Metábasis.it
PHYLOSOPHY AND COMMUNICATION

ONLINE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY
WITH *PEER REVIEW*
WWW.METABASIS.IT
May 2025 year XX n. 39

XR AND MAGIC LANTERN SHOWS: A MEDIA ARCHAEOLOGY STUDY BETWEEN IMAGES, PERFORMANCE, AND NEW MEDIA.

DOI: 10.7413/18281567285

by Francesco Melchiorri
Università IULM di Milano

Abstract
Today's development of XR, particularly accentuated on a commercial level by the growing investor interest in an admittedly not very new technology (Lanier 2019), sees at its core the meeting of algorithmic (Eugeni 2021) images-environments, and gestural (Grespi 2019) and performative bodies, in a highly original and also innovative, technoscientific, expression. In order to investigate through a media archaeology approach such a particular relationship between these elements, an attempt will be made to approach a specific case study, namely that of the magic lantern performances of the 19th century in Central European fairgrounds. Such performances, indeed, produced projected images through particularly innovative forms for the time, through shows between the theatrical and the cinematic, in which the performers' bodies played a central role (Wynants 2020). Often, moreover, through such performances, the fairground became a place for experimentation and communication of science, and/or the latest development of new media and technologies. Through research on specific sources, a comparison of the suggested elements will be proposed in order to underline a wider look at the current production of immersive images, to also reevaluate their current social and techno-aesthetic function (Simondon 1992, Montani 2014).

Keywords: XR; Media Archaeology; Magic Lantern; Performance; Techno-Aesthetics.

Introduction

This paper investigates the interrelation between Extended Reality (XR) and historical Magic Lantern shows through the conceptual lens of techno-aesthetics, drawing particularly on Gilbert Simondon's posthumously published letter *On Techno-Aesthetics*. His notion of «techno-aesthetics» challenges

the traditional separation of the technical and the aesthetic by proposing an «intercategorial fusion» where aesthetic experience emerges from the embodied use and material engagement with technical objects. His reflections serve as a philosophical foundation for reconceptualizing XR not merely as a digital medium, but as a live, performative apparatus that activates sensorial, motor, and imaginative faculties. In parallel, this paper reconsiders Magic Lantern shows – commonly viewed as early visual media – as inherently performative events that integrate projection technologies with live storytelling, musical accompaniment, and audience interaction. Drawing on the theories of Ruggero Eugeni, Barbara Grespi, Nele Wynants, Erika Fischer-Lichte, and Philip Auslander, the study positions both XR and Magic Lantern experiences within a broader genealogy of live performative media, emphasizing their shared capacity to construct immersive, co-present environments. Rather than contrasting these media based on technological advancement, the analysis emphasizes their mutual reliance on embodied spectatorship and performative staging. Both enable alternative modes of world-experiencing – through digital immersion in XR and analog enchantment in Magic Lantern performances – thus resisting easier categorizations within visual or screen-based media. The paper proposes a shift in media historiography that integrates performance theory and media archaeology, revealing overlooked continuities between analog and digital forms of liveness. Finally, it argues for a performance-oriented approach to media theory that foregrounds embodied interaction and co-presence as central to understand the evolution of mediated imagination from the fairgrounds of the nineteenth century to the digital environments of the present, attempting to propose a narrowing of the distance between screen studies and performing arts studies.

A techno-aesthetic framework

In 1982 Gilbert Simondon wrote an unfinished and posthumously published letter to Jacques Derrida, in which explores the interconnections between technical objects, aesthetic experience, and the human body. Commonly known as *On Techno-Aesthetics*, though brief in format, the letter presents a rich and dense conceptual meditation on the intimate entanglement of aesthetics and technology. Simondon argues that to reinvigorate contemporary philosophy, we must open ourselves to domains that have often been excluded from traditional discourse, particularly religious and aesthetic practices. More radically, he proposes that aesthetics should not merely be thought alongside technics, but rather within it – as a dimension internal to technical activity and the lived experience of tool use, creation,

and engagement with the material world. In this philosophical correspondence Simondon proposes the concept of techno-aesthetics – an emerging philosophical framework that blends technical and aesthetic analysis. Thus, he introduces an original way of thinking about technology, suggesting that the relationship between aesthetics and technology is far more complex and mutually constitutive than conventional distinctions between art and industry. Simondon critiques the separation between technological practices and artistic practices that is often imposed in traditional Western thought. He suggests that if contemporary philosophy aims to be revitalized, it must shift focus to the interfaces between these two domains, embracing a more integrated view of aesthetic and technical practices. He provocatively asks why the field of philosophy does not more explicitly consider the relationship between aesthetics and technics, proposing the need for a provisional framework that could be referred to as an «aesthetico-technics or techno-aesthetics». What Simondon calls techno-aesthetics is a conceptual framework in which the aesthetic is not a layer imposed upon function but emerges organically from within technical processes. Drawing on examples that span architecture, engineering, design, and manual craft, Simondon articulates a vision of aesthetic experience that is bodily, sensorial, and profoundly embedded in action:

