

Thinking *Through* Images



**Approaching Aby Warburg
and the Digital Humanities
and Arts**

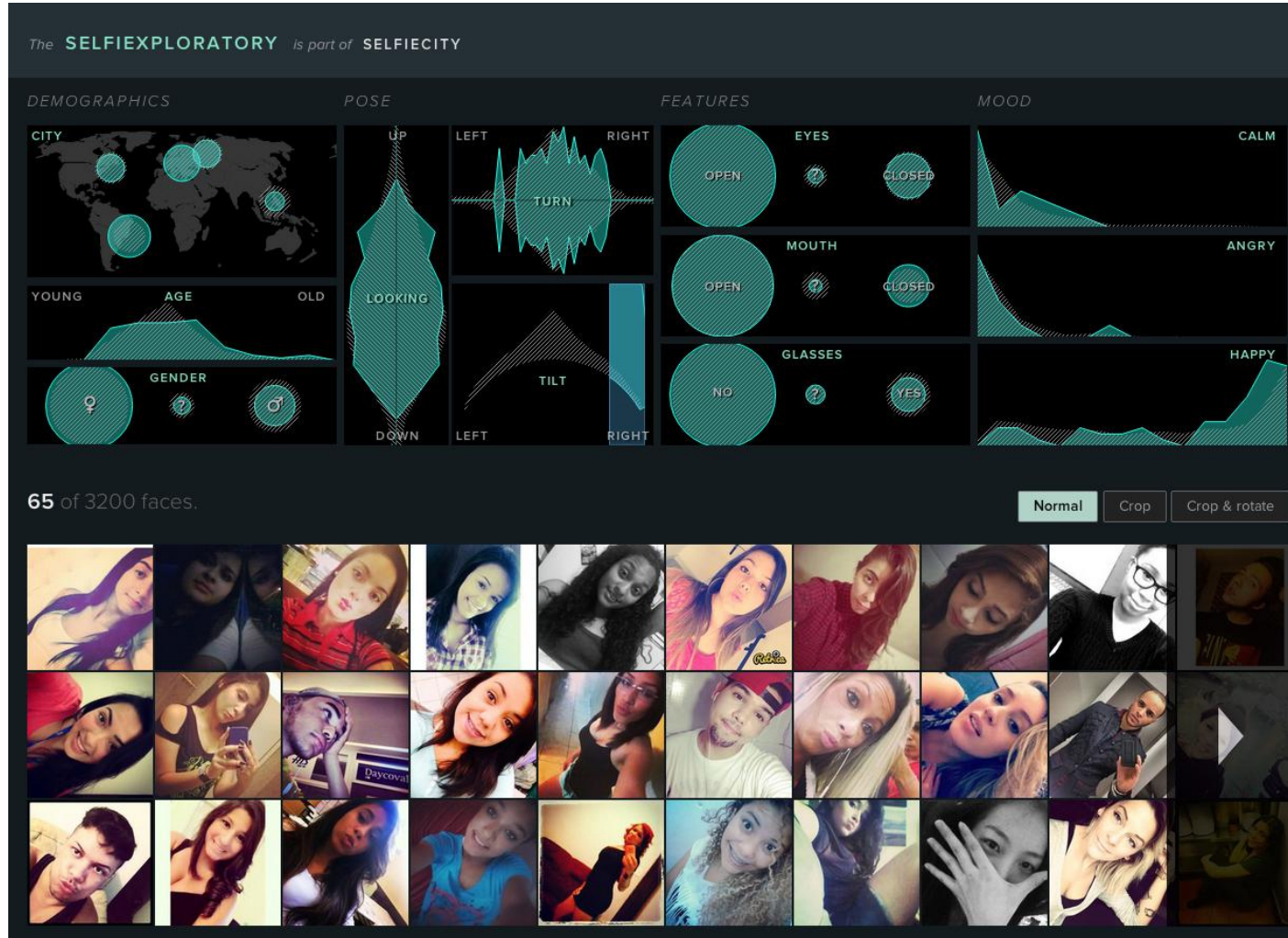
Amanda du Preez



Dealing with images in DH

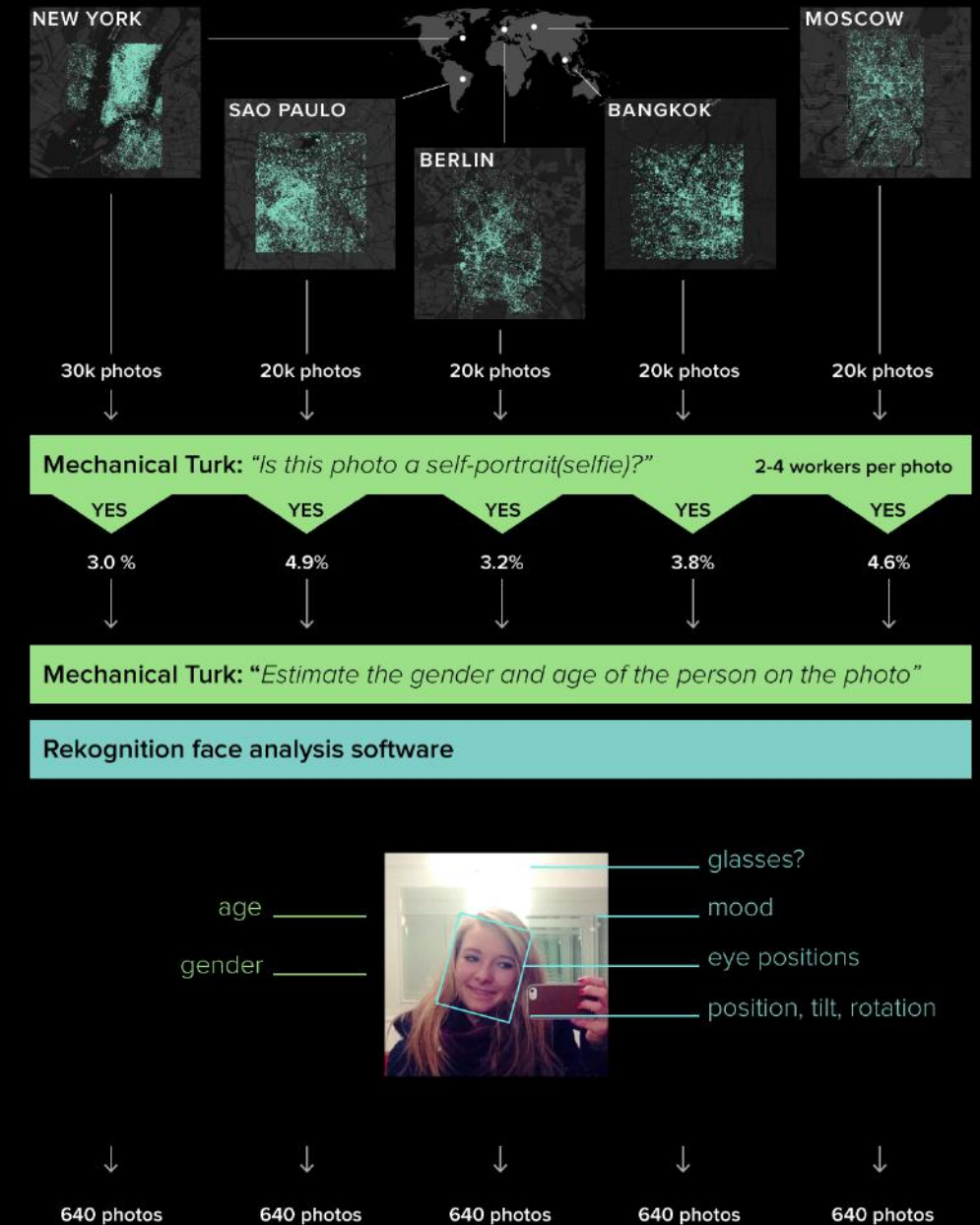
- *do you digitize images (digital imaging and processing) or use only digitally born images?*
