

What Remains of the Sublime

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This thesis examines how the sublime has transformed from its eighteenth-century philosophical origins to its contemporary ideologies within digital culture, photography, and computer-generated imagery. Drawing on the writings of Burke, Kant, Marx, Nye, and more, it traces the visual movement of the sublime from natural landscapes to industrial structures and finally to the now artificial imagery that define the twenty-first century. While classical theories positioned the sublime as an encounter with the overwhelming, contemporary ideas extend this experience through automation, efficiency, and an abundance of images.

The text will argue that photography, once central to mediating these encounters with scale, vastness, and obscurity, now faces a crisis in the face of algorithms and infinitely reproducible digital imagery. Together, the written and practical components propose the idea that the sublime serves as a critical framework for understanding human experience within technologically saturated environments.

Chapter 1: Historical and Theoretical Foundations of the Sublime

The sublime has long been the mark of the limits in which human beings can understand. It is an aesthetic category that emerges when individuals face phenomena whose size, power and/or obscurity exceed our perception. Though modern culture associates the sublime with natural and technological spectacle -along with media displays of natural disasters and human conflict- its roots lie in eighteenth-century debates on fear, beauty, reasoning and more importantly the boundaries of representation. This chapter intends to trace the development of the sublime from its historical and classical approach most notably seen in the works of Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant, to its transformation within the industrial age- to hopefully demonstrate how photography has become central to mediating the experience of vastness and power in which a viewer can feel. In drawing the threads that weave these historical and theoretical foundations, the chapter intends to establish and understand how the sublime evolves within contemporary artistic culture and why photography remains deeply rooted in its modern forms.

Burke and the Aesthetics of Terror

Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) provides one of the earliest accounts of the sublime. For Burke, sublimity is rooted in affect, not reason. Famously he stated that "whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, is a source of the sublime" (Burke, 1757, p.36). Terror, vastness, and power create a pleasurable fear- a state in which Burke describes as "astonishment, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror" (Burke, 1757, p.57). Burke's sublime is therefore a bodily reaction produced by sensory interference and intensity rather than intellectual contemplation.

Burke also emphasises obscurity as a defining part in the experience: "Obscurity is necessary to make anything terribly sublime" (Burke, 1757, p.58). Shadows, vague outlines of forms, and concealment heighten this sense of danger. The implications this has on visual representation is extensive, as this means that images do not need to depict literal terror to evoke the sublime; they can produce awe through ambiguity, perspective, and scale.

A photographer's ability to accentuate light, shadow and minute details aligns strongly with Burke's emphasis on sensory experience and makes it an effective method to heighten perception- if done right. Many early landscape photographers intuitively echo Burke's principles, creating images that amplify the magnitude of nature-a photography that follows this is Ansel Adams. However, yet photography also introduces a contradiction, While Burke's sublime depends on affects created through immediacy, the photograph boxes the overwhelming into a fixed composition, transforming what should be unmediated terror into something controlled and aesthetically framed. Therefore, photography both extends and complicates Burke's theory by mediating what he originally positioned as beyond mediation.

Kant and the Limits of Representation

Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (1790) reorients the sublime from the body to the mind. For Kant, the sublime appears when imagination confronts something so vast it "cannot be contained in any sensible form" (Kant, 1790). The confrontation described here is a moment where the imagination fails but reason asserts itself in its place. Kant described this as a "faculty of mind surpassing every standard of sense" (Kant, 1790). Whereas Burke emphasises sensory terror, Kant's sublimity is cognitive based e.g. the mind recognises its own power in the face of nature's immeasurability. This contrast between Burke's emphasis on sensory processing and Kant's cognitive focus is important because it reveals early disagreement about whether sublimity is felt through the body or realised through the mind, a tension that becomes central when applied to photography.

Kant's most significant contribution to this movement is the idea that the sublime begins where representation fails. The imagination "strives to progress toward infinity, but reason demands totality" (Kant, 1790). This dialectic of that between which is depictable and rational with that which transcends depiction, becomes crucial when considering photography. The camera is a device of representation, yet its compression reveals the limits in which Kant identifies. Further on, a photograph of a vast landscape or industrial system can never hold its full size. What lies beyond the edges of the frame becomes part of the viewer's awareness. This would reflect Kantian recognition in which our cognitive limitations are tested.

