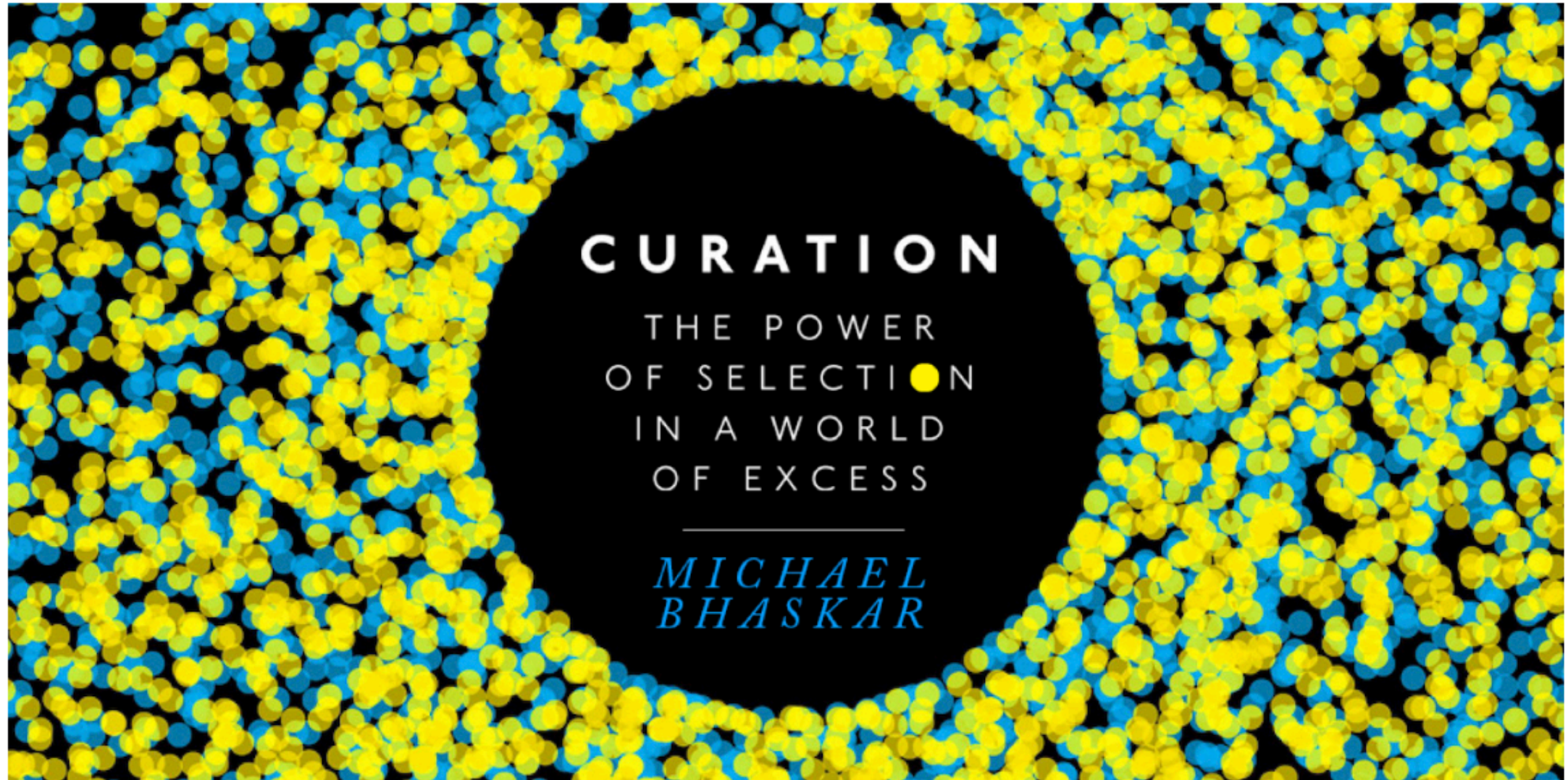


Shock and Awe

Curating the Sublime

Level 4 | Ways of Perceiving | Lecture Two



Curation : *n.* using acts of selecting and arranging to add value



**hans ulrich
obrist**

ways of
curating

hans ulrich
obrist

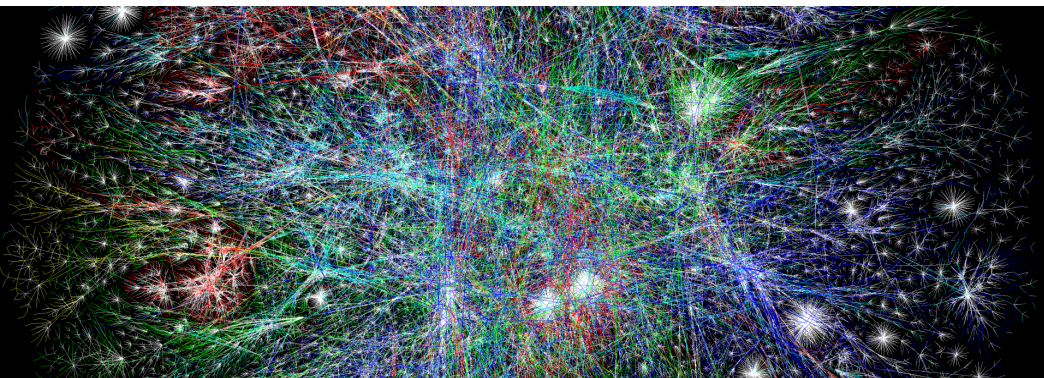


Caspar David Friedrich
Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog 1818
Oil on canvas
98.4 x 74.8 cm



Ansel Adams
Clearing Winter Storm Yosemite Valley 1942

THE SUBLIME LANDSCAPE





John Martin *The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah* 1852
Oil on canvas 136.3 x 212.3 cm
Courtesy Laing Art Gallery, Tyne & Wear Archives and
Museums

Martin's paintings with their dizzying detail and macro-perspectives, were the 'IMAX films' of their day...



The Empire Strikes back....Shock and Awe military strategy - the 'televised' bombing of Baghdad

Whilst a calculated military tactic devised to decimate and demoralise a targeted adversary the public 'spectacle' becomes one of a guilty sublime where beautiful terror is witnessed in awe



Joseph Mallord William Turner
Snow Storm - Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth exhibited
1842