- *do you aggregate images in a digital archive? (meta-data)*
- *do you use image recognition and machine learning to discern patterns?*
- *do you treat the image as a distinct data unit? In other words treat images as image-data in and of themselves*

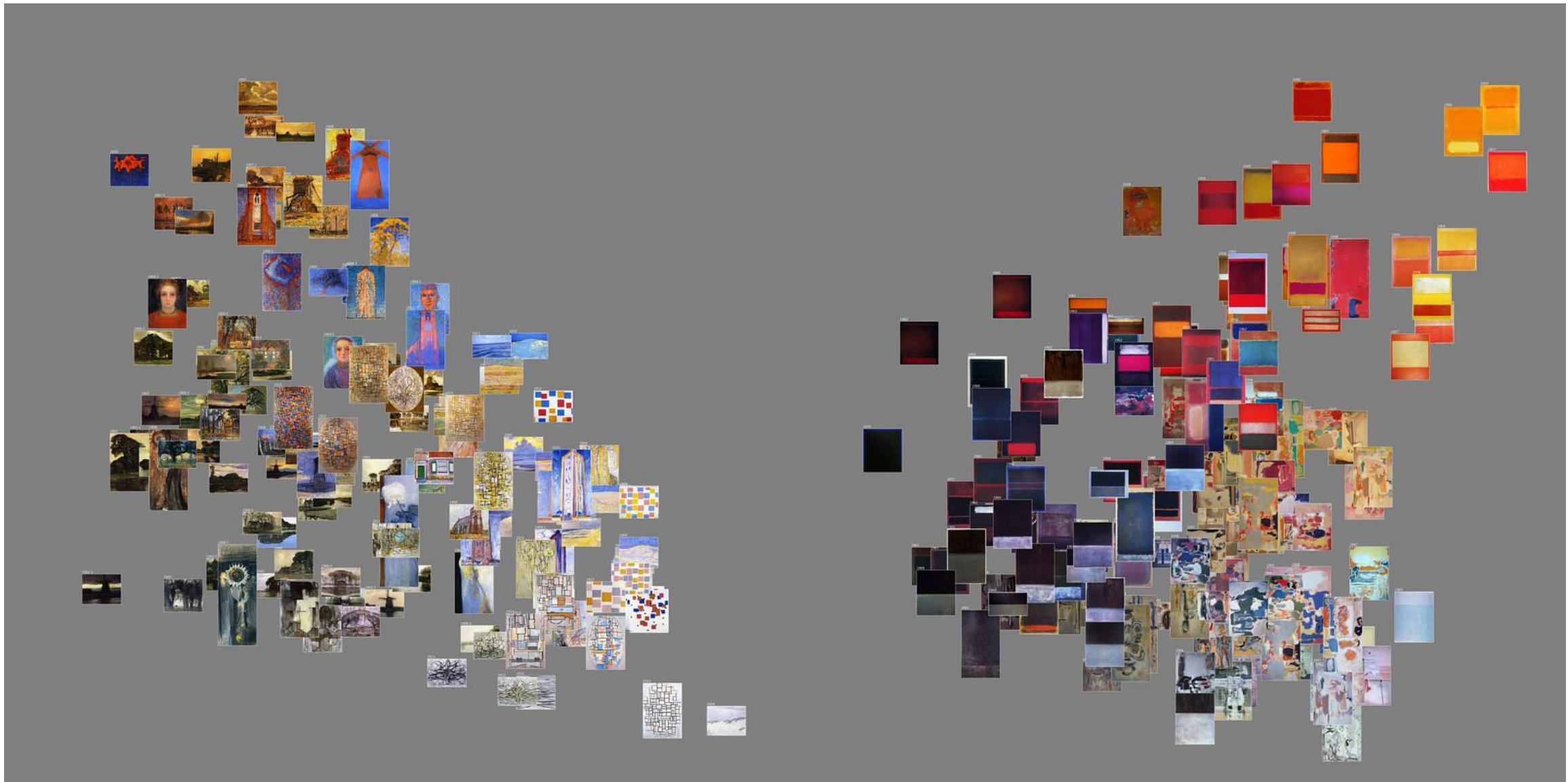
Selfiecity (<http://selfiecity.net>, 2014) Lev Manovich and Software Studies