Therefore, photography occupies an almost ambivalent position in relation to Kant's theories. It appears to contradict the idea saying that the sublime is unrepresentable. Yet it simultaneously reinforces this notion that representation is always partial. The viewer becomes aware of the power of the photographic image. This duality is important to note as we see later developments in which the technological sublime would produce.

Tension Between Burke and Kant: When Applied to Photography

Bringing Burke and Kant together reveals that photography destabilises both the classical theories. In terms of Burke, photography mitigates that immediate terror by translating it into a framed image; with Kant, the image represents the unrepresentable. At the same time, photography makes visible what exceeds our own perception- vast industrial mechanisms, geological formations, or arial landscapes- while also pointing to what is left outside the frame. This produces what Lyotard later describes as the postmodern sublime: "The feeling that something must be thought which cannot be represented" (Lyotard, 1984, p.78). The photograph therefore functions as a place where sensory affects and cognitive crises meet. Photography therefore occupies a "double position" as it reveals overwhelming phenomena yet also exposes the limits of visual representation, reinforcing both Burkean and Kantian ideas at once.

From Natural to Industrial: Photography and the Technological Sublime

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the source of the sublime shifted from natural vast landscapes to more industrial structures and mechanised environments. Leo Marx and David Nye argue that the rise of large-scale technologies introduced new forms of awe- despite the thirty-year timescale between their work. Marx

writes that “the machine is the new mythic symbol of power” (Marx, 1964, p.192) when referencing modern states of imagination. Similarly, Nye notes that “each generation has created its own technological sublime” (Nye, 1994, p.xiii). Factories, dams, bridges, and networks evoke the same mixture of awe and anxiety once associated with the natural, at least at its time. Continuously, this shift also shows how the sublime adapts to cultural and technological changes, moving from mountains and storms to industrial systems and mass-scale machinery.

Photography became the best medium to making these new spectacles visible to a general audience. It provided a means for documenting size while also imposing a sort of order onto overwhelming environments. The work of Bernd and Hilla Becher is central here. Their typological studies of water towers, blast furnaces, and cooling towers transform industrial structures into repeated visual forms. According to Hilla Becher, their aim was not to romanticise industry but to examine “the form, not the function” (Becher, 2005, p.42). By presenting these structures in serial grids, the Bechers reveal patterns that the naked eye may overlook. Bechers’ work therefore links back to both Kantian and Burkean ideologies, revealing how photographic methods can mirror philosophical ideas- even when applied to modern industry.

Edward Burtynsky extends the exploration of industrial size into the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. His photographs of mines, quarries, and oil fields combine aesthetic beauty with senses of unease. Burtynsky explains that his images “are meant to function as metaphors for the dilemma of our modern existence” (Burtynsky, 2003). They reveal humanities ability for transformation while exposing the consequences of nature’s extraction. He also acknowledges the contradictory pull of the sublime; “we are drawn by desire, but repelled by what we see” (Burtynsky, 2018).

Burtynsky's use of aerial perspectives and angles underscore the importance of technological advances. These viewpoints are accessible only through machines- helicopters, drones, and satellites. The sublime in his work is not merely produced by industrial scale but by machine-enhanced vision. As Batchen argues, photography “documents the world and transforms it into something conceptually larger than itself” (Batchen, 1997, p.13). Burtynsky’s images show just this, they turn landscapes of industry into representations of global systems.

This chapter has displayed how the sublime evolves alongside changes in perception and technological discoveries. From Burke’s sensory terror and Kant’s cognitive crises to Marx’s and Nye’s technological approach to the sublime, the category has continually shifted in response to new forms of power. Photography sits at the centre of these transformations; it visualises phenomena while also exposing the limits of representation. It produces encounters that are simultaneously sensory filled, conceptual, and technological. These developments lay the groundwork for understanding this digital and computational sublime, where twenty-first century technologies reshape perception once again.

These historical and theoretical frameworks provide the basis for the next chapters in this thesis, which turn to the twenty-first-century sublime. Contemporary photographic culture operates within digital infrastructures, algorithmic data systems, and forms of machine-vision that exceed human comprehension. These new conditions challenge classical theories and demand a rethinking of the sublime. Understanding this shift is

essential to show how photography continues to mediate our encounters with the immeasurable in this digital era.

