

# **MEDIA ARCHAEOLOGIES EVENING**

**BARCELONA, DECEMBER 1ST 2017**

**THOMAS  
ELSAESSER  
WOLFGANG  
ERNST  
& DARTS**

Media Archaeologies Evening is organized by the UOC Chair in Design & Multimedia Creation together with DARTS Interdisciplinary Research Group.

In collaboration with:  
La Virreina Centre de la Imatge  
ICUB - Institut de Cultura de Barcelona

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# MEDIA ARCHAEOLOGIES EVENING

The Media Archaeologies Evening stems from the communication and knowledge transfer goals of the UOC Chair in Design & Multimedia Creation, aligned with the research lines of the Interdisciplinary Group DARTS, as well as triggered by the particular interests and trajectories of the researchers involved in the organization of the event.

The aim of this evening was to generate a space for sharing different approaches to the media and art histories, focused on a relatively new framework and methodology for the production of knowledge: the media archaeological approach.

During the last years, media archaeologies have emerged recurrently in the events produced by our group (i.e Art Matters International Conference, Interface Politics International Conference, Speculative Futures of Art, among others) as well as the R&D projects that we have supported. Thus, we understood that the time was ripe for a special meeting focused exclusively on Media Archaeologies. This event has also been intended to provide the fertile soil to promote the creation of a local network able to connect our investigations and initiatives with the international media archaeological landscape.

During the Evening, we took the chance to extend the meanings of Media Archaeology (as an *epistemology / methodology / aesthetics / symptom*) in order to visibilize its divergent frameworks of approach to the pasts/presents/futures of Art and Audiovisual Media and their related practices, infrastructures and agencies.



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Two pioneers of Media Archaeology joined us during the evening: Thomas Elsaesser and Wolfgang Ernst. Through the 'research lenses' and case-studies introduced by both of them, we could take into account perspectives, agents and variables under-explored in the established narratives of Art / Media History. After their presentation, a rich discussion among them, DARTS and the public ensued.

The following pages written by Pau Waelder summarize the richness of this meeting, particularly focused on the final debate.

This Evening was not an end in itself, but the beginning of a dialogue on the alternative methods to address residual, marginal and alternative media, arts histories, materialities, agencies and infrastructures that we would like to continue promoting. With this aim, we are editing a follow-up of the event in the form of a special issue on media archeologies and variantologies in the Artnodes Journal on Art, Science and Technology.

**PAU ALSINA, VANINA HOFMAN, ANA RODRÍGUEZ GRANELL,  
ENRIC MOR & IRMA VILÀ I ÒDNA**



Enric Mor and Pau Alsina present the Media Archaeologies Evening at La Virreina Centre de la Imatge, Barcelona.



# THOMAS ELSAESSER

Elsaesser is a very prominent and internationally recognised author whose works have been translated into a multitude of languages, many of which you will know since the author has been present in many congresses in Barcelona. Thomas Elsaesser's work focuses on very diverse fields that range from film studies, the history of cinema and film theory, to addressing questions about cinephilia, avant-garde, German cinema, cinema of the early times, genre film and Hollywood productions.

He is currently Professor Emeritus of the University of Amsterdam and since 2013 he teaches at Columbia University. He has also been a visiting professor at many American universities such as UCLA, University of New York or Yale.

Considering the framework of this event, we are particularly interested in mentioning those texts in which Elsaesser has been an active figure in the field of media archaeology where he has been reflecting on the issues addressed by media archaeology, specifically from the history of cinema and epistemology – of the cinematographic object since the archaeology of the media involves several ways of theoretical intervention from artifacts and phenomena as diverse as files, devices, institutions or bodies.

In this sense we would like to highlight a couple of texts that help to address some questions about what media archaeology is when it is considered from various disciplines. Firstly, in the film essay compendium *History as Media Archaeology*, the chapter “Early Film History and Multimedia” is particularly relevant. Another article, published in *Cinemas* and entitled “The New Film History as Media Archaeology,” as well as one of his latest collaborations with Malte Hagener, *Film Theory: An Introduction Through the Senses* (Spanish Edition: *Introducción a la teoría del cine*) must be mentioned. Finally, I'd also like to recommend Elsaesser's latest book, which will be released in 2018, *European Cinema and Continental Philosophy: Film as Thought Experiment*.