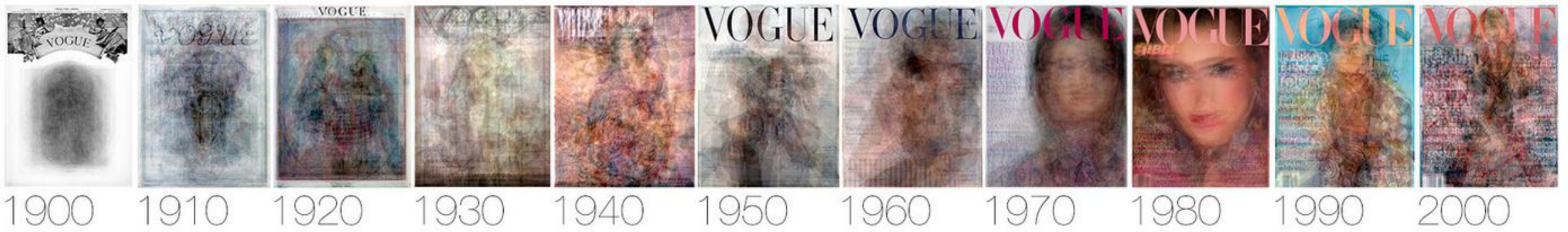
SELFIECITY

DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

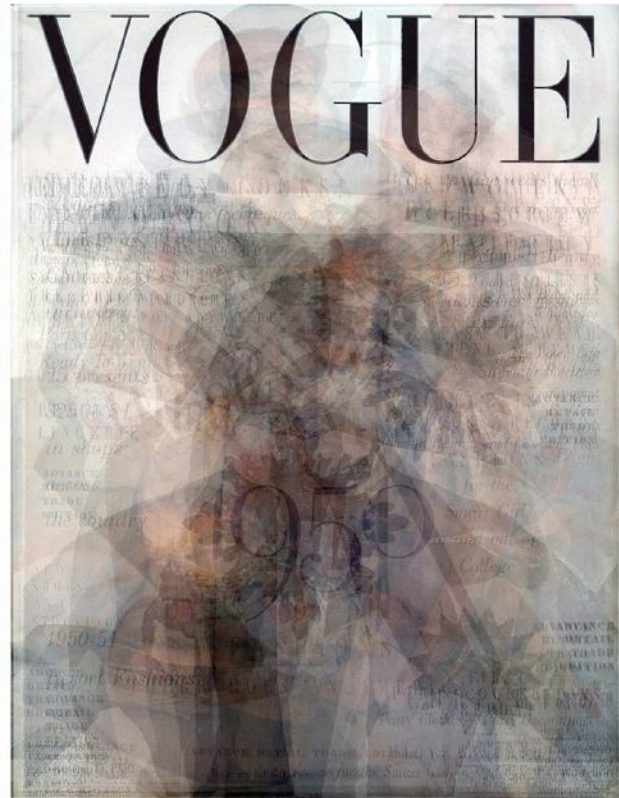
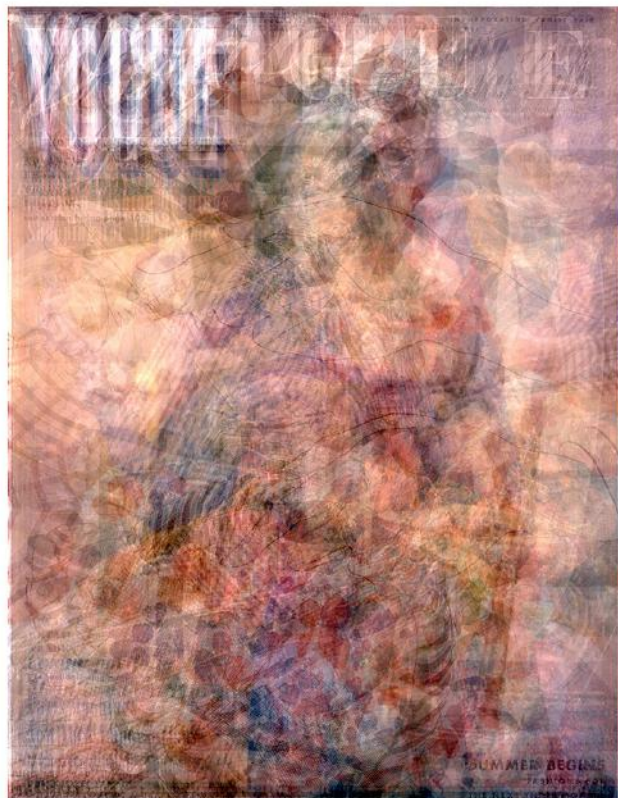