«It's technical and aesthetic at the same time: aesthetic because it's technical, and technical because it's aesthetic. There is intercategorial fusion»[1].

The text is notable for its methodological hybridity: Simondon does not offer a systematic philosophical argument so much as an affective phenomenology of technical encounters, weaving together reflections on buildings, machines, tools, and artworks. This style reflects his conviction that the aesthetic value of technical objects can only be grasped through their dynamic use, rather than through detached contemplation. In fact, he critiques traditional aesthetics for focusing too heavily on the "consumer" of art rather than the maker, for whom aesthetic experience is intimately tied to bodily movement, rhythm, texture, and resistance. The idea of techno-aesthetics draws from the history of industrial and architectural design, as well as from everyday tools and objects. Through these examples, as quoted above Simondon introduces the concept of intercategorial fusion as the blending of the technical and the aesthetic. He claims that the technical is inherently aesthetic because

[1] G. Simondon, *On Techno-Aesthetics*, translated by Arne De Boever, PARRHESIA, n. 14, pp. 1-8, Open Humanities Press, n. l. 2012, p.3.

of the way technical operations involve creative and aesthetic choices that contribute to the final product's form. These two aspects are not separate but form an indivisible unity. This fusion of categories, according to the thinker, reflects the complexity of human engagement with technology, which cannot be neatly divided into functional utility and aesthetic enjoyment. Simondon emphasizes that aesthetics should not only be about passive contemplation, as is traditionally conceived in the philosophy of art. Rather, he draws on the concept of sensorimotor pleasure that arises from the interaction with technological objects. A key theme in this sense is the bodily and sensorial dimension of tool use: he argues that the true aesthetic experience of a tool or machine emerges through its usage – the physical sensations that come from manipulating, assembling, or operating these objects. Whether driving a car, using a wrench, or playing a musical instrument, the user's body becomes involved in a reciprocal relationship with the tool. In this context, aesthetics becomes a lived, embodied experience. As Simondon eloquently puts it: «It's in usage, in action, that it becomes something orgasmic, a tactile means and motor of stimulation»[2]. This statement positions techno-aesthetics as not only a philosophical concept but a deeply sensory and experiential one, where action and sensation are inseparable from the aesthetic value of the object. Thus, this pleasure is not purely functional; it is the result of a dynamic communication between the human body and the material world. Tools mediate this relationship, enabling a specific kind of intuitive knowledge rooted in motion, resistance, vibration, and force. For Simondon, the use of a specific tool is already a form of aesthetic experience – not because the tools are "beautiful" in the traditional sense, but because they enable a participatory engagement with form and matter: the aesthetic experience is not confined to passive spectatorship; it involves active, sensorial engagement. The letter ultimately suggests that every technical object possesses an aesthetic potential – whether realized or not – because all human-made things are implicated in systems of perception, use, and cultural coding. Moreover, Simondon applies his techno-aesthetic theory to the physical world, considering how objects, structures, and even landscapes contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between technology and aesthetics, beyond design per itself. The exploration of techno-aesthetics offers a radical rethinking of the relationship between technology and aesthetics. Rather than seeing the aesthetic as a superficial layer added to technology or design, he proposes that the aesthetic is integral to the experience of

[2] Ivi, p. 5.