**ANA RODRÍGUEZ GRANELL**

# MEDIA ARCHAEOLOGY AS A SYMPTOM

Professor Thomas Elsaesser centered his intervention in the history of cinema as a subject to be addressed in terms of media archaeology. He pointed out that cinema has been primarily understood by film theorists from the perspective of photography, which entails applying concepts related to the image, such as truth and illusion, as well as its staging as a projection and its condition as a record or imprint. In this sense, he stressed that the genealogies of cinema recurrently refer to the arts of projection, the developments in optics (lenses, telescopes and magnifying glasses), the so called “persistence of vision,” and finally the history of photography to explain the invention of cinema. In addition, film historians have seen as a necessary condition of cinema the monocular representation in perspective that has prevailed in Western art since the fifteenth century. They have thus understood the projection of the cinematic image inside a rectangle as a reenactment of Leon Battista Alberti’s open window.

Currently, digital cinema questions the assumption that the genealogy of the moving image should be solely based on photography and projection. It is at this point that Elsaesser finds it interesting to explore an archaeology of cinema that could lead to different narratives of its origins, not related to photography and thereby not opposing analog to digital:

“In my book on Film History as Media Archaeology,<sup>1</sup> I have tried to rethink this story of the “origins” of cinema, particularly the idea that cinema – as we know it, tending towards greater and greater realism, and

1. Thomas Elsaesser. *Film History as Media Archaeology* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016). <http://en.aup.nl/books/9789462980570-film-history-as-media-archaeology.html>

becoming a story-telling medium, has somehow become “inevitable”, as if that was its natural destiny.”

Considering that cinema had no other option but to become the medium that the Lumière Brothers popularized entails reducing previous inventions to mere predecessors of the projected moving image. However, when Joseph Plateau invented his phenakistoscope, Eadward Muybridge developed chronophotography, Etienne-Jules Marey created his station physiologique and the photographic gun, Thomas Alva Edison built the kinoscope, and many others (such as Ottomar Anschütz, Georges Demeny, or William Kennedy Dickson) experimented with photography they were not necessarily intending to create a cinematograph. Already to break away from the assumption that chronophotography necessarily leads to cinematography, and that other developments in cinema (silent to sound, black and white to color, or two-dimensional to three-dimensional) inescapably follow a linear progression in time can be considered, according to Elsaesser, as the main purpose of “cinema as a media archaeology.” Still, he admits that different authors have elaborated divergent definitions of what “media archeology” means: to Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka, the main aspect that provides a certain cohesion to the term is media archeologists’ “discontent with ‘canonized’ narratives of media culture and history,”<sup>2</sup> while for Siegfried Zielinski it is an activity that conducts “probes into the strata of stories, [that make up] the history of the media [and] a pragmatic perspective [that seeks] to dig out secret paths in history, which might help us to find our way into the future.”<sup>3</sup> For Geert Lovink, media archaeology is “a hermeneutic reading

## MEDIA ARCHAEOLOGY QUESTIONS CANONIZED NARRATIVES OF MEDIA CULTURE AND HISTORY

2. Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka, “Introduction” to *Media Archaeology: Approaches, Applications, and Implications* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 2-3.

3. Siegfried Zielinski, “Media Archaeology”, *Ctheory.net* (07/11/1996) <http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=42>

of the ‘new’ against the grain of the past, rather than telling of the histories of technologies from past to present.”<sup>4</sup> Questioning established narratives and the concept of an unavoidable linearity are common traits to these views on media archaeology, but there is also resistance and deviance: for Lori Emerson “Media archaeology provides a sobering conceptual friction to the current culture of the new that dominates contemporary computing,”<sup>5</sup> and Huhtamo and Parikka conclude that “Media archaeologists have begun to construct alternate histories of suppressed, neglected, and forgotten media that do not point [...] to the present media-cultural condition as their ‘perfection.’ Dead ends, losers, and inventions that never made it into a material product have important stories to tell.”<sup>6</sup> Elsaesser does not entirely agree that media archaeology should be a “counter-history of the losers,” and prefers to depict it as “forgetting about the fathers and going to the grandfathers.”