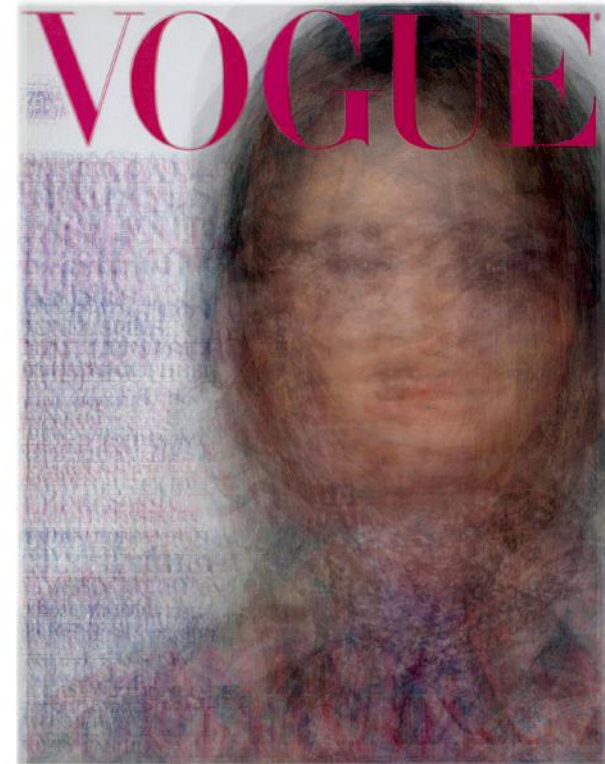
Mondrian vs Rothko: Revealing the Comparative "Footprints" of the Modern Painters
by Culture Analytics Lab



Robots Reading Vogue by Lindsay King and Peter Leonard, Digital Humanities Lab, Yale University



1940s- 1950s



1970s - 1980s

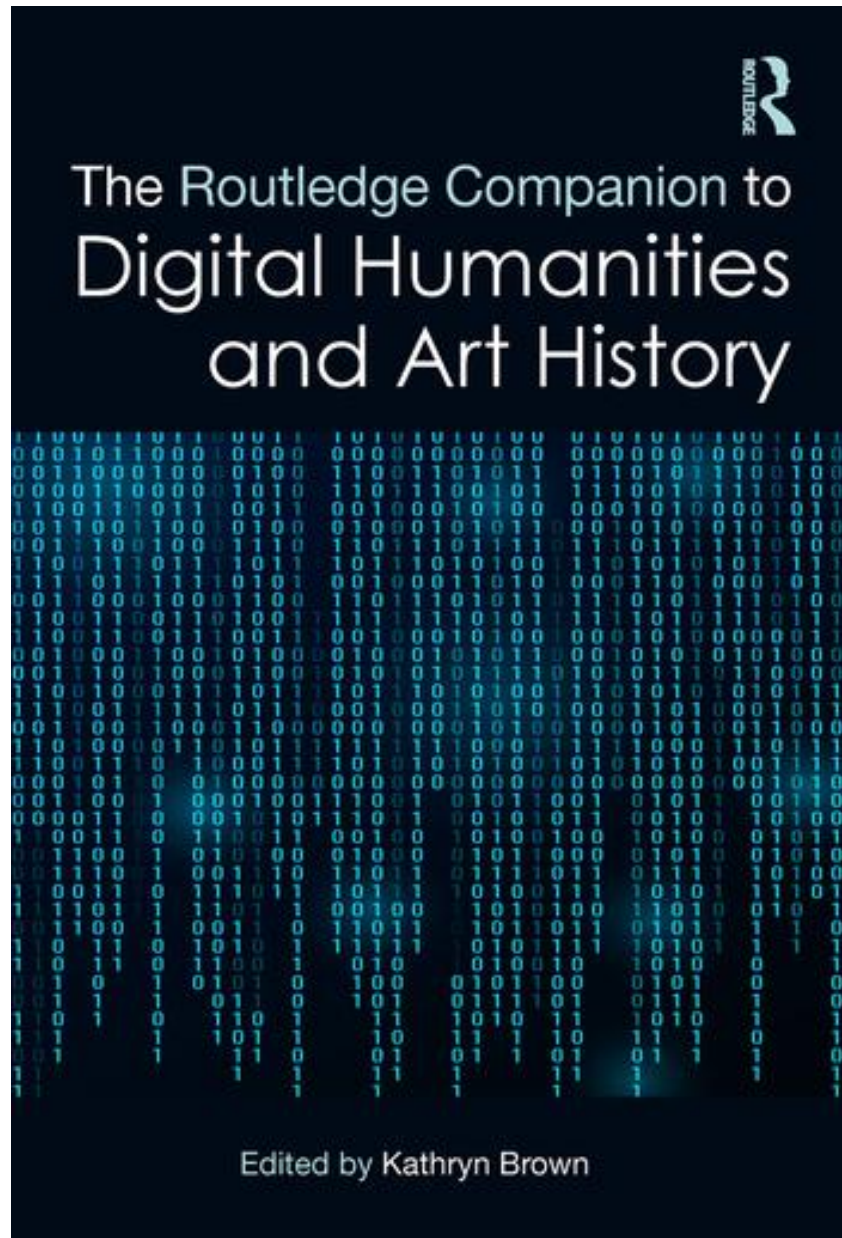
Aby Warburg's (1866-1929) BilderAtlas Mnemosyne



Ovid Exhibition in *the Reading Room of the Kunstwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg*, Hamburg, 1927



