

Painting, Photography, and the Digital

Painting, Photography, and the Digital:

Crossing the Borders of the Mediums

Edited by

Carl Robinson

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PREFACE

Painting, Photography, and the Digital: Crossing the Borders of the Mediums is the third in the series of anthologies looking at the interconnections between the three titular mediums in contemporary art practices. I have discussed the lack of writing around the associations between painting, photography, and the digital in the previous two books, *PaintingDigitalPhotography...* and *PhotographyDigitalPainting...*, so will not press the point here.¹ I will note again, though, that I anticipate these collections of essays will begin to address this gap by providing much needed thinking on the subject.

As with the previous texts, this publication stems from a symposium—*DigitalPaintingPhotography* (2021)—which brought together contributions from that forum into this book.² For the earlier events, relevant proposals were selected from the call-out for papers in response to the theme (the relationship of the mediums in various ways) whilst I contacted one or two artists to contribute. I began formulating the *DigitalPaintingPhotography* convention differently, however, by approaching artists whose practices explore a painting/photography or photography/painting dynamic in relation to the digital and asking them to be involved before sending the call-out for papers. I did this as I intended the focus of the two days to be primarily around investigations into the physical connections of painting/photography/digital in *picture-making*. The artists I had discovered since the publication of the last book whose practices made these connections excited me and I was keen to include them in this research.³ I believe such picture-making is critical to understanding what is meant by “medium” in relation to painting and photography in the digital age. I therefore liaised with artists who test and stretch the frame of the medium through practices, which are,

¹ Carl Robinson, *Paintingdigitalphotography: Synthesis and Difference in the Age of Media Equivalence* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), and Carl Robinson, *PhotographyDigitalPainting: Expanding Medium Interconnectivity in Contemporary Visual Art Practices* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020).

² <https://carlrobinson2958.wixsite.com/my-site>.

³ I had contacted Alison Goodyear and Dan Hays before the second symposium, although they were both unable to contribute at that time.

to quote Rosalind Krauss (b.1941), “latent in the traditional connection of ‘medium’ to matters of technique.”⁴

All those I located agreed to contribute to the symposium and this book, and outlining their interrelated painting/photography/digital practices in the call-out for papers elicited responses from researchers working and thinking in similar ways. It will therefore be found that a number of the texts included in this anthology focus on that painting/photography/digital association, with some centring on the photography/digital/painting connection, and others a painting/photography relationship. This shaping of the anthology naturally limits the number of practices foregrounding a more purely digital type of research from being reviewed here. Future symposiums and books will, no doubt, explicate the ongoing study into these other areas, which will broaden the scope of the investigation.

In shaping the two-day symposium, I considered how to bring together different thoughts across a range of interrelated practices to create a cohesive whole. For the event, I arranged the sixteen papers into groupings, such as “Painting-Digital/Photography,” “Digital-Photography/Painting,” “Photography-Digital/Painting,” and so on. Bracketing the mediums in this way runs counter to my position that the interconnections between painting, photography, and the digital are formed as a type of rhizome, all intertwining laterally with each other, which I touched on in the “Preface” to the second book.⁵ However, aligning practices and medium cross-over in the ways noted above was intended to make the mass of associated concepts outlining interconnectivity more comprehensible for delegates over the two days.

I attempted to begin compiling the essays for this book in similar fashion to how I approached the symposium, by grouping connected ways of working, concerns, and themes to enable the reader to work their way through definable areas of research. As there are clear links between some of the practices, I thought it might be possible to simply frame the texts into distinct groups, although I quickly surrendered this notion as the multiplicity of connections across the whole undermined such rigidity. This fluidity of connection between and across the mediums, where new links appear as the practices are studied more closely, is reassuring as it underlines the never-ending intertwining of them, which defies fixing.

Even so, I have placed some of the essays together where I see there are clear associations between practices and theories exploring the mediums. For instance, both Mick Finch and Frances Woodley utilise photographic

⁴ Rosalind Krauss, “*A Voyage on the North Sea*”: *Art in the Age of the Post Medium Condition* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000), 7.

⁵ Carl Robinson, “Preface,” in *PhotographyDigitalPainting*., xvii.

sources to create digital collages and I have therefore put their essays together at the start of the book. Rhys Himsworth also uses found photographic source material from the internet and, consequently, he follows on from Woodley. Till Julian Huss's thoughts on software as a state of mind appears to naturally link to Alison Goodyear's approach to practice, (amongst several of the other artists included in the book) so I have positioned his text before hers as a lead into her essay. Theresia Stipp's and my essays, which both study aspects of the painted-on-photograph, naturally complement each other and therefore sit together, and so on.