Turner was friends with the scientists Michael Faraday
and Mary Somerville

**Both the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions
begin to impact the way we 'see' the world**

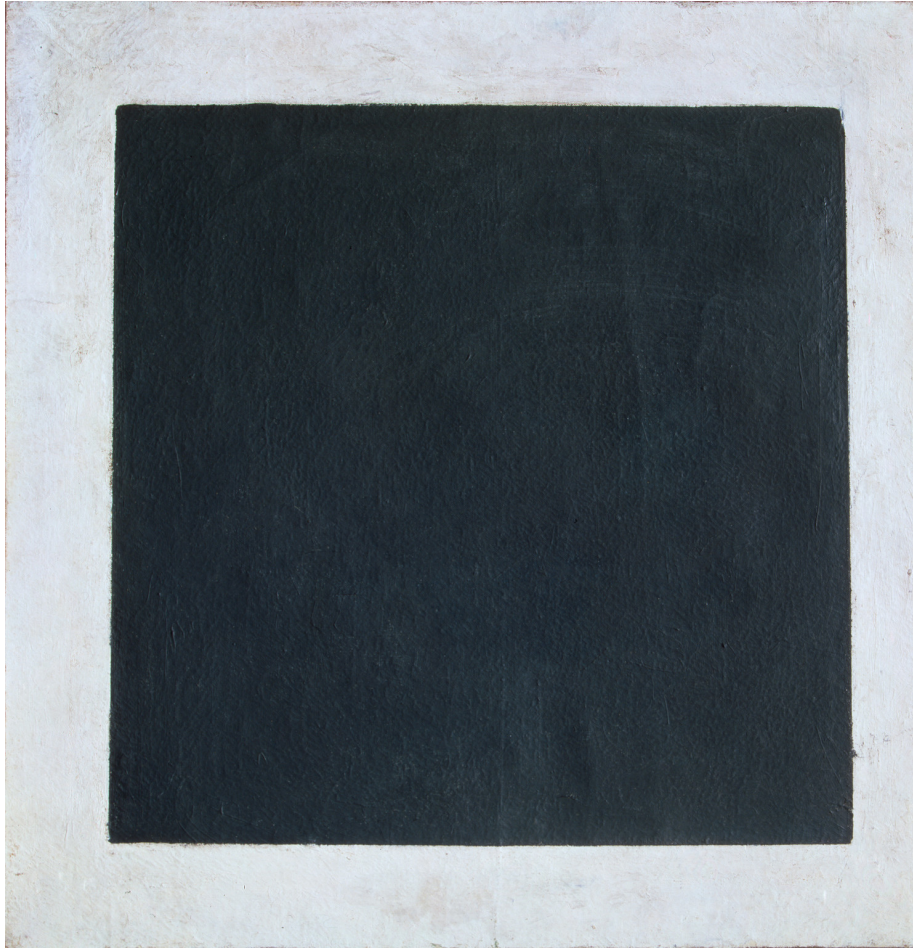


Rain, Steam, and Speed - The Great Western Railway
1844, Joseph Mallord William Turner

In the latter half of the nineteenth century some artists abandoned the