<https://warburg.sas.ac.uk/aby-warburg-bilderatlas-mnemosyne-virtual-exhibition>



The Routledge Companion to Digital Humanities and Art History

Edited By Kathryn Brown

| | |
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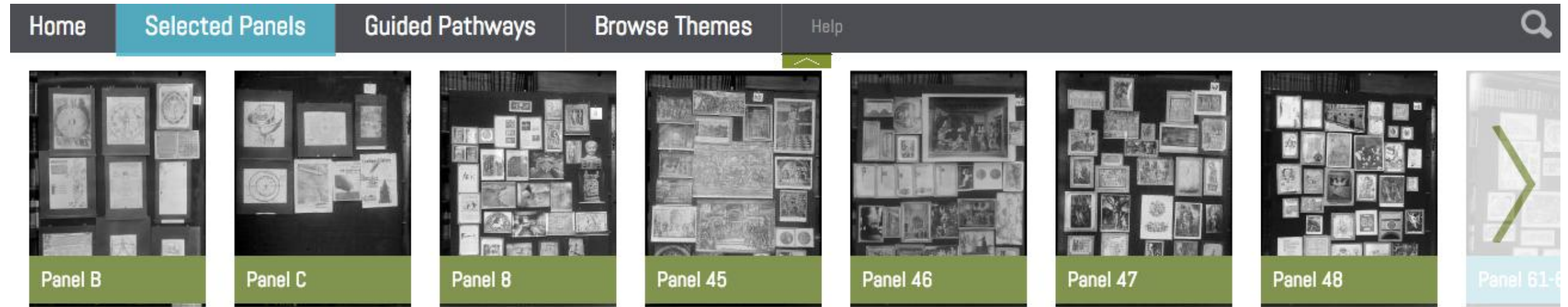
"Approaching Aby Warburg and Digital Art History: Thinking Through Images" Amanda Du Preez

Guiding Warburgian Concepts

- Images as migrating units of meaning - they have an afterlife (*Nachleben*);
- Pathos formula (*Pathosformel(n)*) - pictorial representations of expressive gestures;
- Framing as both a conceptual and structural strategy (*Denkraum, Zwischenraum*);
- Networked atlas;
- Principle of the good neighbour;
- Movement between close and distant reading.

Mnemosyne. Meanderings Through Aby Warburg's Atlas by Christopher Johnson

sponsored by Cornell University Press and The Warburg Institute





Panel 61-64

Neptune as a conducting, 'serving God.' Whom I now. 'Virgil'

Meandering between the Southern and Northern Renaissances, Warburg here juxtaposes Italian and Dutch representations of a myth that was crucial to Virgil's *Aeneid*, but that also speaks directly to his own attempts to find images where cosmographic-demonic forces are expressed in an artistic style that shows both formal restraint and individual expression. Building on panels 41a and 60, Warburg explores how late Renaissance and Baroque festive art employed a Virgilian Neptune to symbolize both



Guided Pathways



Panel 70

Introduction (1 of 5)

Next >

1 of 5 | Guides: [Jane O. Newman](#) & [Laura Hatch](#)

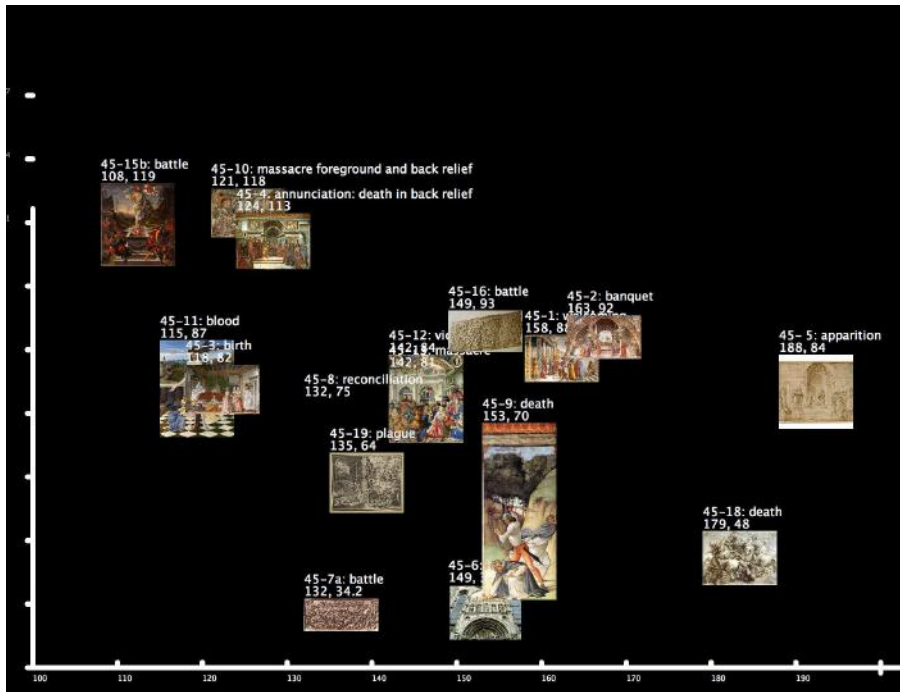
The Baroque as the Renaissance?

In the draft "Introduction" ("Einleitung") to the *Mnemosyne Atlas*, not published during his lifetime, Warburg describes the central goal of the project: the tracking of the dueling forms that characterize human responses to potential threats from within and from the outside. Juxtaposing agitated and potentially merely reactive, "phobic-kinetic" responses to these stimuli, on the one hand, to the deliberate, controlled, even "artistically" contained moment of reflection prior to (defensive) "shaping" "action" ("Handlung"), on the other, he explains that the *Atlas* will display the tension between these two Nietzschean – Dionysian and Apollonian – responses as it is visible, first, in the pathos of antiquity's earlier language of gesture ("Gebärdensprache") and, second, in the afterlives of that language in the Renaissance (3; on the evolution of Warburg's notion of "pathos formulae," see Warnke 61-8). Both here and throughout Warburg's oeuvre, it was thus the achievement of a specific period, namely, the *Renaissance*, to have taken up the battle previously fought by the Ancients between forces capable of overcoming, possessing, and thus enslaving humanity, and the powers of human reason and self-control, which signify both personal and civilizational freedom. Because the permanent "schizophrenia" of the "West" perpetuates the possibility of the return of un-reason, as Warburg writes in his "Notes on Mnemosyne" ("Mnemosyne I. Aufzeichnungen," 645), it was to be the task of the *Atlas* to tell the story of the return of *sophrosyne* to pre-eminence in Europe during that period, indeed, to lock this version of the history of the "pathos formulae" securely into place, via a series of panels that moved from ancient through medieval to Renaissance artistic forms.