However, there is also an infinite number of subtler linkages across all the outlined practices. Take, for example, Clare Strand's *The Discrete Channel With Noise*,⁶ which she discusses in her essay. Strand, ever conscious of being classified as a photographer (even though she has not made a photograph for the last ten years) is emphatic that she was not a painter whilst producing this body of work. Yet, I would argue that her process of breaking down the photographic image into discrete elements of data, which she then painted in single blocks of tone in the creation of this piece, is exactly that employed by Dan Hays in his painting practice. Obviously, the conceptual locus of Strand's research centres on noise that interferes with the transmission of image through an intermediate conduit, one medium to another. Hays, on the other hand, creates paintings translated directly from the digital photographic image. Nevertheless, whilst Strand's is a somewhat simplistic process compared to Hays's ultra-sophisticated technique, the method of output in creating their pictures is the same for both artists working through these practices. This is one link to and from Strand's work outlined here, but there are others. Another example, for instance, is the materiality of her *The Discrete Channel*... connecting to the materiality of Saunders's, Abbie Schug's, and Hays's practices, as well as Dawn Woolley's painted on Smartphones, painted-on-photographs in general, Goodyear's painting slipping between the physical and the virtual, and Martin Lang's mixing of painting, photography, and digital manipulation. The blurring of painting / photography distinctions in Elias Wessel's works—discussed by Frances Guerin—relates to a number of the practices such as Saunders's, Strand's, Schug's, and Lang's. Himsworth's practice not only connects to Finch's and Woodley's working methods, but his theme of landscape also links to Hay's use of landscape imagery, albeit that these artists have different concerns drawing them to work with this motif. There are further associations between these two, with both, for example, recognising certain inherent impossibilities embedded in their practices, which, if anything, drive

⁶ Page 210.

them forward: Himsworth declares that his work “romantically and hopelessly, attempt[s] to connect to a distant landscape from the location of the computer screen”⁷; Hays announces that he is engaged in a “forlorn battle to keep up with the tsunami of visual information distributed online.”⁸ Hays’s painting, in taking directly from digital sources, connects to Schug’s as she attempts to translate AI generated imagery into pigment. Unmoored from a sense of a single “reality,” Schug’s concern resonates with Lang’s questioning of the “Truth in Painting” centring on events from 1993, which in turn could be seen to have echoes to Woolley and Zara Worth’s ideas around shifting interpretations and possible meanings of painting transmitted through social media (which echoes with Strand’s work). In part of her writing, Rahma Khazam investigates the nature of painting drawn into video, understood as “live” painting, and Saunders touches on how he extends his painting/photography practice through video animation, which hovers between the analogue and the digital. This exploration of the space between analogue and digital is to be found across nearly all the practices outlined here.

Given I have brought together artists and theorists writing around interconnections of the three mediums, it comes as no surprise to find that underlying ideas, supported by the same sources, repeatedly occur across the different texts. “Nonhuman agency,” thoughts around the blurring of the “on-line” and “off-line,” transmission and migration of images, movement between mediums from and back into social media, and artists’ interrogation of the interstices between the mediums are just a few of the concepts that echo across the writing. Isabelle Graw’s writings on painting are drawn on no less than ten times across five essays. This not only testifies to her critical thinking around the place of painting today, which informs the literature, but also indicates the cohesion of thinking and approaches within and across the practices and methodologies discussed in this book. Carol Armstrong’s thoughts help reinforce the arguments in three of the essays, and, likewise, Krauss’s theories are employed in three. Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) is referred to in six texts, with Clement Greenberg (1909-1994), Michel Foucault (1926-1984), and Jacques Lacan (1901-1981) in two.

What is striking, however, is how very similar, and even identical non-academic references associated with the practices appear in different essays. For example, *Google Street view* is referred to in two of the texts, and both Hays and Saunders mention the Jacquard loom in relation to the matrix, with which both are concerned as a grounding for their work. These artists also

⁷ Page 63.