pursuit of the sublime for reasons of taste, others because of an increased
interest in beauty and scientific realism.

Nevertheless, the sublime still held great importance for many Victorian
artists, even as they distanced themselves from the sublime of the
Romantic era.

Abstraction and the Sublime



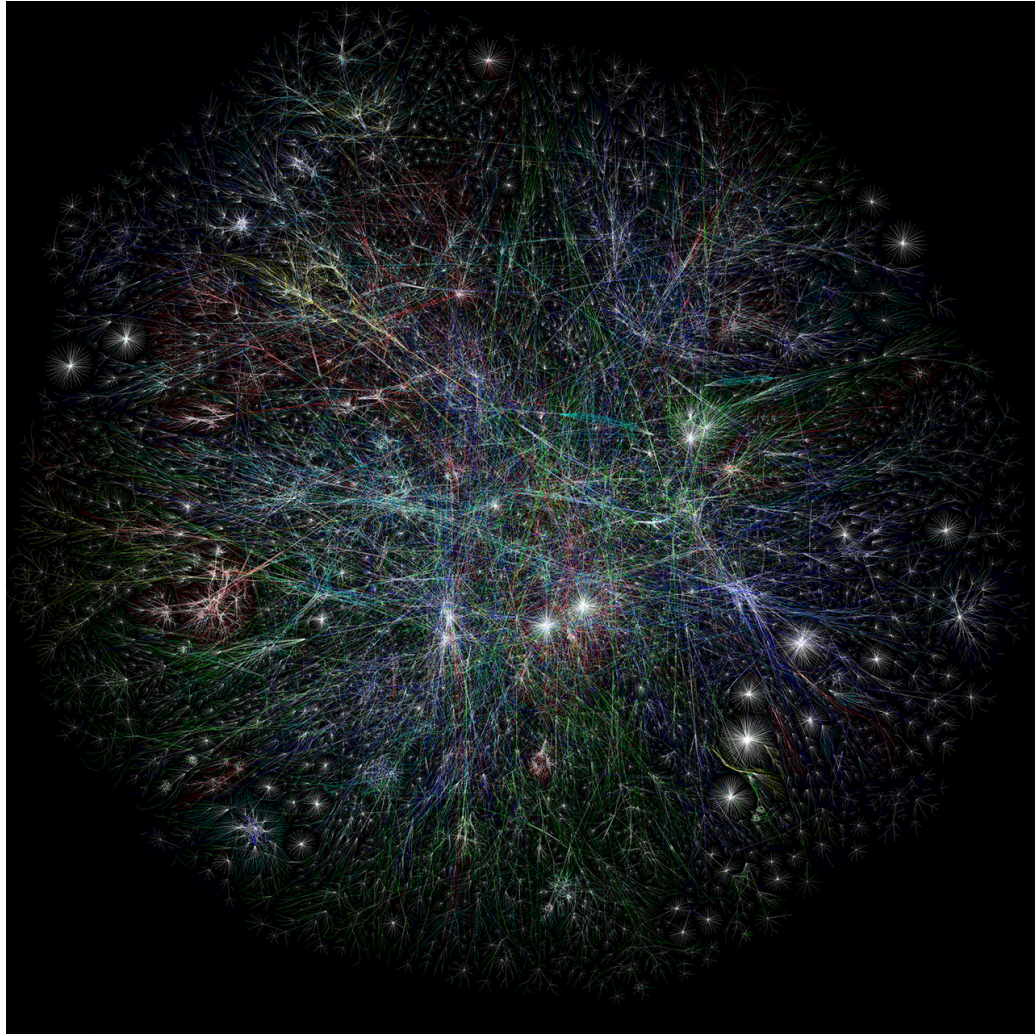
Kazimir Malevich
Black Square 1930
Oil on canvas