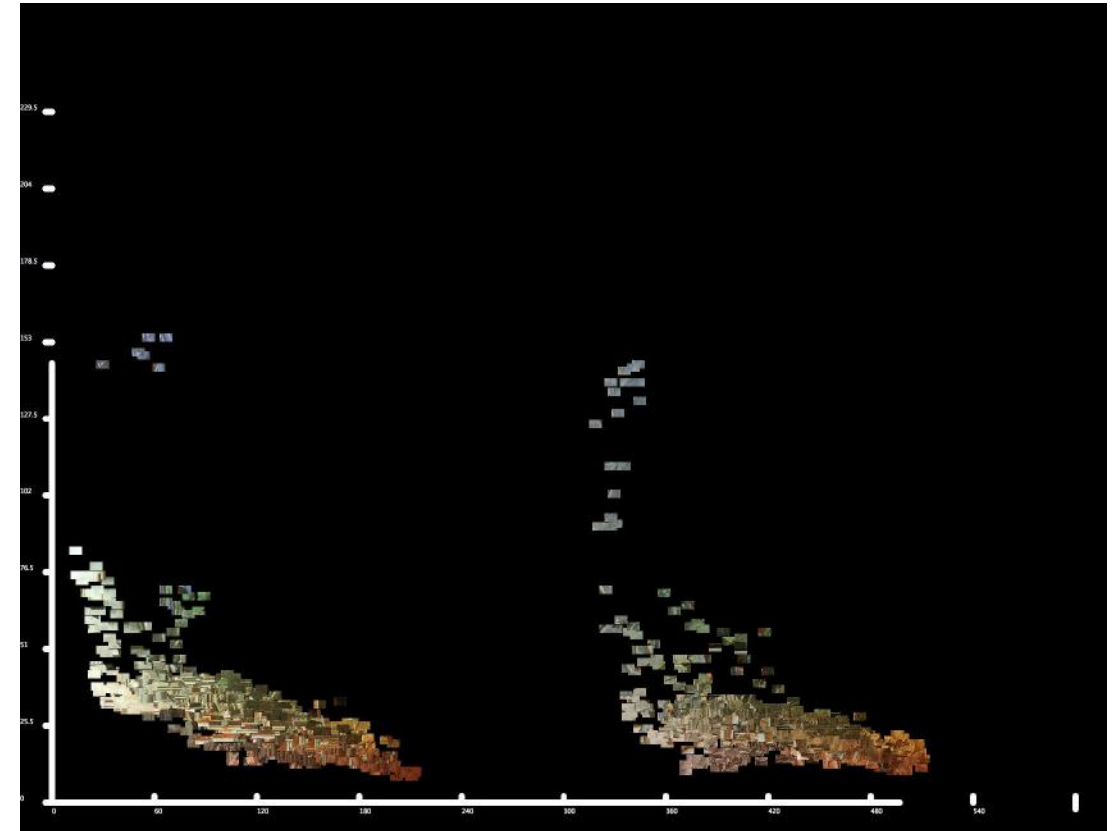
THEMES:

1. Cosmological-genealogical prologue; cartography
2. Ancient cosmology
3. Classical “pre-imprinting”; an archaeology of artistic “expressive values”; ecstasy and melancholy; pathos formulas of sacrifice and triumph
4. Transmission and degradation of Greek astronomical thought in medieval Arabic, medieval and Renaissance European astrological imagery (Baghdad, Toledo, Padua, Rimini, Ferrara)
5. The “afterlife” of classical “expressive values” in Renaissance, mainly late quattrocento art
6. “Inversion,” ascent, and descent in Renaissance (esp. in the cinquecento) and after; from the muses to Manet
7. Virgil, Dürer, Rubens, and the northward migration (translatio); Neptune and nature
8. Baroque excess, art officiel, and Rembrandt’s mediation; theatricality and anatomy
9. Final “inversions”: advertisement and transubstantiation (Eucharist); the sacred and profane



Remapping the images of Panel 45, using the ImageMeasure and ImagePlot modules of the ImageJ Software.

"I argue that Digital Art History should continue its investment in contextual visual knowledge by combining quantitative image-data paradigms with traditional art history in order to foster critical interpretations of visual culture."



Visualization the hue and saturation in images 45-4 (Annunciation) on the left and 45-10 (Massacre) on the right



Figure 4.1. A Pathosformel emerges. Left to right: detail of vase from Nola, Louvre, 470 BC; etching after 5th century BC vase from Chiusi, G.F. Gamurrini, *Annali dell' inst. di corrisp. archeol.* 1879; Woodcut from Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Venice 1497; Northern Italian engraving, late 15th century AD, School of Mantegna, Hamburg Kunsthalle; Albrecht Dürer, "Death of Orpheus", 1494, Hamburg Kunsthalle

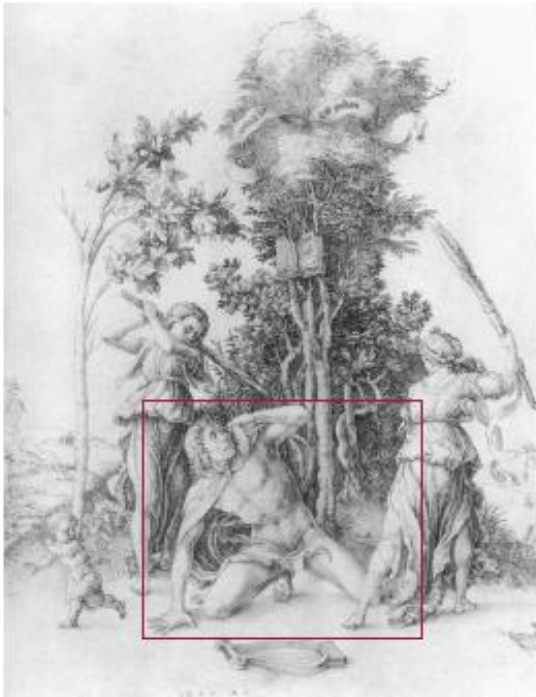


Figure 4.2. Extraction. The box around the body is created by drawing a line on the figure, from head to toe, and then using it to estimate a "bounding box" centered on the body, and enclosing its limbs.