Following this enumeration of several definitions of media archaeology, he concludes that he is less concerned about what media archaeology is and more about why is it gaining traction as a discipline at the present time:

“I am inclined to treat media archaeology as a symptom rather than a method, as a place-holder rather than an autonomous research program, a response to various kinds of crises, rather than a breakthrough innovative discipline, and finally, I worry whether media archaeology is itself an ideology, rather than a way of generating or securing new kinds of knowledge.”

As a symptom rather than a method, media archaeology becomes questionable in itself, but also more flexible and less dogmatic. It serves the purpose of signaling tensions and contradictions in the history of cinema as it is currently narrated, and in the way cinema itself is understood. For instance, the setup of the moving image as a projection on a screen inside a dark room, in such a way that the film is constrained to a rectangular frame

4. Geert Lovink, *My First Recession: Critical Internet Culture in Transition* (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2003), 11.

5. Lori Emerson, “Media Archaeology/Media Poetics” (<https://mediarchaeology.wordpress.com/class-description/>)

6. Erkki Huhtamo and Jussi Parikka, Introduction, 3.

and surrounded by darkness can no longer be conceived as a normative form of presentation, as the development of large screens enables the projection of an image so large that it exceeds the human field of vision and immerses the viewer into it. This can also be said of the way in which images are projected in the facades of buildings and inside exhibition spaces, filling large walls in a manner that is reminiscent of the phantasmagorias of the late 18th and 19th century, in the work of artists such as Krzysztof Wodiczko, Doug Aitken, Anthony McCall, and Matt Collishaw. Another tension identified by Elsaesser is the inscription of cinema in the increasing mobility and portability of images, which dates back to the fifteenth century and is related to a process of commodification. He also suggests a correlation between mobility and monocular perspective, in the sense that the single point of view “anchors” the image and compensates for its variability in space. Once more, it is the mode of presentation of images in contemporary art that unveils this tension between the fixed spectator and the mobile image. Elsaesser points out other connections between art and film, particularly in the way that painting has framed the representation of reality, that lead to considering cinema from a different perspective:

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“Indeed, cinema would thus not only be a storytelling medium, but function also as a mediator that prepares and reshapes the physical world as image, picture and spectacle, in a process that only intensified and accelerated throughout the 20th century.”

In fact, Elsaesser stresses, to conceive cinema on the basis of a linear narrative and a monocular perspective leads to an unavoidable obsolescence of the medium. Our current media landscape consists of multiple screens, of watching audiovisual content on various channels and simultaneously

performing different tasks. We are obliged to adopt multiple points of view as we interact with the images around us. It therefore becomes necessary to think about cinema outside the constrained assumption that it is a projected moving image that originated from photography. In order to escape this perception, cinema can be seen as part of the history of human preoccupation with mortality, as suggested by André Basin. By connecting cinema to plaster casts and death masks, as trace and index, it becomes “both very ancient and very modern,” as emphasized by Elsaesser, more than simply a view of the world through a window.

Another way of expanding the genealogy of cinema is to explore the theories of light: this takes Elsaesser to consider the figures of Christiaan Huyghens and Hermann von Helmholtz and the genealogy of physiological optics, which he connects to current blockbusters such as *Avatar*, *Gravity*, *The Revenant* or *Life of Pi*, films that “want to disorient our perception in such a way that we are bodily involved.” Professor Thomas Elsaesser concludes his lecture by addressing the currently accelerated development of Virtual Reality technologies and how this mode of perception of moving images is increasingly being popularized.



Ana Rodríguez Granell introduces the lecture of Prof. Thomas Elsaesser at the Media Archaeologies Evening.

# WOLFGANG ERNST



In a digital culture of apparent, virtual, immaterial realities, a reminder of the insistence and resistance of material worlds is indispensable, and all the more so from a media-theoretical point of view (Wolfgang Ernst, 2005)

Since 2003, Wolfgang Ernst has been Professor for Media Theories in the Institute for Musicology and Media Science at Humboldt University in Berlin. Grown in what became known as the “German Media Theory School”, Ernst academic interests have covered archival theory museology and media materiality.

Ernst’s current investigation also involves media archeology as a research method and an aesthetics of practicing media criticism (a reverse-engineering tactic) to approach media in its infrastructural and operative level from a specific perspective called ‘diagrammatic media archaeography’.