Mark Rothko *Untitled*, 1953

In his 1949 text ***The Sublime is Now Newman*** argued that the 'subjective abstraction' of modern American painting was a contemporary counterpart to the idea of the sublime. For aesthetic theorists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the sublime was related to formlessness, immensity, intense light or darkness, terror, solitude and silence experienced in nature, yet it also offered the solace of transcendence, an art in which one could lose oneself. Such ideas persisted in early twentieth-century landscape painting, especially among the artists associated with expressionism, for whom intense experience emerged in enriched colour. Yet for Newman, a generation later, abstract painting could give viewers this sense of standing alone in front of infinity, without the props of 'nostalgia, legend, myth'.

Rothko felt a particular kinship with the **British painter J.M.W. Turner**, whose later landscapes sometimes verge on the abstract, with recognisable forms dissolving into the evocation of light and space. Tate's collection of Turner was one of the principal reasons for Rothko's generous donation of the Seagram murals, seen in the adjacent gallery. The Turner painting shown here was included in an exhibition held in New York in 1966, which prompted Rothko to recognise his affinity and joke that the nineteenth-century artist 'learned a lot from me'.



The Age of Empire

Top: Thomas Cole, *The Course of Empire: Destruction*, 1836.

Below: A photograph of the aftermath of the attacks, September 2001.









Edward Burtynsky
Oxford Tire Pile #8, Westley, California,
USA 1999
Dye coupler print
68.6 x 86.4 cm
Courtesy Flowers Gallery, London © Edward
Burtynsky



Joseph Wright of Derby. Vesuvius in Eruption, with a View over the Islands in the Bay of Naples c.1776–80



Ansel Adams



Edward Burtynsky
Oil Spill #2, Discoverer Enterprise, Gulf of Mexico, May 11, 2010
Digital, colour print on paper



The Day After Tomorrow (2004)

Ascending and Descending the Sublime – Transcendence and Immanence



James Turrell



Bill Viola

The Capitalist Sublime



Andreas Gursky...Damien Hirst



Martin's paintings with their dizzying detail and macro-perspectives, were the 'IMAX films' of their day...

John Martin *The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah* 1852 Oil on canvas 136.3 x 212.3 cm
Courtesy Laing Art Gallery, Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums

Wright emphasises the drama of the erupting Vesuvius through contrasts: between the tranquility of the sea and the violence of the volcano, the cool light reflected from the moon and clouds with the hellish spewing of fire and lava. In comparison to the volatile power of the volcano, the tiny foreground figures stress man's insignificance before the sublime grandeur of nature. Wright did not witness the eruption of Vesuvius in 1777, but it clearly spurred his imagination. He returned repeatedly to the subject, and produced over thirty views of the volcano.



Vesuvius in Eruption, with a View over the Islands in the Bay of Naples
c.1776–80



Joseph Mallord William
Turner
*Snow Storm - Steam-Boat
off a Harbour's
Mouth* exhibited 1842