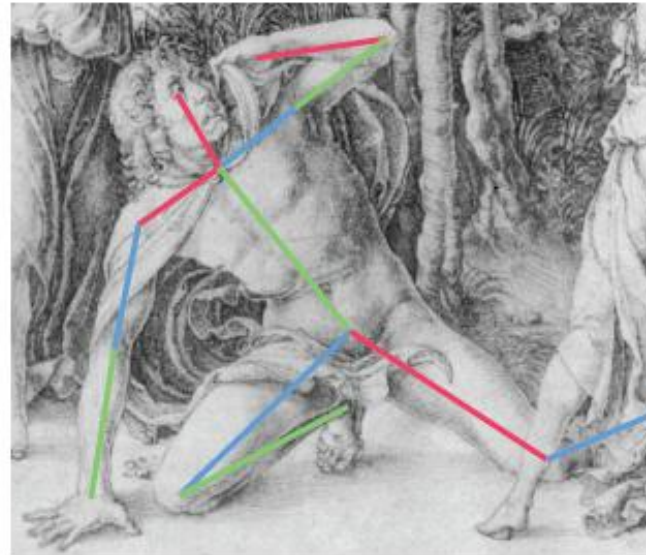


Figure 4.3. X-ray

Our skeletons are made of twelve segments – the lower and upper legs, the spine, the lower and upper arms, the shoulders, and the neck – which represent a compromise between anatomical accuracy and consistent reproducibility. The reason we have shoulders and not hips, for example, is that the latter are usually invisible – they lie, barely implied, below layers of clothing – and our initial experiments revealed that they would be tagged almost at random.

Figures in the *Bilderatlas* are often mirrored, rotated, and – in Greek pottery or constellation-maps – even upside-down. If left uncompensated, this spectrum of positions would quickly become the dominant feature in the data. We therefore rotate each skeleton so as to make the spine always vertical, and mirror the poses horizontally, so that the higher arm is always on the left. We thus end up with one angle per body-part, minus the spine, or eleven angles in total.

The decision to straighten the spine is clearly a questionable one – even more so, as several Pathosformeln (Laokoon in particular) involve a strong torsion of the trunk. But we could think of no alternative option – and, as we will soon see, the impact over the results seems to have been negligible.

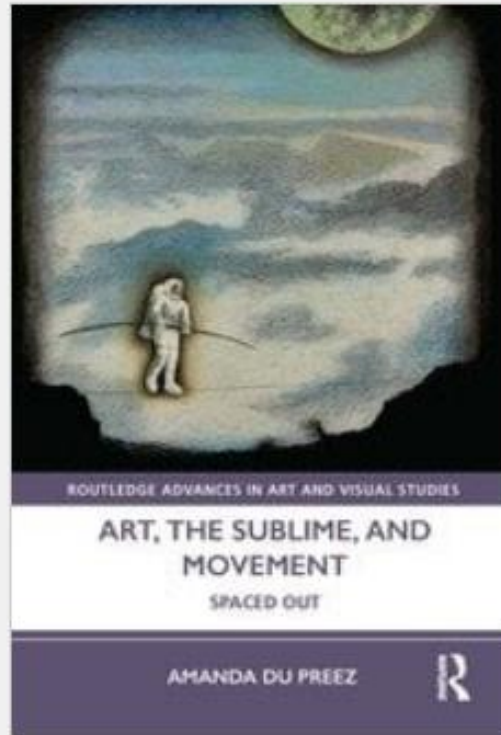
Leonardo Impett and Franco Moretti Operationalizing Aby Warburg's Pathosformeln

The video player displays a presentation slide with a dark red background. The slide content includes:

- A blue hierarchical tree diagram at the top, representing a morphological model.
- A row of nine red stick figures in the middle, showing variations in posture.
- A row of six small images at the bottom, including classical sculptures and paintings.

In the bottom right corner, a man with a beard, wearing a dark suit and a red tie, is speaking at a podium. The video player interface at the bottom shows a progress bar at 00:52:03, a timestamp of 01:28:38, and standard playback controls.

“Our morphological model for Pathosformeln is statistically strong: but what are the art-historical implications?”



[Enlarge](#)