Ernst has defined his position as a *cold gaze* in the vast landscape of approaches to Media Archaeology, which it is characterized by a focus on the particular time of the machines, the machinic agency and the capacity of machines –and their algorithms– to become archaeologists themselves and, therefore, their capacity to generate a “true media memory” (that differs from human remembrance) that recalls or re-activates the past in a discontinuous mode, completely alternative to the comfortable narratives of cultural history.

Without falling into anthropomorphization, together with Ernst we can say that machines remember and forget with

their own logics and temporality which are irreducible to the historical discourse: *a media-epistemological point of view*. A counterview that conforms by its own right the meshwork/network/ecology of possibilities for the exercise of memory (remembering and oblivion). A divergent counterview that we, humans, tend to overlook.

Media Archaeology, according to Ernst, operates as a method to disentangle different forms of storage and possibilities for the re-actualization of the past. A method to address the preservation of cultural objects from a “techno-logical” temporality of the machines. A method to discover a media heritage embedded in a post-human temporal logic.

In his conference, Wolfgang Ernst explained his Radical and Operational Media Archaeology, that has emerged in opposition to the use of the term ‘archaeology’ as a metaphor (i.e. soft media archaeology). His perspective can be seen as a fascinating counterpoint of the perspective presented by Thomas Elsaesser. We hope to be able to address an exercise of encounter and dis-encounter of these two perspectives in the open debate that will follow.

**VANINA HOFMAN**

# RADICAL MEDIA ARCHAEOLOGY

Professor Wolfgang Ernst defined media archaeology as “both a method and an aesthetics of approaching technological objects,” and pointed out that it focuses on the hardware while it must face the challenge of addressing the software, code and algorithms as “the essence of computing.” He also criticized the archaeological metaphor, exemplified by events such as the excavation of discarded Atari game cartridges in a landfill in the desert of New Mexico, and suggested a more code-oriented perspective on media archaeology. In connection with Prof. Elsaesser’s talk, he stressed that cinematography is not destined to become obsolete in the digital era, but rather it can be considered close to the essence of the computer given that it is based on a sequence of frames that Ernst equates to the processing of bits in computing. To further elaborate this connection between the moving image and computers, he stated that the digital preservation of old video recordings is turning machines into media archaeologists:

“To save the heritage of the electronic image for the future, it is being digitized and the closest reader of video art and other video is the digital computer itself. The media archaeologists are not only humans, the most important media archaeologists are media technologies which look at other media.”

Ernst also criticized the view of media archaeology as historicizing and emphasized that it addresses what the historical discourse misses. In contrast, he stated that media archaeology must focus on the signal (be it analog waveforms or digital pulses) and make it present again. An example of this is the preservation of old televisions and computers in museums: they are displayed as mere objects, turned off and not processing a signal, as they should be in order to be properly understood. In relation to

this, Ernst proposes a diagrammatic media archaeography, that implies a different way of writing about media “in terms of grammar,” addressing technical details in a close reading that would be similar to the Series of Technical Reports in Prof. Nick Montfort’s Trope Tank lab at MIT.<sup>1</sup> Working closely with code and the technical aspects of media is something that, according to Ernst, should not be left to engineers but must also be a skill developed by humanities scholars and archivists.

Following with his criticism of the archaeological metaphor, Wolfgang Ernst considers that the notion of “layers” is misleading and that media archaeology is not about digging out the past, but rather focuses on the principles that drive technology and logic behind the code and algorithms. Against the notions of “deep time of the media” (Zielinski) or of “a media excavation into the mineral and raw material basis of technological development”<sup>2</sup> (Parikka), Ernst suggests focusing on the process rather than the object, the logic behind the device rather than simply digging out an old machine.

This leads to what he calls Radical Media Archaeology, a close approach to technology that, in its search for its mathematical roots, leads to philosophical analysis:

“...media archaeological insight can only be derived from the close analysis of electro-mechanical artifacts, electronics, and finally computational machines; literally media archaeology takes the arché at its mathematical face value: algorithmic rooting in numbers. The logo of Radical Media Archaeology therefore is the square root symbol «√».”