Turner was friends with the
scientists Michael Faraday
and Mary Somerville

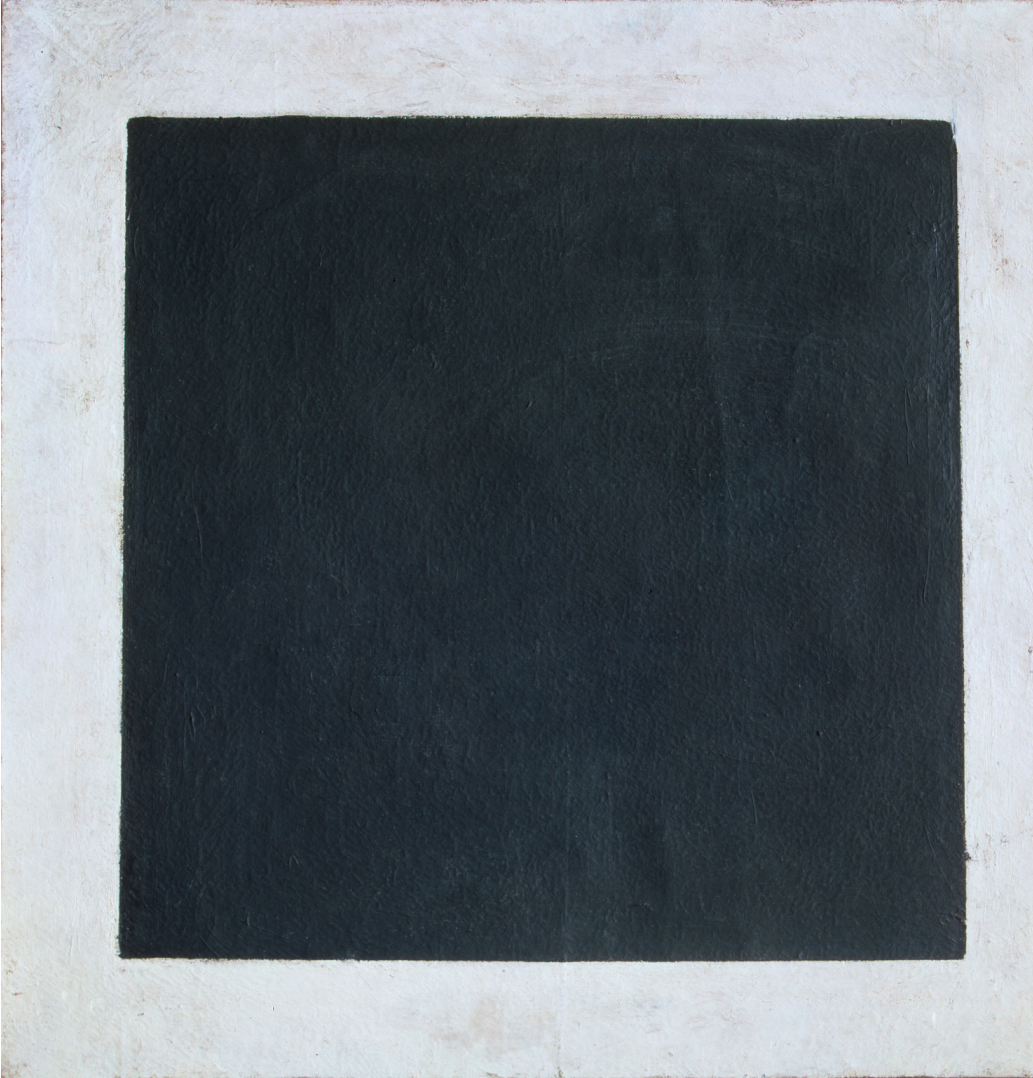
The Sublime in Crisis: Landscape Painting after Turner

In the latter half of the nineteenth century some artists abandoned the pursuit of the sublime for reasons of taste, others because of an increased interest in beauty and scientific realism.

Nevertheless, the sublime still held great importance for many Victorian artists, even as they distanced themselves from the sublime of the Romantic era.



The Contemporary Sublime



Kazimir Malevich
Black Square 1930
Oil on canvas

STARTING INTO THE VOID
(LIMITS OF PERCEPTION)