technology itself. Through interaction, engagement, and embodiment, humans experience the aesthetic dimensions of the tools, structures, and environments they create. By reframing technology in this way, Simondon not only expands the boundaries of aesthetics but also highlights the deep and often unnoticed relationships between technical creation and artistic expression. His proposal of a new philosophical framework that merges aesthetics and technics challenges the division between art and engineering, suggesting that every technological object carries an aesthetic dimension that is essential to understanding human interaction with the material world. The letter is more than a catalog of examples. It is a philosophical intervention that seeks to break down categorical separations between disciplines. Simondon is advocating for an intercategorial axiology – a framework of values that does not isolate the aesthetic from the technical but sees them as co-emergent, co-dependent, and mutually illuminating. He gestures toward the present where philosophical thought must reckon with the realities of embodied making, technological environments, and sensorial interfaces between humans and machines. By insisting that aesthetics is not merely contemplative but practical and affective – rooted in action, materiality, and sensorimotor pleasure – Simondon reimagines the relationship between humans and their technical environments. His letter to Derrida emerges as a call to reconfigure aesthetic theory along technogenic lines, grounding beauty not in ideal forms, but in the dynamic interplay between bodies, tools, and matter. In this sense, his reflections anticipate and resonate with later developments in media theory, art and technology studies. Simondon techno-aesthetics prefigures a posthumanist aesthetics grounded in material engagement, affect, and distributed agency between images, bodies and media.

Extended Reality as algorithmic images

Starting from this theoretical framework, the contemporary media chosen for a deeper comparative analysis are the newest immersive technologies. Extended Reality (XR) encompasses virtual and augmented reality technologies, offering immersive experiences that blend real and virtual environments. XR creates experiences that blend digital content with the real world, enhancing our interaction with both. The different degrees of immersion in the XR are related to different interactions, different technologies and different experiences. Extended Reality, indeed, is an umbrella term that includes virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and mixed reality (MR). VR immerses the experiencer in a completely different environment via digital and/or 360° video,

while AR and MR overlays digital elements onto the real-world view, where in the latter the two worlds can also interact in some way.

Jaron Lanier is the scientist who invented the term VR. In *Dawn of the New Everything: Encounters with Reality and Virtual Reality* he tells the story of the medium from its very beginning, helping us to discover that the first headset for VR was designed and registered by Ivan Sutherland in 1965. Hence, despite the recent commercial interest in metaverse, mainly due to Zuckerberg's launch of Meta in 2021, VR and XR in general as digital media are not that young.

Anyway, from the very beginning, the core of the XR experiences is the search of interactivity with digital environments. Users can engage with them just turning the head, or, with the use of controllers, manipulating objects and explore them in a deeply, personal way. XR creates a profound sense of presence, and this interactivity fosters emotional and imaginative connections, making the experience feel unique to each individual user.

Following the proposal of Ruggero Eugeni in *Capitale Algoritmico. Cinque dispositivi postmediali (più uno)*, XR as particular kind of algorithmic images have the «vocation to "make themselves the world"», an ability in continuity with the archaeological past of images:

> Images have since their origins manifested a vocation to "make themselves the world," that is, to manifest an *industrious presence* within the environments shared between and with subject-organisms.
>
> […]
>
> This *making themselves the world of images* through devices has consisted, on closer inspection, in the articulation of a manifold series of sharing or conversely distancing relations involving the observer: relations with his or her own body and its different perceptual registers; with the materiality of the images themselves and the technologies of the devices; with other observers present in the same environment; with the environments present physically or only by means of residues and traces in which the images were produced, and with the subjects who inhabit them and act by producing

> the images; with the environments that are eventually depicted in the images (and thus again with the subjects who stand out and act there).[3]

To provide a clear distinction of different relations with images and XR, the author characterized them by different regimes of presence within the experience. He defines the traditional photographic, cinematic, and electronic images as «*abstantive*»; subsequently, in XR

> [a]lgorithms take up this tension of images to make themselves the world, but they decline it in new ways, either by superimposing the world in which the observer is physically present and the world in which the image is produced, and relating this meta-world to the one depicted in the images (*abstantive-immersive* experience); or by superimposing the three worlds of production, observation, and figuration in forms that are sometimes less complete (*moderate immersive* experience) and sometimes more complete (*radical immersive* experience).[4]

Images make themselves the world by creating specific effects of presence through the devices that exhibit them. These effects are achieved by constructing and modulating relations between the observers, the environments they inhabit, and the other subjects encountered in those environments.

The Gestural Cinema Theory in dialogue with XR

In this sense, it could be interesting to propose a connection between XR and Cinema by the idea of a primary gestural component. Following Barbara Grespi theory in *Figure del corpo. Gesto e immagine in movimento*, as language that unlocks the fixity of the image and puts bodies back in motion, cinema is not made up of images but of gestures. The gesture is his core, which is why the film carries out, already with its own language, a capillary work of rehabilitation of the fragments of human movement:

[3] R. Eugeni, *Capitale algoritmico. Cinque dispositivi postmediali (più uno)*, Morcelliana, Brescia 2021, p. 165-166 (my translation).

[4] Ivi, p. 166.