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1. The Trope Tank. Retrieved from: [http://nickm.com/trope\\_tank/](http://nickm.com/trope_tank/)

2. Jussi Parikka 2012, quoted here after: Michael Goddard, Opening up the black boxes: Media archaeology, ‘anarchaeology’ and media materiality, published 28 April 2014 in the online journal: New Media & Society, <http://nms.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/04/27/1461444814532193>.

Ernst confronts this approach with the view of media archaeology as digging out things, but also stresses that Archaeology is not only concerned with artifacts but also with data, in a similar way to how Digital Forensics analyzes traces of data in computers, seeking to reconstruct information from erased files. This way of looking at technology introduces, according to Ernst, a “non-human perspective on human culture”, which he deems necessary to address the study of human artifacts such as those that are the subject of media archaeology. Understanding technology as the combination of hardware (*techné*) and code (*logos*), he points out that media archaeology cannot be concerned exclusively with the artifact, but also address the processes taking place inside it:

“Media archaeology refers to both aspects: the physical artifact (ancient Greek *techné*), and its mathematical analysis (*lógos*) when it comes to computational devices, which makes the composite term «*techno/logy*».”

Software is what separates computer archaeology from other archaeological approaches that only had to concern themselves with the artifact. Ernst defines the exclusive attention to hardware as soft media archaeology, while paradoxically hard media archaeology also focuses on software. Coming back to the excavation of Atari videogame cartridges, he stresses that to dig out these pieces of plastic and display them in a museum (which could be described as soft media archaeology) has nothing to do with the medium, and that what is required is to go to “the roots of the programming code within, which requires disassembling the source code.”

One of the aspects that favors a soft media archaeological perspective is the focus on obsolete, archaic and apparently forgotten technologies. However, as Ernst points out, the interest in the early stages of a certain technology is not motivated by an historicist approach, but by the fact that, as Lance Sieveking puts it, “it is at the[ beginnings of invented things,] that we may detect their true nature.” After examining the origin of most media, such as Edison’s phonograph (antedeceded by Scott’s phonautograph), the kinematograph (preceded by chronophotography), radio, and television (the television tube was developed out of Ferdinand Braun’s electronic oscilloscope), Ernst concludes that these inventions were originally developed analysis and measuring in experimental research, and that each

medium still contains a lot of knowledge that goes beyond the specific application of the invented device and can therefore be explored through media archaeology. In this sense, he reiterates the importance of preserving not just the machine (for instance, an RCA 630-TS early television set)<sup>3</sup> but also the signal it used to process. Otherwise, it is only an object, not a medium. In order to preserve the signal, Ernst points towards the technique of emulation, that allows a computer to operate as if it were an older device:

“Emulation is probably the future of what will become the memory of our media age, because as we all know computer programs and webpages disappear very soon and by emulation you can be in the state of playing, for instance, a game in a Commodore 64 computer. So a computer can be its own predecessor, it does not simulate it but becomes the older computer.”

**“EMULATION IS PROBABLY THE FUTURE OF WHAT WILL BECOME THE MEMORY OF OUR MEDIA AGE.”**

This final remark brings us back to Ernst’s previous assertion that the media itself becomes a non-human media archaeologist, which he elaborates discussing the case of John Logie Baird’s phonovision, an early technology that allowed to record a television image on a gramophone record. When Baird’s records were found in the BBC archives, the only way to restore the images they contained was through data processing on the computer. To Ernst, this has drastic consequences to the preservation and study of media in the future:

“The future historian will not necessarily be human, it will be something like a «robot historian» or a «computational historian,» because in order to see technical media again we need more advanced technical media.”

3. See F. R. Hodson / D. G. Kendall / P. Tautu (eds.) *Mathematics in the Archaeological and Historian Sciences* (Edinburgh / Chicago: Edinburgh University Press / Aldine Atherton, 1971

# Q&A: MEDIA, AUTOMATION, TECHNOLOGY

The open discussion following the lectures by Prof. Elsaesser and Prof. Ernst was structured around five questions from the audience that lead the speakers to address the subjects of media, automation, institutions, technology, and finally the main objectives of media archaeology.