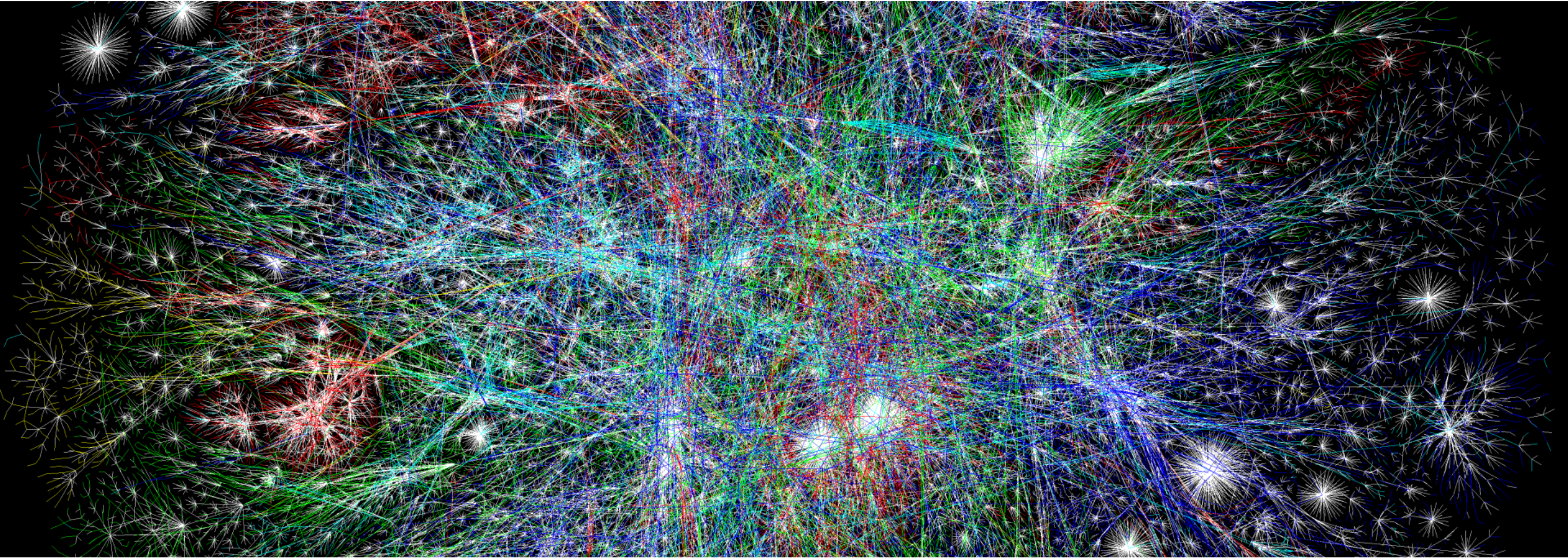
Bill Viola







The Internet – The Networked Society



The contemporary technological sublime finds expression in an affective combination of elevated emotion and banality – a combination in which the subject also **encounters the limits of the self.**

AFTER 9/11: PHOTOGRAPHY, THE DESTRUCTIVE SUBLIME, AND THE POSTMODERN ARCHIVE

“9/11 wicked but a work of art, says”

Damien Hirst

The events of 9/11, he'd enthused, were “the greatest work of art imaginable for the whole cosmos.” Karlheinz Stockhausen

Both artists later apologised for their remarks, although both of them were articulating the dark ambiguity of the sublime