> the cinema machine is a figure of the body: it includes the user's body in its design as a technical object, taking on formal characteristics that suggest precise modes of use. [What Grespi calls «the filmic gesture»] should increasingly be understood, also as a consequence of the digital revolution, as an operation involving the creator's body, and not only, according to the tradition, his or her gaze.[5]

Relaunching this assertation, it could be argued that if Cinema enables a transformation of images in gestures, XR amplifies this affordance making possible to have not only gestural images, but also gestural fruition of them. Indeed, experiencers' bodies need in almost all the cases a gestural involvement with the algorithmic images, directly related with a deeper comprehension of the experience. This idea, potentially present but apparently unexpressed in the fruition of the Cinema, seems to be partially confirmed also in a previous text, *Il Cinema come gesto: incorporare le immagini, pensare il medium*, where the same author states also about the embodied component of moving images experience:

> Cinema has always been considered an optical and psychic fact, despite Walter Benjamin immediately sensed that the primary destination of moving images was the body, not the mind of the spectator. […] When this happens, the notion of corporeality is expanded and enlarged to the technology itself; the bodies in question become two, and it is their relationship that is particularly fruitful.
>
> Within *embodiment* studies […] technology is constantly traced back to the possession of a body.[6]

[5] B. Grespi, *Figure del corpo. Gesto e immagine in movimento*, Meltemi Editore, Sesto San Giovanni 2019, p. 17-19 (my translation).

[6] Ead., *Il Cinema come gesto: incorporare le immagini, pensare il medium*, Aracne editrice, Roma 2017, p. 15 (my translation).

An Early Cinema medium linkable to XR: Magic Lantern as a performative medium

Precisely looking for this unexpressed bodily need of visual media it could be useful to take a step back. During the Early Cinema time, a particular medial experience could perhaps tell something along these lines.

In this sense, Magic Lantern shows are an interesting case to compare. They were an innovative form of visual storytelling. They used a light projector to display hand-painted glass slides, creating (moving) images as a vivid spectacle for audiences. These shows combined imagery with storytelling, captivating viewers in a way that was revolutionary and, in a sense, immersive for their time. However, primarily considered a visual medium, Magic Lantern shows were recently rediscovered as a performing art event. Following Nele Wynants recent contributions, indeed, «the magic lantern show can be considered a part of the history of both theatre and popular culture in the broadest sense of the word. It is a precursor of what we today call multimedia or intermedial theatre»[7]. Together with their projection component, a sort of displays' precursor, scholars more and more highlight also the theatricality of these shows. In this way Magic Lantern experiences arise in the meeting ground of both a 'projection' experience and some various ways of creating live performances with the lantern, often by music, a lecture or narrative presentations. This characteristic is probably clearer following the genealogy of these shows, again Wynants:

> Magic lantern shows were live performances that were part of a nascent entertainment culture. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the magic lantern was mainly used for entertainment by itinerant artists, who travelled between towns and villages to earn a penny. With their lanterns and slide boxes strapped to their backs, they gave shows often accompanied with song, music and dance. It was only in the first half of the nineteenth century, when lantern slides could be produced on a commercial scale by new print procedures. The era witnessed a proliferation of traveling shows and exhibitions, encouraged by the burgeoning development of science and technology, and supported by changes in transportation, education, and social mobility. Due to

[7] N. Wynants, *Invisible hands in the history of the magic lantern: where theatre studies and media archaeology meet*, Early Popular Visual Culture, n. 18, 4, pp. 422-447, Routledge, London 2020, DOI: 10.1080/17460654.2021.2016213, p. 426.

> technological advances in light sources and the introduction of the photographic lantern slide soon after 1850, the magic lantern grew into a mass medium that found its way into church halls, classrooms, temperance halls and university auditoriums.[8]

Becoming a mass medium, Magic Lantern shows didn't lose their performative power; rather, they enrich it via a hybridization between new technologies and new environments or venues. For Wynants, until the end of their mass reception they were specific events: live, for an audience in a shared space with the performers, and at a specific point in time. Moreover, in some specific uses of the Magic Lantern, as Phantasmagoria and/or *theatre scientificque* as well as in some opera experimentations, «the technology of the magic lantern was as much part of the medium specificity of theatre as the stage presence of the performers».