## MEDIA

The first question was formulated by an art historian in the audience, who addressed the use of the term “media” as communication and as technology, asking the speakers to clarify this term. Prof. Elsaesser stated that he recognized that art historians tend to make a radical distinction between medium and artwork, and related this distinction with the importance that originality, uniqueness and the figure of the creator has in art history. He also quoted Walter Benjamin’s seminal text *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproducibility* to refer to how the term medium, when associated with technology, has been identified with reproducibility. However, he pointed out that the work of art, which art historians consider unique and due to the inspiration of an individual creator, is already affected by economic and technological conditions:

“...artworks through their site specificity, through their boundaries, through their implicit philosophical ontologies, are already infused and imbued with media. So for instance, when you talk about an artistic movement like Impressionism, it is dependent on the mobile easel, and that mobile easel only functions if you have the technology of color production, paint production, including stabilising paint with chemicals, and sealing it within a tube. These are techniques and technologies

developed at a particular point in time. [...] As you go back, you see there is almost no point in art history where you can say it is free of technology. The mediatic aspect of painting is there almost from the beginning. That would be where media and art find themselves.”

Elsaesser also pointed out that technologies enter the art world when they become obsolete in the sense that they lose their original function and are rendered useless in a certain way. For instance, a 16mm projector can now enter the gallery space as a sculpture, since it has ceased to become an everyday object and is increasingly rare, as well as not being able to serve the practical purpose it originally had.

Prof. Ernst stressed that there is generally a confusion in the use of the word medium in most languages, given that it is common to confuse media studies (which concern technology) with mass media studies (which are communication studies). Quoting Marshall McLuhan, he reminded that the content of the medium should not be confused with the message of the medium. In order to pinpoint the origin and definition of the term medium, he recalled Claude Shannon’s mathematical theory of communication, which establishes that the medium is what happens in between a sender and a receiver:

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“We you watch a YouTube video, you don’t see what happens in between, but that is where the medium takes place. We don’t see a medium when we look at the screen, the medium is what happens in between.”

Additionally, Ernst addressed the term “media art”, indicating that it is an umbrella term that designates a type of art in which technology is part of the content of the work itself, therefore the medium is the message. For instance, he stated, early video art focused on experimenting with the electronic image itself. He also mentioned that in order to work with technology, it is

convenient that artists not only use proprietary commercial software, but that they also learn how to code.

## AUTOMATION

A person from the audience offered a reflection about the connections between weaving and computing how the automation of looms marks the beginning of computer coding. Prof. Elsaesser recalled the film *Wie man sieht* by Harun Farocki, in which a genealogy is established connecting the IBM computer, the Hollerith cards, and the Jacquard loom. He also pointed out that exploring the origins of automation and the role of the loom in the origins of the computer contributes to write back women's work and skills into what is primarily a male history.

Prof. Ernst mentioned the book *A Collection of Many Problems*, by Garnet Hertz<sup>1</sup>, and the figure of Ada Lovelace, the first computer programmer, who once stated that algebraic formulas can be used to weave patterns. In Ernst's opinion, Lovelace's approach is a radically mathematical approach that implies that anything can be created mathematics and uses the machine not as a mechanical tool to produce things but as a mathematical device. He added that the drastic change that took place between the weaving tradition and computing is interesting because it leads to think about the discontinuities, instead of the assumed linearity that is favored by historians:

“We are in a non linear time, a time of discontinuities. If we learn to look at these discontinuities when we write about our culture, it will certainly be enriching.”

## INSTITUTIONS

Another question addressed the role of institutions in the preservation of old media and whether any of them was doing a

1. Garnet Hertz, “A Collection of Many Problems” by Garnet Hertz, extracted out of the *Ancient and Modern Philosophers: as, Secrets and Experiments in Informaticks, Geometry, Cosmography, Horologiography, Astronomy, Navigation, Musick, Opticks, Architecture, Statick, Mechanics, Chymistry, Water-Works, Fire-Works, &c. In memory of the Dead Media Handbook*. Retrieved from: <http://conceptlab.com/problems/>

“good job” in relation to the objectives of media archaeology. Prof. Ernst pointed out to the labs as particularly interesting spaces, where it is possible to experiment with media, and mentioned Jussi Parikka's blog *Machinology* as well as his upcoming book *Lab Culture*. Prof. Elsaesser referred to institutions and research centers such as the ZKM (Zentrum für Kunst und Medien) in Karlsruhe and the various Media Labs (Harvard and MIT among them). He also stated that museums are not doing a good job since they are committed to linear genealogies and false teleologies, and that it was rather the artists who entered the art museum with artworks using the cinematic (proto-cinematic, para-cinematic) apparatus who presented interesting ways of looking at obsolete media. In this respect, he mentioned the work of Tacita Dean, Rosa Barba and Gibson + Recorded. Museums, he added, are good at turning technologies into philosophies since they create a different ontological space for the objects on display. This is made evident in the work of artists such as Antony McCall or Dan Graham, which is now reemerging and has taken on a completely different meaning.