⁸ Page 185.

refer to the importance of water in their practice—one as the material source for analogue photographic working methods, the other as a metaphor for the fluidity of the digital. Saunders hopes that possible moiré effects, created in the projection of digitally animated images onto woven screens, will disrupt viewing and interpretation of the image. This is extraordinarily similar to Schug's preoccupation with solarisation effects occurring on the digital screen, affecting and reframing the digital image when viewed from certain angles, which she can then translate into her painting. Both Huss and Strand comment on Paul Delaroche's (1797-1856) pronouncement on the death of painting, and both also make reference to Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946). Hays and I remark on Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917), and both Lang and Shug refer to the films of Steve Spielberg.

These are just a few of the connections that appear to me in the texts, and I am aware that others will present themselves to the reader as they work their way through the anthology. As with the previous books, I have encouraged the contributors to write in the voice they feel is appropriate to expressing their ideas and concerns. Thus, the tone of each essay is unique, ranging from the informally anecdotal to the more rigorously formal. This, I believe, adds to the richness of the whole anthology, which, I anticipate will prove fascinating to read. I hope, therefore, that given the diverse, yet interlinking concerns expressed here, this book will inspire greater research into relationships between painting, photography, and the digital in today's art practices.

Carl Robinson, June 2022.

THE ESSAYS

Mick Finch's body of digital collages, entitled *The Book of Knowledge*, explores the transcription and ordering of photographic elements to question the potential signs and power relationships of images. Finch takes photographic sources from the post-war encyclopaedia *The Book of Knowledge* and digitally rearranges and resettles them into forms that subvert the original aspirational and prejudiced views they presented. This method of adjusting the potential cultural meaning of images through their transmission and migration to other states takes inspiration from Aby Warburg's (1866-1929) photographic displays, which mapped relationships between works of art as a means of drawing attention to movement between pagan and renaissance cultures. Finch's digital flattening of his manipulated photographic representations brings about a metaphorical flattening of any potential hierarchy of orders they may suggest. This approach has parallels to the flatbed picture plane on which rearrangements of thoughts can adhere.

Similar to Finch's methods, Frances Woodley creates digital and material collages from digital photographic reproductions of northern European paintings linked to the still life tradition. Digital manipulation and digital painting have enabled Woodley to develop an interconnected practice across studio and screen, which anchors her post-internet practice to the historical tradition of picture-making. She arranges her essay into two parts: the first considers completed works, whilst the second explores interconnected practice as method. Through this, Woodley addresses the question of anachrony in post-internet practice, (a feature of the internet that makes reproductions of historical images from multiple time zones coexist simultaneously). Her current work questions how such anachrony can be brought into dialogue with historical painting's anachronicity, its chronologies, traditions, and allegories.

Rhys Himsworth also draws on photographic source material found on the internet to create his digital pictures, which bring attention to the perilous state of the natural environment through the imagery of landscapes and flora printed onto substrates made up of crushed, recycled, electronic material. Himsworth not only explains the process of making the works with modi-

fied digital printing equipment, recycled into types of painting paraphernalia; importantly, he also clarifies how his sourcing of materials from the vast wasteland of discarded consumer electronics in China is a means of opening discussion around today's shifting geopolitical landscapes and economies. Neither solely painting, photography, or digital, Himsworth understands these printing practices as operating in the spaces between the three mediums.

Several artists who provide essays in this book engage in practices that move between painting and the digital. Till Julian Huss's thinking on painting and software as a state of mind, therefore, provides a useful addition to these texts. He argues that when understood as an aesthetic attitude aligned to the structure of the medium, painting becomes a state of mind. Likewise, the use of digital techniques applied to painting can be thought of as a software state of mind. Huss explores the work of four contemporary artists to underline his position that artists who develop paintings anchored in digital imagery employ a software state of mind in their practices. Huss sees these painterly / digital strategies as forming an overall mediality state of mind.

Alison Goodyear writes about her painting practice—which moves between the painterly, photographic, and digital/virtual realities—to investigate the painter-beholder—painting-beholder relationship. She takes Michael Fried's (b. 1939) theories on this subject to question whether the beholder's relationship to the artwork alters when the encounter shifts from a more traditional viewing of a two-dimensional painting to the immersive experience of the virtual space. Goodyear also draws on Denis Diderot's (1713-1784) thoughts on spectator immersion in the fictive landscapes of Claude-Joseph Vernet (1714-1789) to underline the parallel, actual, immersive experience for the viewer in her non-narrativized VR landscapes. These considerations frame the practice of her virtual environments, which evolve out of her physical paint palettes and underpin her thinking around "painting as place."

