let us first elaborate the subjective side of this active engagement. Castellucci chooses the strategy of denarrativization in order to play with different spectatorial attitudes. As the performance progresses more and more toward an abstract visual scenography, it moves away from narrative and its focalizing logic (that was still at work in the first scene of the performance). By gradually taking away the narrative grip, *M.#10 Marseille* gently attributes the spectator a more active role in the process of looking, in which the subjective aspects of seeing (personal associations, connections and experiences) become more important as the performance moves to greater visual abstraction. As such, the performance introduces a new mode of subjective perception in which the spectator actively and personally engages with what is seen. In this sense, it could be said that the spectator becomes the main focalizer for creating a personal narrative, a subjective meaning from what is seen. In *Focalizing Bodies* (2011), Maya van den Heuvel-Arad argues that the body of the performer in postdramatic theater can serve as a visual narrator and an external focalizer in narrative-based postdramatic theater (12-13). In the analysis of different case studies, she shows how the body of the performer can take on the role of a focalizer of narrative action through verbal description or bodily presence, like the camera does visually in film (15). Focalization is the process that draws attention to the position from which things, people and events are seen and also how this subjective position mediates the vision presented to us. Focalization helps to clarify how such subjective positions implied within the address presented to us by, for example, theatre performances, invite us to take up these positions, identifying with the point of view they present us with. (Bleeker *Visuality in the Theatre* 28)

Although *M.#10 Marseille* moves beyond (visual) narrative, as the analysis already demonstrated, the narratological concept of focalization is interesting in understanding an important shift in the focalizing action that takes place during the performance. Whereas the performance opens with a classical set-up of drama, in which the focalizing agents are the performers who verbally focus the

spectator's attention on a narrative, the second part of the performance leaves this focalizing agency completely open. Devoid of any human presence onstage, the visual scenography of light, colors and shapes no longer narrates, nor does it guide the spectator through a well-delineated dramatic action. As a result, the spectator is left with a radically de-narrativized visual dramaturgy that invites the spectator to take up the role of an external focalizer that falls back on subjective experiences, associations and connections in order to make sense (or even narrative meaning, if at all possible) of the excess of virtuality on the stage. This way, *M.#10 Marseille* draws attention to the subjective relation between the subject and object of seeing, illustrating the spectator's constitutive relationship within representation.

Recalling the triad of visuality as an event that unfolds between the subject of vision, the object of vision and its mediators, it is also important to look at the intersubjective mediators that influence vision. *M.#10 Marseille* shows how different media initiate different processes of looking that all meet their respective temporalities, conventions and logics. By pushing the transactions between these different media to their limits, the performance pulls the audience out of its passive comfort zone, positioning the spectator between media, their temporalities and ways of looking. As such, *M.#10 Marseille* pushes for an active involvement of the spectator in what is seen. This way, the performance promotes the individual gaze of the spectator to the center of meaning-making. In its intricate staging of the image (and of media) *as* performance, *M.#10 Marseille* becomes a self-critical and self-aware visual dramaturgy, a "critical vision machine" that reflects on the processes of making and perceiving images (Bleeker *Visuality in the Theatre*). Rather than being a mere exercise in deconstructing ways of seeing, theater here also becomes political, as it shows how mediation *works*. In positioning different media within the time and space of the theater, *M.#10 Marseille* offers a reflection on the effects of mediation and even on image formation. Consequently, the performance stimulates an awareness of how images work, and can even play a part in the much debated need for 'visual literacy'; the skill of being able to read and interpret images as complex social, cultural and medial constructions (Elkins). Without a doubt, this competence has become paramount in today's highly technological society and its cultures of mediation.