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## TECHNOLOGY

A person from the audience pointed out the presence of technology in the history of art and criticized what he perceived as technological determinism. Prof. Ernst underscored the difference between technique and technology, stating that art has always been technique, that is, related to the skills of the human body or the human mind, but that technology is different in the sense that the machine becomes a co-creator. Quoting Henry Fox Talbot's book *The Pencil of Nature*, he stressed how the pioneer of photography was fascinated to have found a non-human art, a way to represent nature without the subjective interpretation of his hand.

Prof. Elsaesser addressed the subject of technological determinism, stating that the relationship between humans and technology could be drawn between McLuhan's notion

of media as an extension of the human senses and Friedrich Kittler's assertion that human beings are nothing other than the technologies they use for communication. Against the fear that technology might control humans, he offered examples of how people are able to adapt to new technologies in the span of a single generation, and suggested that machines can "let the world disclose itself for us." Following on this subject, Prof. Ernst replied that it is not only that humans adapt to technology, but also that the use of language already places humans on the machinic side. He also expressed the need to invent new terms in order to avoid using old terms to describe the radically new challenge of our media culture. Elsaesser added that for this reason he describes media archaeology as a symptom and a placeholder, rather than a new way of generating knowledge. They both discussed that media archaeology needs to actively offer new terms to help understand the rapidly changing media, to which Elsaesser concluded, addressing Ernst: "Your definition of media archaeology will make the very term media archaeology obsolete."

### **MEDIA ARCHEOLOGY AS A SYMPTOM AND AS A METHOD**

The final question from the audience focused on the objectives of media archaeology itself, comparing the perspectives of both speakers. Prof. Elsaesser stated that they use the same term, but with different inflection or meaning. He asserted that history can no longer be understood simply in terms of linearity and causality, particularly when we are handling nonlinear ways of accessing information. In this respect, he added that cinema has brought montage to the world, which already breaks the idea of continuity and substitutes flow for discrete entities. Prof. Ernst stressed that media archaeology can be established as a method to give answers, to find what is a medium in a technical sense and define what is an image in terms of computation. It is the task of this discipline to point towards the discontinuity introduced by computation and rethink time and history. He concluded that media archaeology is gaining attention because it offers a way to reflect about media culture in an active way.



Prof. Wolfgang Ernst and Prof. Thomas Elsaesser answer the questions of the audience at the Media Archeologies Evening.

# VIDEO DOCUMENTATION

The lectures of the Media Archaeologies Evening were recorded in video and can be found on YouTube in the original English version and also translated into Spanish.

## ENGLISH

MEDIA ARCHAEOLOGY AS A SYMPTOM.

Thomas Elsaesser

<https://youtu.be/3PX1-7WSP88>

RADICAL MEDIA ARCHAEOLOGY

(its epistemology, aesthetics and case studies)

Wolfgang Ernst

<https://youtu.be/hshcwoTRmFw>

Media Archaeologies Evening. OPEN DISCUSSION

[https://youtu.be/u3\\_SYMIsn2Q](https://youtu.be/u3_SYMIsn2Q)

## SPANISH

LA ARQUEOLOGÍA DE LOS MEDIOS COMO SÍNTOMA.

Thomas Elsaesser

[https://youtu.be/6S\\_TJF-p\\_Uk](https://youtu.be/6S_TJF-p_Uk)

ARQUEOLOGÍA DE LOS MEDIOS RADICAL

(su epistemología, estéticas y casos de estudio)

Wolfgang Ernst

<https://youtu.be/LQtjl5Yh7D8>

Encuentro sobre Arqueología de los Medios.

DEBATE ABIERTO

<https://youtu.be/PfSbkdKk1CE>