Dawn Woolley and Zara Worth write about their own and Casper White's practices, which reflect on, and engage with, social media as a means of questioning how digital cultures may have come to fill the void created by the loss of religion in secular life. The lack of distinction between the "on-line" and "off-line" has created a potential fluidity between the virtual and the real, and White's, Woolley's, and Worth's practices explore this unsettled space between the physical and the digital. Each artist employs different methodologies to investigate the transformation of digital subjects into ma-

terial forms, which brings attention to the immateriality of the divine. Digital liquidity becomes fixed in the materiality of these artists' paintings, to be re-transformed into the mutable as they circulate through the networked world of *Instagram*.

Martin Lang's essay focusses on his ongoing body of work "The Truth in Painting 1993," which employs painting, photography, and digital manipulation brought together in pictures that depict events from 1993. He anticipates that both the lack of certainty around the mediums used, and the occasions depicted in the works, will spur viewers to question notions of socially constructed and mind-independent truths connected to incidents of that time. Lang frames his work in relation to ideas of slippage of the work of art as a single, unique, entity in Jacques Derrida's (1930-2004) "The Truth in Painting" and Enrico Terrone's concept of "standards of correctness" in "The Post-truth in Painting." This positions his work in a "post-truth" world, where the "truth is out there," but which cannot always be clearly defined and understood.

Following on from questions around the truth that lies behind the image, Abbie Schug outlines her continuing project *After Image*, which centres on a painting practice formed of painted mediations of digital data, giving the appearance of the human being. Schug understands her research is a conscious statement about the representation of image that is metarepresentation. This shifting from data-based imagery—itsself AI created within the computer—to painting raises questions around viewing and perception of what lies on the border between being and quasi-being. Schug explicates the stages of her working practice, which encompasses forms of visual mutation, interference, and noise in the development of mutable digital images that become fixed in the painting process. These pictures have a profound sense of reality to them, whilst holding a significant feel of the virtual.

Dan Hays takes an anecdotal approach to his essay as he relates how his painting of the pixelated digital image stems from the impression that low-resolution television screens, video games, and VHS video recordings made on his child's eye. As he developed his practice, early data-compressed digital images thus resonated with him and provided both the visual imagery and the methodological means for creating his paintings. His painstaking method of laying down one coloured dot at a time to represent each pixel in the image throws painting's slowly mediated and opaque fixedness and the digital's technologically fluid and transparent immediacy into sharp relief.

Hays notes, however, that the increasing pixel density of the electronic image presents an ever-greater challenge to his painterly translations, obliging him to devise new strategies to extend his painting, which comments on the digitally saturated world.

Clare Strand articulates how her work *The Discrete Channel with Noise* centres on the transmission of data in its channelling of the photograph into painting through an encoding, decoding, and recoding method. Disruptions affecting the movement from one medium to the other—such as breaking the image down into a simplified grid, verbally communicating and aurally re-interpreting this, paint's materiality, and the imperfect artistic mediation in re-forming the picture—is the “noise” that disrupts the message. Whilst this scrambling and re-ordering of the data brings a semblance of the original source material, this has changed into a new form, providing new meanings. Strand remarks on the potential for this movement to be never-ending, as the photograph turns into painting, to be reconstituted as digital image again when it re-enters the world of photo-documentation and social media.

Theresa Stipp looks at aspects of the painted-on photograph in her essay, which, she stresses, is a method of artmaking that has had surprisingly little attention paid to it in the literature. She examines a selection of three artists' painted-on photographic works from *Placing Deliberately. Painted-on Photography in Contemporary Art*, an exhibition she helped put together. Stipp looks at aspects of “correction,” deletion, and mediation in these works as part of her framing questions around the indexicality and temporality of the mediums. Ultimately, Stipp considers the function of painting and photography, where the “presentness” of the painting stirs the “pastness” of the photograph. Drawing these concepts out from such a small selection of painted-on photographs underlines the need for much further investigation into this practice.

In looking at authorship associated with the painted-on-photograph, Carl Robinson's essay naturally compliments Stipp's thoughts on this subject. Robinson argues that in painting on the photograph, the artist takes ownership of the original work and re-authors this into a new, singular, art object. He understands these pictures as being neither painting nor photograph, but a new type of artwork that is the “painted-on-photograph.” To explore aspects of authorship in such practices, Robinson takes four acclaimed artists' painted-on-photographic works, which challenge or affirm assumptions to do with artmaking, and particularly the artist's shifting position and author-

ity within art practices. As with Stipp's essay, Robinson's studying one aspect of the painted-on-photograph demonstrates this field of inquiry demands further research.