Bringing Images to Life

There is, however, one central aspect of *M.#10 Marseille*'s visuality that risks to remain in the dark when only focusing on its function of a critical stage for

examining ways of seeing and their cultures of mediation. What stands a chance to be neglected, is the fact that the performance also aims to seduce and intoxicate its audience with enthralling visual scenes. The performance accomplishes a magical fascination with the image coming to life on the theater stage, which is not merely a mental but also a visceral, bodily act. As such, the performance goes beyond any easy meta-critique on visuality. In the different scenes, Castellucci experiments with bringing the image onstage and bringing it to life in the spatio-temporal structure of the theater. In the first part, this happens quite literally, when the conversation of the married couple gets interrupted time and again with *tableaux vivants*. Here, live performers turn still-life images into live images, embodying their poses and expressions in a choreography of arrested movement. Or to put it even stronger: they transform images into *living* images. This becomes even more clear in the second part of the performance, when the stage is devoid of any human presence, and instead displays an intricate choreography of lights and shapes. In this scene, the visual language of minimalist painters like Rothko and Malevich is brought onstage and is brought to life, visualizing their paintings as choreographies that happen in the shared time and space that is typical for theater. As such, the performance explores an animistic attitude toward the image as a live and living entity, turning theater into a medium for (re)animating the image.

In first instance, this magical aspect of *M.#10 Marseille*'s visuality might strike one as strange or antiquated, as contemporary Western culture is mostly critical of animistic practices, rejecting them as customs from a long-forgotten past. Nevertheless, there seems to be an *animistic turn* (if one wishes to think in the logic and temporality of 'turns') to which also the visual dramaturgy of *M.#10 Marseille* testifies. Nowadays, there seems to be in impulse to attribute objects and non-living entities with a sort of spirit and an active competence for interaction.[10] We no longer exclusively use our telephone to interact with other people, but we also talk with the device itself, asking it how the weather will be or requesting it to schedule an appointment in our calendar. This fascination with intelligent technologies that are so smart that they seem to be able to think (or at least: to process human thought), is widespread and testifies to the current inclination to humanize our world of (oftentimes technological) objects. This kind of animism is of course far from new, as even the oldest civilizations attributed magical life to images, sculptures and other works of art.

What is new, however, is that this animistic attitude has also become a central theme in thinking about visuality in general. We already mentioned how visual studies looks into the *performance* of images, investigating how they actively

create meaning as social, ideological and political constructions. Here, one finds the idea that images are capable of some form of thought and that they are able to speak to us in a non-discursive way. Although this idea has a long prehistory in art historical thinking of the twentieth century, it has only recently been taken seriously, when W.J.T. Mitchell explicitly asked the question "What do Pictures want?" (6). Interestingly, Mitchell formulates the question as a reiteration of Sigmund Freud's question "What does a woman want?" and Frantz Fanon's question "What does a black man want?", rhetorically equating the image with suppressed realities. Even more interesting in this context is the fact that Mitchell proposes to think of images as living organism and to question their desires *as if* they were alive. He describes this attitude as a "double consciousness", a concept he borrows from American sociologist William Edward Burghardt Du Bois to describe the double take toward images in contemporary culture, treating them not only as mere objects, but oftentimes also as magical entities with own desires and powers:

> How is it, in other words, that people are able to maintain a 'double consciousness' towards images, pictures and representations in a variety of media, vacillating between magical beliefs and skeptical doubts, naive animism and hardheaded materialism, mystical and critical attitudes? (Mitchell *What Do Pictures Want?* 7)

M.#10 Marseille creates this kind of double consciousness, staging the image in theater as self-reflective and critical device for questioning image politics while at the same time reviving the image as a magical entity, as a living image that fascinates and enthralls audiences. This way, Castellucci positions the theater both as a space for reflection and critical thought, as well as for poetic and mystical fascination. This combination of an actively involved spectator and the magical bedazzlement might startle one, as they seem to constitute opposite sides in the spectatorial experience. The clear tension between these attitudes prevents an all too easy reconciliation between both, but offers an interesting stepping stone to deal with visuality (and visual literacy) not merely as an abstract exercise in deconstructing the image, but also as an enthralling and fascinating experience. Steering a middle course between deconstruction and fascination, between the critical and the mystical, this approach heralds a new and interesting way of dealing with visuality, going beyond iconoskepticism and moving in the direction of an iconocritical attitude facing the image.