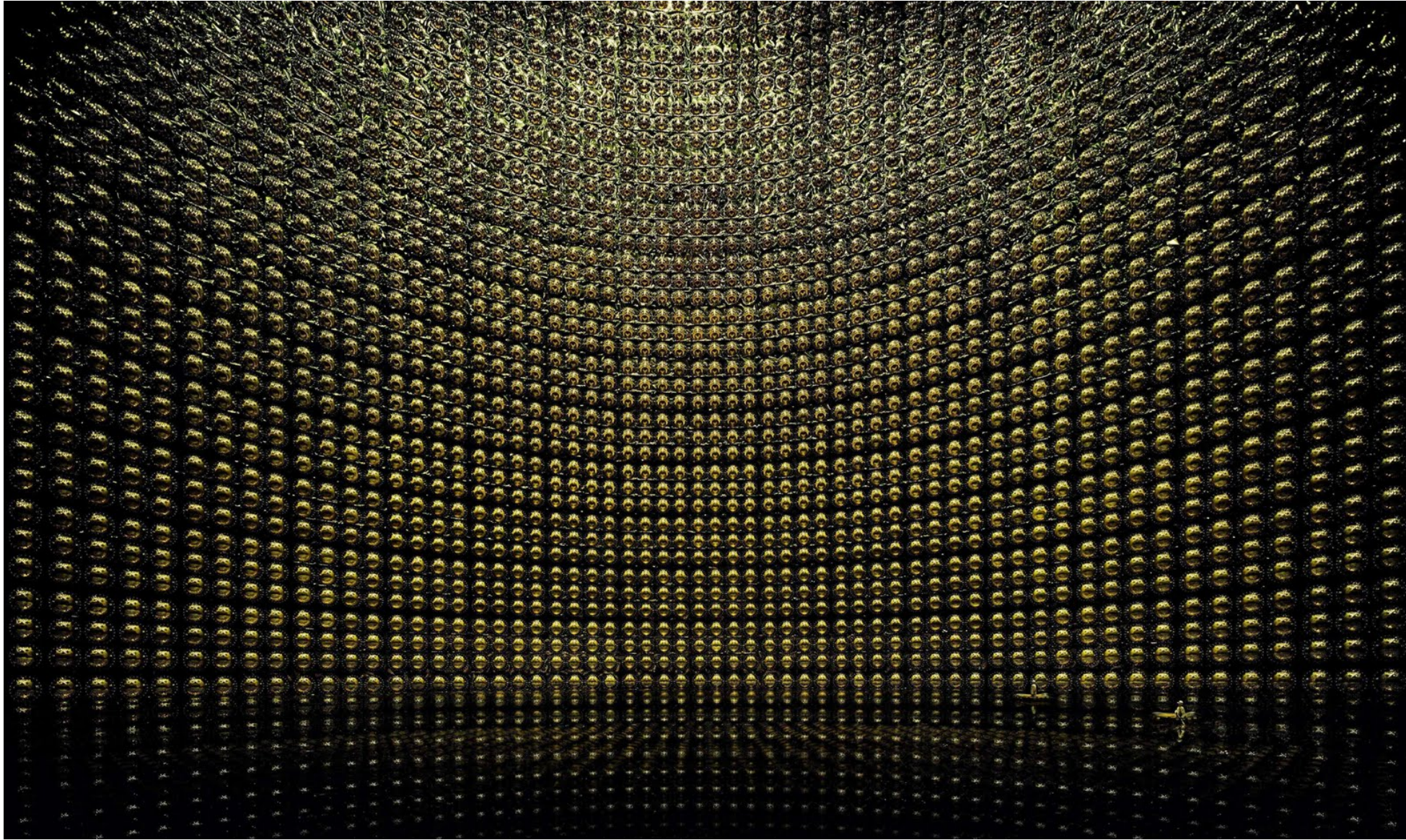




Top: Thomas Cole, *The Course of Empire: Destruction*, 1836.



Below: A photograph of the aftermath of the attacks, September 2001.



Subjugating the micro
for the macro.
Contriving the reality
for the purpose of the
image.

Andreas Gursky









Edward Burtynsky
*Oil Spill #2, Discoverer
Enterprise, Gulf of Mexico,
May 11, 2010*
Digital, colour print on
paper



Edward Burtynsky
*Oxford Tire Pile #8, Westley,
California, USA 1999*
Dye coupler print
68.6 x 86.4 cm
Courtesy Flowers Gallery,
London © Edward Burtynsky









Shock and Awe

The Sublime in the Age of the Anthropocene

MISSION GALLERY EXHIBITION 2020

Shock & Awe – Age of the Anthropocene

Exhibition Statement

The allure of the sublime has preoccupied artists and philosophers throughout history from its earliest articulation in Longinus right through to the contemporary expressions that have seen the sublime evolve yet fundamentally still point towards the inexpressible yet palpable feeling of what Kant described as *negative pleasure*. The Shock and Awe exhibition brings notions of the sublime up to date and contemplates the sublime in the Age of the Anthropocene where our relationship with nature has evolved as through both scientific and industrial revolutions we have endeavored to become control nature. Whilst nature remains awe-inspiring we have brought about our own versions of terror as the balance of power has shifted where both the capitalist and technological sublime collide with former classical Romantic Sublime, yet as we bring about irreversible destruction we remain humble and ultimately servants of the natural world that we inhabit. The Shock and Awe exhibition seeks to create a dialogue between the different notions of the sublime so that we may contemplate civilizations destiny in the Age of the Anthropocene.

The exhibition brings together to voices of philosophers such as Burke and Kant to initiate discussion between artists exploring notions of the sublime from the Romantic Sublime (Caspar D. Friedrich, JW Turner) to the Technological Sublime (9/11 Photographers, Gursky, Burtynsky). Shock and Awe explores the relationship between nature and society (culture) and the impact of both the scientific and industrial revolution to contemplate a contemporary notion of the ecosublime.