Chapter 2: The Digital and Computational Sublime

The move from industrial to digital systems marked a major shift in how contemporary societies encounter the sublime. While industrial sublimity features physical magnitude such as; dams, factories and machinery, the digital sublime emerges from infrastructures that are largely invisible. Data centres, cloud computing, algorithms, surveillance, and global data all operate at scales that exceed human ability and perception. These systems introduce forms of scale that operate far beyond sensory experience, making the digital sublime more elusive than the industrial forms that relied on visible structures. This invisibility creates a new kind of sublimity shaped by automation, abstraction, and complexity.

Lex Manovich described digital culture as “software culture,” where algorithms replace mechanical tools as the primary means of organisation and decision-making (Manovich, 2013). These systems process data at speeds and volumes that surpass human cognition and ability. The sublime here is reflected not by physical size but abstract scale, the ungraspable quantities of data, and the speed in which operations can be made.

Paul Virilio’s concept of “dromology”- defined as the logic of speed, highlights how technology can produce events and transformations faster than humans can witness (Virilio, 1994). This creates a form of technological awe- we rely on processes that escape direct perception. This shifts the sense of overwhelm from natural or industrial landscapes toward the speeds and rhythms of computation. Trevor Paglen describes much of contemporary image circulation as “invisible images,” produced by machines rather than humans (Paglen, 2016). Algorithms classify, sort, and interpret images in ways that transform visual culture. This highlights a new form of sublimity: one based not on what we witness directly, but on systems that perceive and interpret the world beyond our awareness.

Artists like Hito Steyerl explore this opacity by tracing the hidden life of digital imagery, such as how they move through servers, are compressed, replicated, and interpreted by software. Her work exposes the scale of modern digital systems. Ryoji Ikeda uses abstraction, sound and data visualisation to create immersive experiences that overwhelm the senses- displaying how computational scale can be shown in a form that is more aesthetically grounded. I feel very inspired by this work and will test using this within my independent project, which is focused on the sublime as a motion experience and an immersive one at that. Both artists translate these hidden operations of the digital world into sensory experiences, making the invisible structures of computation perceptible.

An expanded form of perception, one created by the modern structures of data such as satellite imagery, AI-enhanced photography, and facial recognition- is making way for new forms of sublimity, grounded in this interplay between visibility and invisibility. Suddenly, anybody with a phone at home can watch a livestream of a street fifty miles away, and those walking the street have no idea... These technologies stretch the boundaries of human sight, shifting sublimity from physical vastness to informational vastness.

Yet this expansion of digital awe raises anxieties about mediation and control. Images become data points within their algorithms, and their meaning depends on software interpretation. How many times can the technological sublime transform as we discover new automations such as AI-generated imagery and information? That is what we are all currently experiencing right now. This continual technological acceleration shows how unstable and fast evolving the digital sublime has become.

This second chapter positions the digital sublime as a primary twenty-first century phenomenon shaped by abstraction, automation, and infrastructures naked to the human mind. This chapter serves as groundwork for my examination of photography's crisis in the following chapter. These ideas set the stage for understanding why photography struggles to maintain depth and authenticity within such automated environments.

Chapter 3: Photography's Crisis

Contemporary visual culture is increasingly defined by speed, circulation, and surface-level engagement. Photographs move through the digital world with little resistance and are consumed rapidly, scrolled past instinctively and often forgotten just as quickly. This tension created for photography's traditional claims of depth, presence and reflection harms its authenticity. Historically, photographs functioned as material encounters that required attention. They asked viewers to pause, to interpret and to consider. Digital circulation undermines these slower forms of perception. Perhaps the reason in which manipulated imagery is often seen as authentic by the average scroller.

Writers such as Hito Steyerl argue that the photographic image has become that of "poor", endlessly copied, compressed, and redistributed until its original context dissolves and becomes forgotten. The contemporary photograph is less an object but more a fragment of data which is optimised for visibility rather than meaning. This shift marks a changing of how we experience these photographs. The immersive, contemplative encounters associated with the sublime becomes harder to replicate and sustain within an age that rewards immediacy above duration. Even overwhelming images risk becoming part of an endless pit of archived stock, a quick moment of interest before the next stimuli replaces it. This speaks directly to photography's loss of discord- images no longer demand time, and without time the conditions for such sublimity become unstable.

Geoffrey Batchen argues that photography has entered a "post-photographic" condition, where digital manipulation and reproducibility erode its connection to reality (Batchen, 1999). Photographs become objects of data rather than a records of life. I would say it undermines traditional forms of photographic sublimity, which relied on the viewer encountering something vast or overwhelming within the image.