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[1] This article was published in the electronic journal *Image [&] Narrative*, accessible on: http://www.imageandnarrative.be/inarchive/thinking_pictures/rottger_jackob.htm (accessed 02/10/2015). The article consists of seven key arguments and subtitles. As the e-article has no page numbers, we will refer to the numbers of the subtitles for the exact location of the mentioned quotes.

[2] "Es handelt sich um die *Relation* von inszeniertem Blick (durch das Medium), dem Wahrgenommenen (Bild) und dem Wahrnehmenden (Körper des Menschen)" (Jackob and Röttger, *Ab Der Schwelle Zum Sichtbaren* 243, original emphasis).

[3] Bleeker uses the concept, following Martin Jay's "Scopic Regimes of Modernity", in which he borrows the term 'scopic regime' from the French film theorist Christian Metz. He introduces the concept in his 1975 study *The Imaginary Signifier* to distinguish between the cinematic scopic regime and the theatrical. Jay, however, generalizes its interpretation, arguing that the different visualities that were at work throughout history, constitute different scopic regimes, which at times competed with one another, or succeeded each other.

[4] "Was in einem Moment eine manifeste Wand zu sein scheint, erscheint im nächste Augenblick als Illumination oder gar als bloßer Schatten. Was sich im einen Moment sehr nahe hinter der Leinwand zu befinden scheint, verwandelt sich kurz darauf in eine weit entfernte Erscheinung oder umgekehrt" (Eiermann 230).

[5] This article was first published in 2015 in a French translation, entitled "Questionner l' "Entre": Une Approche Méthodologique pour l'Analyse de la Performance Intermédiale" (2015). I will refer to Röttger's so far unpublished original English manuscript for quotation (including page numbers) (2015). The English manuscript is available here: http://www.uva.nl/binaries/content/documents/personalpages/r/o/k.e.rottger/en/tab-four/tab-four/cpitem%5B3%5D/asset?1360852800459 (accessed 10/06/2016).

6 For an in-depth analysis of photography's fossilizing nature, I refer to Barthes (150) who focuses on the *memento mori* quality of the movement and to Bazin (12) who stresses the counterpart of that arresting process, namely photography's process of mummification.

7 "Weil sich hinter der Leinwand etwas abspielt, tritt sie als Medium in Erscheinung. Und weil sie als Medium in Erscheinung tritt, erscheint das sich hinter ihr Abspielende objekthaft, erscheinen die sich hinter ihr bewegenden Gegenstände nicht als ekstatisch-gegenwärtige Dinge, sondern als sich stets entziehende Objekte" (Eiermann 233).

8 Eiermann anchors his notion of postspectacular theater in the psychoanalytical discourse of Jacques Lacan. In this regard, he also analyzes the double function of the veil in *M.#10 Marseille* from that perspective. For the analysis, I refer to Eiermann (230-238).

9 It should also be noted that *M.#10 Marseille* challenges the much-contested concept of medium-specificy that has been put forward by Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried. Although different media indeed have their 'own' spatio-temporal logics and effects, hybrid performances like *M.#10 Marseille* illustrate how these media react on and interact with each other. In effect, the performance points at the impurity of media, a concept that W.J.T. Mitchell uses to refute the modernist restrictive focus on specificity and absorption (Mitchell, *There Are No Visual Media* 395).

10 In an interview, visual artist an theater maker Kris Verdonck remarked the same phenomenon: "Could it be that all devices we have, our smartphones, laptops,… are actually magical things? It is absolutely incredible what these devices are capable of with regard to communication, coordination, registration and so on. If you push it to its limits, they become really 'high-tech' and then you discover the potential of these devices. In this sense they are indeed 'magical.'" (Verdonck and van Baarle 206-207).