Writing about Elias Wessel's recent output, Frances Guerin focusses on his exhibition of large-scale digital photographs *Die Summe meiner Daten* (*The Sum of My Data*) 2017, displayed at the Hôtel de Beauharnais in Paris in 2020. These works are typical of Wessel's approach to picture-making, which involves layering, blending, and blurring of distinctions between analogue and digital mediums. With their impression of a painterly aesthetic, the pictures appear to hover between painting and photography, materiality and ephemerality, the bodily and the spiritual. It is these indeterminate spaces, the interstice, that Guerin studies in her analysis of what gives Wessel's work its particular impact. Hung in the Beauharnais next to imposing portraits from the late eighteenth century, the photographs assume a grandeur that belies the source from which they originated and the medium in which they are executed.

Matt Saunders takes the opportunity to reflect on where his resolutely analogue approach to picture-making—which centres on creating photographic works through painterly, material, approaches—is presently positioned. Saunders explains his current fascination with the implications of the weave, embedded and embodied within the creation of the artwork. In being the ground for the picture, the weave of the fabric is the matrix that forms both the physical materiality and the visual grain of the work. Extending his thinking on the significance of the matrix, Saunders draws on Bracha Ettinger's (b.1948) writing on the matrixal borderspace, which offers ideas on the spatial positioning of transformative encounters between the "I" and the "non-I." For Saunders, this concept is a signal to the space between painting and photography within which he plays.

In her essay, Rahma Khazam considers the blurring of the borders between the mediums in contemporary art practices, focusing on their technological and nonhuman dimension. Khazam points out that digital technology is enabling ever more complex interrelations between painting, photography, animation, and video. To examine these crossovers, she divides her essay into three parts: the first looks at practices that combine painting with digital photography and video; the second takes examples of works positioned between the still photograph and the moving image; the third investigates works that combine these disciplines and mediums. Khazam explores the impact of human and nonhuman agency on the technological production

and reception of these works, and the ways in which they decentre the human subject, rendering aspects of reality inaccessible to us.

THE BOUNDED AND THE SYNOPTIC: THE ARCHIVE AND PHOTOGRAPHIC APPROPRIATION

MICK FINCH

In this essay I will discuss my studio practice in the form of a series I have been working on since 2014 entitled *The Book of Knowledge*. This will be in relation to my wider studio practice that has impacted on my thinking. Important to this discussion is the art historian Aby Warburg's (1866-1929) use of photography, most famously in the form of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* which was a visual manifestation of what he called the *pathos formula*. I will also use aspects of Bruno Latour's (b. 1947) 1985 essay "Visualisation and Cognition: Drawing Things Together," as a conceptual counterpoint that unwittingly proposes an attitude toward collage in relation to methodologies related to photographic secondary material.¹ Most famously, Warburg's central interest was the transition from the pagan to the renaissance. To be more precise Warburg focused on pagan culture's *nachleben*² its survival, after-life, or metamorphosis in the renaissance and until the present day. He collected images of gestures of self-defence to represent a vast pictorial manifestation of social memory in relation to questions of survival. His research demanded essentially an iconological basis and the technical means to capture the flows and superimpositions of pictorial migration across panoramic timeframes. His methodology progressively moved from compilations of research material, in the form of final academic texts, to privileging alternative forms of image-led monstration, as was the case of the *Mnemosyne Atlas* (Fig. 1.1).

From the early years of the twentieth century until his death in 1929, Warburg identified the mobility and migration of images as the driving force of the renaissance that brought about a pagan afterlife. To explore this

¹ Bruno Latour, "Visualisation and Cognition: Drawing Things Together," in *Knowledge and Society Studies in the Sociology of Culture Past and Present* (Bingley: Jai Press, 1985), 1-40.

² *Nachleben* translates here as "after life."

idea, he developed and managed an image-led methodology to focus on objects of cultural transmission.



Fig. 1.1. Aby Warburg, Panel 6 of the Mnemosyne Atlas, 1928-1929, dimension unknown, Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg, Hamburg. © The Warburg Institute, London.

This activity in turn created a practice that used images to map relationships between works of art. This practice necessitated the means to produce photographic images at a technically advanced level. Even before the construction of the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg (KBW), his own purpose-built library in Hamburg, he had not only established a considerable library but also a sophisticated technical apparatus that facilitated the projection and production of photographic images. From the early nineteenth hundreds he staged exhibitions which foregrounded photographs and other reproductions of key primary material where text took the back seat. This

led to his largely unrealised *Mnemosyne Atlas* project, which was made in the last years of his life.