Furthermore, Martin Lister similarly emphasises that photography now circulates primarily as information, shaped by the systems that distribute it, rather than as a stable representation (Lister, 2013). As a result, the sublime becomes harder to locate because the conditions that once supported it; attention, rarity, and reflection are weakened by constant exposure.

Conditions of contemporary visual contemplation create a sense of passivity in the viewer. Instead of engaging with images as singular events that stand in a moment of time, viewers respond through habitual gestures such

as scrolling, tapping, and liking. This is not to say that all of it is bad. It is this feature that has also allowed imagery to be shared globally, which comes with its own pros and cons. However, it is this passivity that stands in tension with traditional notions of the sublime, which relies on a moment of temporary suspension in order to understanding our own perception. In this context, the viewer becomes a participant in a flow that is automated rather than an active interpreter- thus weakening photography's ability to provoke deeper emotional responses.

The Easily Manufactured Sublime

One of the more significant developments in wider cultural shifts is the way in which the sublime itself has become abundant through artificial intelligence. What early writers would describe as rare, and overwhelming can now be produced almost instantly through digital tools. For example, AI-generated images can create dramatic mountains or vast architectural forms at the click of a button. These images are only imitations of sublimity- exaggerated scale and depth of environments and atmospheres can be created. However, they require no direct encounter with nature, danger of physical scale and as a result, the sublime risks becoming a template of a style rather than an experience and/or a concept.

Social media further reinforces this shift, where dramatic and heightened imagery is plastered on platforms and inescapable, and is rewarded with visibility and engagement. Editing apps and filters have always been rooted deeply in a platform's ability to produce images that appear larger, clearer, or more epic than the authentic moment itself. In terms of the sublime, overtime this creates a loop of feedback in which the sublime becomes part of everyday visual language. Instead of provoking awe and reflection, its aesthetics circulate as quick spectacles to be forgotten the next day. What was once extraordinary now risks becoming formulaic, repeating the same cues of sublimity until they eventually lose emotional impact.

A constant exposure to this category of imagery can dull the sense of awe in which these images were once able to provide. When every mountain looks impossibly vast and every sunset is more saturated than you have ever seen in real life, sublimity loses its capacity to shake perception. It becomes more predictable. Further on, artificial intelligence accelerates this process, being trained on vast databases of highly manipulated or styled imagery can assist in its learning of what 'sublimity' looks like in a data driven sense and allows it to reproduce it in seconds. The result being a digitally produced image constructed through patterns and probabilities rather than real, lived experiences.

I am stating that this contemporary process of image viewing contributes directly to photography's current crisis. If sublime imagery can be produced without a landscape, or even a camera- how can photography's historical claim to authenticity and mediation between humans and the vast sides of this Earth be applicable in the twenty-first century. This authentic sense of witnessing something genuinely vast and powerful becomes secondary to the efficiency in which similar images can be produced algorithmically. In a culture saturated by spectacle, an artist's challenge is no longer to generate the sublime but to create the conditions in which it can be felt. This shifts the artist's responsibility away from producing impressive images and toward designing experiences that demand time, attention, and presence... three qualities missing from most digital encounters in the contemporary world.

Automation, Passivity, and our Loss of Connection with Encounters

As mentioned, artificial intelligence and automated photography intensify this problem of passivity. Many contemporary images are generated, selected, or enhanced by an algorithm already set. These all contribute to a sense that the images you see arrive to you shaped by systems rather than human intention. Automation means images reach viewers through processes they do not see, understand, or choose, which reduces the chance for meaningful or unexpected encounters.

A viewer's relationship to imagery is slowly becoming more abstract. Instead of responding to images as singular moments in time, viewers are now more likely to encounter them as a collective of broader technological systems and inputs. Modern theorists describe this as the flattening of visual culture, where differences between natural, digital, and synthetic imagery become harder to distinguish. The boundaries between reality and simulation become less visible. This is already being seen throughout the digital world where fake imagery and news is spread just as fast as their real counterparts.

As a result, sublimity is increasingly experienced through spectacle rather than through perception and disruptions of our imaginations. It is something seen rather than something felt which was the sublime's entire basis at its core at one time. This emotional flattening weakens the viewer's ability to experience the sublime as a genuine disturbance of perception.