Not by chance, Wynants explicitly refers also to the book *The Transformative Power of Performance*by Erika Fischer-Lichte, a leading voice in theatre and performance studies, where she asserted that «the specific mediality of performance consists of the bodily co-presence of actors and spectators». This live encounter elicits a response from the spectators, which impacts via an ongoing interaction with the performers during the entire performance. What Fischer-Lichte calls «a self-referential and everchanging feedback loop». As the German performance scholar points out, whatever the actors do, it has repercussions on the audience and whatever the audience do has repercussions on the actors and other spectators, and the progress of this feedback loop is not completely predetermined nor plannable. «[A f]eedback loop as a self-referential and autopoietic system that has an intrinsically open and never completely pre-determinable outcome that, in fact, can neither be interrupted nor guided in a targeted way through staging strategies»[9].

A fair comparison on experience, imagination, and liveness

Notwithstanding, comparing it with today's XR, the experience of a Magic Lantern show seems to be more passive. Audiences would sit back and watch as a skilled narrator told a story, accompanied by beautiful projected images. The enchantment lay in the storytelling and the visuals, evoking

[8] Ivi, p. 424.

[9] See E. Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, Routledge, London 2008.

wonder and curiosity, but without direct interaction from the audience. Still, an engagement in Magic Lantern shows was rooted in the communal experience. Audiences reacted to the storyteller's performance, sharing the experience of wonder and amazement together. The power of storytelling and visuals captivated their imaginations, even without the interactivity of today. Moreover, is central to underline here also how fairgrounds, auditoriums, classrooms and venues in general, during these shows constitute themselves as a sort of XR environment *ante-litteram*: depending on the different degrees of theatricality, indeed, the Magic Lantern shows would allow the audience to experiment for the one of the first times a sort of VR, AR, or MR, and without today's individual and/or isolating technology.

While XR and Magic Lantern shows both aim to create immersive experiences, they differ significantly in technology, audience engagement, and interactivity. XR represents a modern evolution in storytelling and experience interactive design, whereas Magic Lantern shows were an early form of visual and performative entertainment that captivated audiences with simple yet effective technology, groundbreaking for the time. Both of them could be seen as the most intermedial experience of their time, where the latest technologies and the newest media are stressed, and both share some basic principles in their approach to entertainment, education, propaganda or advertisement, and the creation of alternative worlds for audiences, being mainly used in these fields. However, a comparison between the Magic Lantern and XR which partially ignore the two different historical eras should at least consider the way in which these technologies allowed people to experience reality and imagination.

Both are perceived as an extraordinary experience, exploring the idea of an "alternative dimension" via a strong presence of colorful, possibly moving images, but the relationship with them is opposite: Magic Lantern do not let audience to interact with them, whereas XR let experiencer to interact with images. Anyway, doing so, both media do not completely allow audience to perceive these images as such. The Magic Lantern captured the audience's imagination by projecting still or animated images in a shared space, offering a proto-immersive experience. XR, on the other hand, allows an only apparent total immersion, where the user sometimes can also freely explore the digital environment, changing it with gestures and making decisions that affect the experience. The Magic Lantern show was often a public event, where groups of people gathered to attend the performance of a person or a group using a single medium. XR, on the other hand, can be an individual, intimate and personal

experience that is experienced in isolation from the outside world, or needs collective but at the same time individual use of multiple similar media.

Both the considered media reflect the evolution of human imagination embodied as a (more or less) interactive and immersive experience, closely linked to reality with varying degrees of credibility, difficult to define, in the past and often also in the present.

Finally, they are live, and this side is particularly relevant: following this *fil rouge*, how interesting could be the historical and theoretical attempt of interconnection between live performing arts and live digital media, following an expanded analysis like the one proposed here and focusing on the embodied and imaginative fruition of them? This provoking question seems to find some support also in the analysis of Pietro Montani about VR when he literally suggests that there is a «a specific and significant reference to a scriptural element within the work of the imagination. This element can be linked to the radical regressive condition in which the imagination behaves literally as a "VR generator"»[10]. About this topic, in *The hallucinatory aspect of virtual reality and the Image as a* Bilderschrift he underlines:

> The *hallucinatory immersiveness* of VR must, just like that of dreams, be understood and studied against the backdrop of the network of signifcant *relations* it can entertain with other performances, for example inferential, of an embodied imagination. It seems inadvisable to isolate it from this broader context.[11]

Another last confirmation appears also in the ideas of Philip Auslander about liveness, when in *Liveness. Performance in a Mediatized Culture* he states:

> the historical relationship of liveness and mediatization must be seen as a relation of dependence and imbrication rather than opposition. That the mediated is engrained in the live is apparent in the structure of the English word "immediate." The root form is

[10] P. Montani, *Technological Destinies of the Imagination*, Mimesis International, Milano-Udine 2022, p. 159.