In “Visualisation and Cognition: Drawing Things Together” Bruno Latour discusses the divide between prescientific and scientific culture.³ The emergence of the latter he attributes, in great part, to the emergence of inscriptions as “immutable objects.” He says:

you have to invent objects which have the properties of being mobile but also immutable, presentable, readable and combinable with one another. More exactly, it is possible to overestimate the inscription, but not the setting in which the cascade of ever more written and numbered inscriptions is produced. What we are really dealing with is the staging of a scenography in which attention is focused on one set of dramatized inscriptions. The setting works like a giant “optical device” that creates a new laboratory, a new type of vision and a new phenomenon to look at...Boyle, for instance, in the fascinating account of his vacuum pump experiment... had to invent not only the phenomenon, but the instrument to make it visible, the set-up in which the instrument was displayed...⁴

A set-up here is analogous to a dispositive. Warburg’s focus upon the migration of images in many ways necessitated the construction of dispositives whose function was as optical devices, in a way that can be equated with Latour’s account. Like a seventeenth century scientist, Warburg is confronted by cascades of inscriptions of different modalities that are in turn re-combinations of appropriated artefacts. This process of spoliation is central to Warburg’s mapping of the afterlife of pagan culture. At its heart, it is the engrammatic transmission through the medium of the image that marks his methodology. Warburg was interested in the process in simple organisms as a metaphor for memory retrieval. The mapping of gestures between works is equivalent to recording mnemonic transmissions and transformations between images. Warburg’s concerns differ from a scientific relationship to the “cascade of inscriptions” that Latour describes. Warburg is as much interested in the relationships and intervals between images and their clustering within cultural contexts. His concern is with transmission and migration as forces that underpin iconographic transformation as a complex form of cultural memory and agency.

More precisely, not only photography became important to Warburg but the ability to organise several photographic images on a single plane became the important synoptic optical device. Synoptic here is the ability to see many things together; in this case, clusters of related images pertaining to a

³ Latour, “Visualisation and Cognition: Drawing Things Together,” 1-40.

⁴ Latour, 17-18.

question or an idea. With the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, material was pinned onto black clothed covered boards, photographed, taken apart and reassembled to construct the next board. This, and Warburg's increasing uses of public lectures where he used photographs, book illustrations and prints as key material within a scenography, progressively became the dispositive that made visible and transformed his ideas. This optical device was as much at the heart of his working methodology as it was a means to present his ideas. He not only presented his ideas through the use of dispositives, he also began to think through his ideas by manipulating images using these means, technically in the dark room but also by the act of arranging images on the *Atlas*'s boards. Often the images are of maps, diagrams, or charts. The synoptic aspect here has the characteristic of flattening different orders of representation within a single manipulable and navigable space. This brings to mind Leo Steinberg's (1920-2011) essay of 1972, "The Flatbed Picture Plane."⁵ He discusses the characteristics of a type of space that emerged in the 1950s where heterogeneous elements are brought together in a single space whose specificity he likens to the surface of a desk top, where likewise maps, photographs objects etc. come together in and on a single plane (an interesting aside to what Steinberg identifies here is that the user interface of the computer is a desktop which also gathers together a heterogeneity of elements). Robert Rauschenberg's (1925-2008) work is a strong example of how this operates. Of Rauschenberg's practice, Steinberg says:

Rauschenberg's picture plane had to become a surface to which anything reachable-thinkable would adhere. It had to be whatever a billboard or dashboard is, and everything a projection screen is, with further affinities for anything that is flat and worked-over palimpsest, cancelled plate, printer's proof, trial blank, chart, map, aerial view. Any flat documentary surface that tabulates information is a relevant analogue of his picture plane—radically different from the transparent projection plane with its optical correspondence to man's visual field. And it seemed at times that Rauschenberg's work surface stood for the mind itself—dump, reservoir, switching center, abundant with concrete references freely associated as in an internal monologue—the outward symbol of the mind as a running transformer of the external world, constantly ingesting incoming unprocessed data to be mapped in an overcharged field.⁶

The flatbed picture plain is analogous to the *Atlas*'s boards where the plane of organisation is essentially a plane of data and information.

⁵ Leo Steinberg, "The Flatbed Picture Plane," in *Other Criteria*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), 61-98.

⁶ Steinberg, "The Flatbed Picture Plane," 88.