Platforms today encourage creators to produce imagery that is mind-blowing or unreal as they would put it. These words often used as tags emphasise the marketability and profitability of awe rather than its emotional significance. Its ability to generate engagement is put to the highest priority. This risks flattening the sublime into an aesthetic amongst many, a format tailored for digital audiences. This creates many challenges for contemporary photographers and artists, who must find other ways to produce these sublime encounters for viewers.

Implications for Artistic Practice

These issues shape the challenges of contemporary artistic practice. If photography is losing its ability to hold attention or provoke depth, then artists must consider how to design experiences that counter contemporary digital passivity. This leads directly into the next chapter, where my own practice explores how motion, sound, and environment might contextualise and reintroduce forms of sublimity that resist instant consumption.

Chapter 4: Creative Practice- Motion, Environment and the 21st Century Sublime

My practical work this academic year will seek to explore how an immersive, motion-based installation can evoke a contemporary form of the sublime. While the concept of immersion has been explored greatly in contemporary art, my intention is to interpret it through my own theoretical framework shaped by this digital sublime. While I considered it, the installation will not rely on interactivity and will instead create an atmosphere that surrounds the viewer and encourages slower engagement. The motion imagery I intend on displaying will be abstract and bold- referring to those traditional notions of the sublimed abstraction and

ambiguity. I will bring together abstraction, motion, and sound to evoke experiences that resist immediate interpretation and/or understanding. This decision directly responds to my earlier concerns about digital passivity by requiring the viewer to inhabit the work rather than skim across it.

The conceptual starting point draws directly from Burke's emphasis on obscurity and sensory intensity, and Kant's focus on the limits of representation and understanding. Contemporary thinkers such as Steyerl and Paglen inform my work's engagement with invisible processes. Rather than illustrating these processes literally, the installation translates their qualities; opacity, automation, and scale- into aesthetic forms through abstraction and atmosphere.

Also drawing inspiration from artists like Doug Aitken, whose installations use continuous motion to generate spaces in which to contemplate, and Ryoji Ikeda as previously mentioned, who uses data-inspired visuals to overwhelm a viewer's senses. These precedents provide a useful framework, yet my project diverges by grounding digital abstraction specifically within the debates outlined earlier about the crisis of photographic depth and the rapid acceleration of visual culture in a digital age.

I have realised how much of a key role sound has in the installation. Low-frequency tones, slow shifts in rhythm and ambient noises physically shape the space and the experience. The sound is a medium for producing a bodily sense of magnitude and can allow a room to feel much larger than it actually is. This echoes Burke's idea that the sublime can provoke visceral responses e.g. the feeling of hairs standing up. Sound therefore becomes a tool for reintroducing physical intensity into a digital encounter, bridging the gap between technological abstraction and the qualities of classical sublimity.

A plan to have a spatial design is central to my viewer's experience, it is my plan after all to enrich the viewer in the imagery I present. The installation will encourage a viewer's path through the space, this being due to a viewer's position in relation to the projected imagery shapes what is visible. And while their movement does not control the imagery, it shapes the viewing experience and reinforces the embodied nature of the encounter between the viewer and the imagery. This spatial arrangement is intended to challenge the tendencies of contemporary scrolling culture by making movement slow, deliberate, and tied to perception.

My work is intended to resist the surface-level consumption described in my previous chapter. It must not be able to be reduced to a single frame or short clip but demands extended attention and presence. Through a manipulated atmosphere of motion and sound, the installation aims to produce a form of contemporary sublimity which is wrapped in digital culture but grounded in sensory experience. My practice therefore sits at an intersection of classical/historical theories and twenty-first century technological advancements. It demonstrates how motion-based work can evoke depth and magnitude without relying on simple and literal representation. In this sense, the project acts as both a continuation of the theoretical concerns of this thesis and a practical test of how sublimity might be reinforced beyond conventional photographic forms.

To Conclude

This thesis has been my way of tracing the evolution of the sublime across philosophical texts, industrial and digital contexts, showing how photography and moving-image practices can mediate encounters with overwhelming scale and complexity. From the sensory terror of Burke to Kantian notions of cognitive tension, and from the Bechers and Burtynsky's industrial landscapes to the invisible infrastructures of the digital age, the sublime reveals shifting relationships between humans and technology. I truly believe that humankind will experience the most shifts of sublimity in the next few centuries. The rapid acceleration of artificial intelligence demonstrates only one direction in which contemporary sublimity may evolve, thus raising questions about how future visual culture and art will shape perception.