[11] Id., "The hallucinatory aspect of virtual reality and the image as a *Bilderschrift*", *AN-ICON. Studies in Environmental Images*, no. 1 (2022), pp. 153-171, p. 171.

> the word mediate, of which *immediate* is, of course, the negation. Mediation is thus embedded within the *im-mediate*; the relation of mediation and the im-mediate is one of mutual dependence, not precession. Far from being encroached upon, contaminated, or threatened by mediation, live performance is always already inscribed with traces of the possibility of technical mediation (i.e., mediatization) that defines it as live.[12]

Conclusion

The historical parallel between XR and Magic Lantern shows here proposed ultimately reveals that both forms resist neat categorization within the traditional boundaries of visual media. While commonly understood through the lens of technological innovation and image production, both are more productively approached as part of a genealogy of live media, grounded in performativity and embodied experience. From the visual-gestural immersion of XR to the theatrical staging of Magic Lantern spectacles, both media do not simply project images: they offer holistic experiences. They do not merely offer representation, but provoke presence, participation, and situated relation actor-spectators. In this light, XR and Magic Lanterns function less as visual technologies and more as performance apparatuses. This convergence invites us to reconsider the ontological status of medium through a performance-oriented lens. Rather than treating media as fixed, object-like containers of content, an alternative approach – already anticipated in mediatization theory and performance studies – would view them as dynamic, embodied, and relational dispositifs. Erika Fischer-Lichte's theory of the performative feedback loop finds resonance in XR environments, where the user's embodied interaction with the digital space stresses algorithmic responses and recalibrates the immersive experience in real time. Similarly, in Magic Lantern performances, the live narration, musical accompaniment, and audience reactions formed a complex interactive ecology, even in the absence of digital computation. In both cases, liveness emerges not simply from temporality or interactivity, but from co-presence, contingency, and mutual affect. This perspective also reenforce the argument that live performance and visual media should not be placed in binary opposition but considered along a spectrum of actor-spectatorship configurations. In both XR and Magic Lantern shows, the viewer is not just a receiver of images, but a co-constructor of meaning – whether through physical gestures

[12] P. Auslander, *Liveness. Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, Routledge, New York 2008, p. 56.

tracked by sensors, or through shared emotional responses within a theatrical crowd. The performativity of these media resides in their capacity to activate a field of presence, not only in the sophistication of their visuals. Consequently, what it is emerging is a media archaeology that in a sense is also a performance archaeology. If XR renews and reconfigures the logic of Magic Lantern spectacles, this is not only a technological recursion but also a performative one. The immersive ambition, the meeting-like structure, the activation of embodied imagination – all point to a deeper continuity. This continuity calls for a rethinking of media historiography and theory, one that does not isolate "media" from "performance" or technology from embodiment, but that traces their entanglement across time and space. Such an approach may allow us to unearth forgotten lineages and inspire more nuanced readings of contemporary media. In this view, XR is not a rupture in media history, but a return – albeit digitally enhanced – to a live, situated, and imaginative mode of mediated experience that has always coexisted with the visual logic of screens and recordings. From itinerant lanternists to XR users and experiencers, what persists is not just the image, but the perception of its staging and the embodied spectatorship it demands. A performance-oriented media theory might better account for how technologies like XR or the Magic Lantern are not just tools of vision, but stages of encounter. They do not simply show worlds; they make them happen – and that "happening" is always, irreducibly, performative.

Metábasis.it
PHYLOSOPHY AND COMMUNICATION

ONLINE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY
WITH *PEER REVIEW*
WWW.METABASIS.IT
May 2025 year XX n. 39

MIMESIS
Sesto San Giovanni (MI)
via Monfalcone, 17/19

AlboVersorio Edizioni
& AlboVersorio Edizioni
di Ass. NonsoloSophia
nonsolosophia@gmail.com

© Metábasis.it, rivista semestrale di filosofia e comunicazione.
Autorizzazione del Tribunale di Varese n. 893 del 23/02/2006.
ISSN 1828-1567

SOME RIGHTS RESERVED Quest'opera è stata rilasciata sotto la licenza Creative Commons Attribuzione-NonCommerciale-NoOpereDerivate 2.5 Italy. Per leggere una copia della licenza visita il sito web http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/it/ o spedisci una lettera a Creative Commons, 559 Nathan Abbott Way, Stanford, California 94305, USA.