Photography has undergone significant transformations since its discovery, facing pressures from digital saturation while simultaneously gaining new modes of perception through the same technology. Contemporary sublimity emerges from the interplay between visibility and invisibility, human and machine vision, and even surface-level content. With my creative practice, it is my intention to explore how technologies can reshape perception and experience. The installation therefore acts as a practical reflection of these tensions, exploring whether immersive environments can sustain that depth where conventional photography now unfortunately struggles.

Ultimately, I am not stating that the sublime has disappeared with the arrival of artificial imagery. Instead, the sublime persists by transforming alongside the technological structures that define contemporary life. In an age defined by complexity and automation, it offers a way to understand encounters that continue to exceed our own perception. Photographic practice will always remain a primary mediator of these encounters, and it reveals the possibilities and limits of human vision in a twenty-first century. The future of the sublime therefore lies not in resisting technological change but in understanding how these discoveries reshape the boundaries of perception itself.

Annotated Bibliography

The sources I have gathered here reflect the shifting conversations around photography, digital culture, aesthetics of modern technology and the contemporary sublime. Although each text approaches visual experience from a unique perspective, they share a concern with how modern technology shapes perception and emotion. In developing my own immersive installation, I find myself returning to writers who question these limits of visual representation and those who explore how new forms of media and technology affect attention, feeling and experience.

These works do not form one single theoretical framework; they overlap in many ways. Some focus on historical theories of the sublime, while others examine the pressures of digital culture- while several of them also confront the changing role of photography in a world where imagery can be easily manipulated, endlessly shared and increasingly synthetic. When together, they begging to outline the territory in which my project attempts to navigate: How to create an experience that resists instant consumption and instead, encourages slower reflective engagement. The bibliography also reflects a broader interest in how images can still produce affect and depth during an era where spectacle is commonplace and the sublime can be generated with just a few prompts.

Burke, Edmund (1757). *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*

Burke's distinction between the beautiful and the sublime remains a foundation for understanding emotional and sensory impact in a sublime experience. His emphasis on terror, uncertainty and overwhelmingness helped me in articulating what forms of sensation I both understand the sublime to be and intend to replicate in my own creative practice. While some of his arguments are tied to an eighteenth-century worldview, this tension between pleasure and disturbance is still resonant in contemporary installation and artistic practice and therefore informs my own creative practice.

Kant, I. (1790). *Critique of Judgement*

Kant positions the sublime as a cognitive tension between imagination and reason, where the mind confronts something in which it cannot fully grasp. This philosophical foundation informs my discussion of the limits of representation, particularly in relation to digital infrastructures and machine vision. Kant's distinction between the mathematical and dynamical sublime influences the chapter structure of my thesis and the conceptual basis for my installation.

Steyerl, H. (2009). *In Defence of the Poor Image*

Steyerl argues that the “poor image” circulates endlessly through digital networks, losing resolution and context but gaining political and cultural relevance. Her ideas support my analysis of speed, circulation, and surface-level engagement. Steyerl’s emphasis on degraded digital images helps contextualise the crisis of photographic depth in contemporary culture and directly influences Chapter three of my thesis. Her work also informs how my installation aims to resist this degradation.

Paglen, T. (2016). *Invisible Images: Your pictures are looking at you*

Paglen’s essay examines machine-produced and machine-read images, suggesting that much of contemporary visual culture is now invisible to the human eye. This strongly relates to my discussion of the digital sublime as an infrastructure that exceeds perception. Paglen’s framework supports my argument about informational vastness and the automated circulation of images. His ideas also inform the abstract, indirect nature of my practical work.

Manovich, L. (2013). *Software Takes Command*

Manovich characterises contemporary culture as “software culture” and argues that digital tools fundamentally reshape how images are produced, edited, and circulated. This text strengthens the technological grounding of Chapter 2, reinforcing my analysis of automation and algorithmic processes. Manovich’s insights justify my exploration of abstraction, speed and invisibility within the digital sublime.

Batchen, G. (1999). *Each Wild Idea*

Batchen’s discussion of the “post-photographic” condition provides historical grounding for understanding photography’s crisis. His argument that digital photography destabilises the medium’s link to reality supports my claims about surface-level imagery and the collapse of authenticity. This text directly informs Chapter 3’s exploration of how digital manipulation and reproducibility shift the experience of sublimity.

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