1st Edition

Art, the Sublime, and Movement Spaced Out

By *Amanda du Preez*

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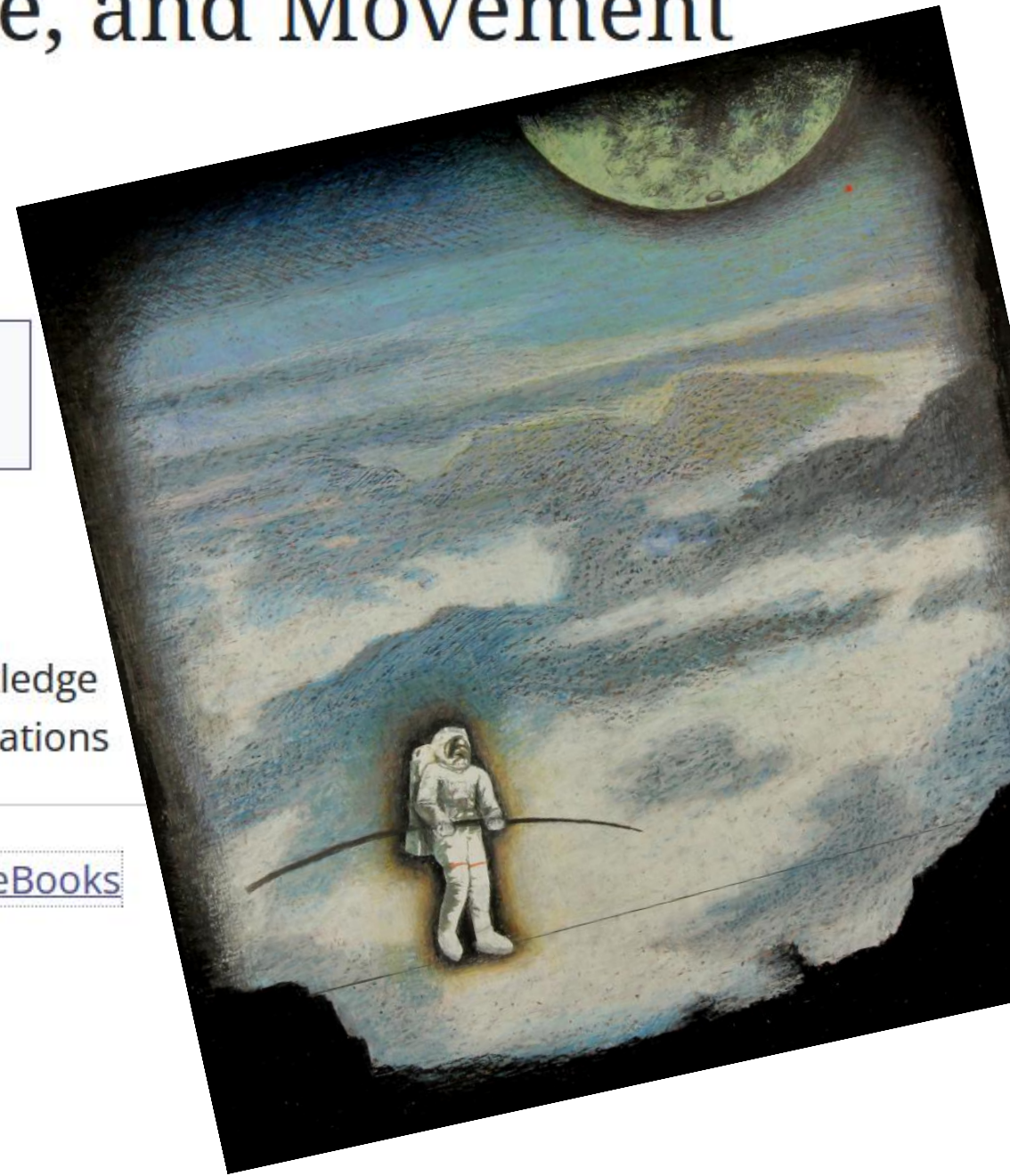
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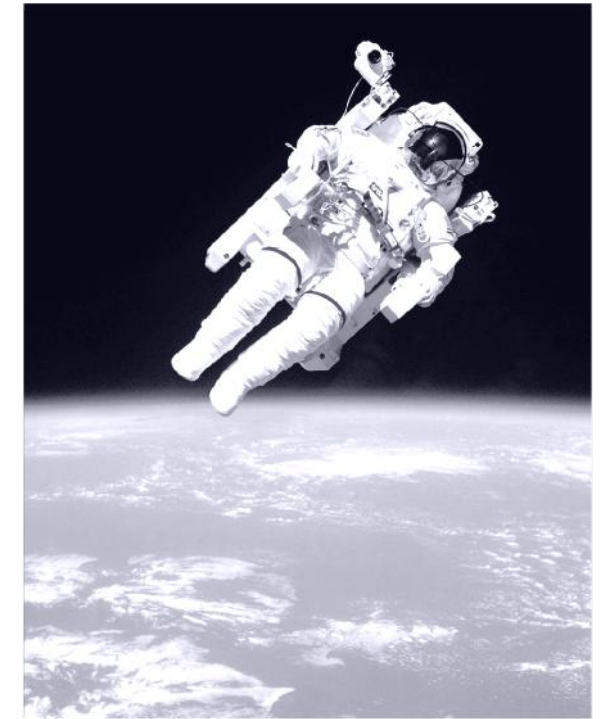


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Key Terms:

place, space, time, belonging, gravity, displacement, home, falling, navigating, balancing, mobility, flight, void, cyberspace, Earth, outer space



Part 1:
Walking on Thin Air

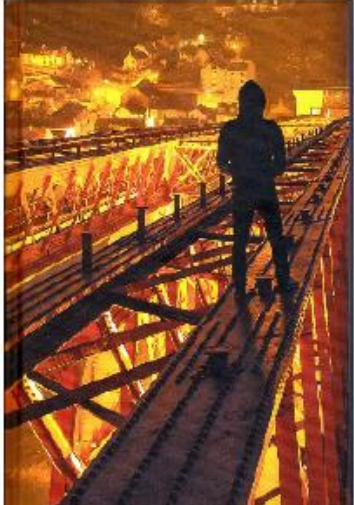
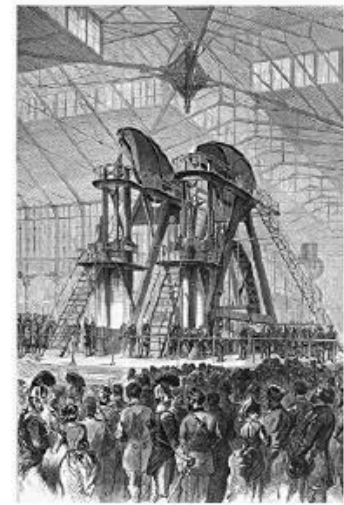
Balancing Act
sauteur



Into the Void
mountaineer



Running-As-If
flâneur/ traceur



Part 2:
Walking on the Moon

Up in the Air
aeronaut



In Vain
cybernaut

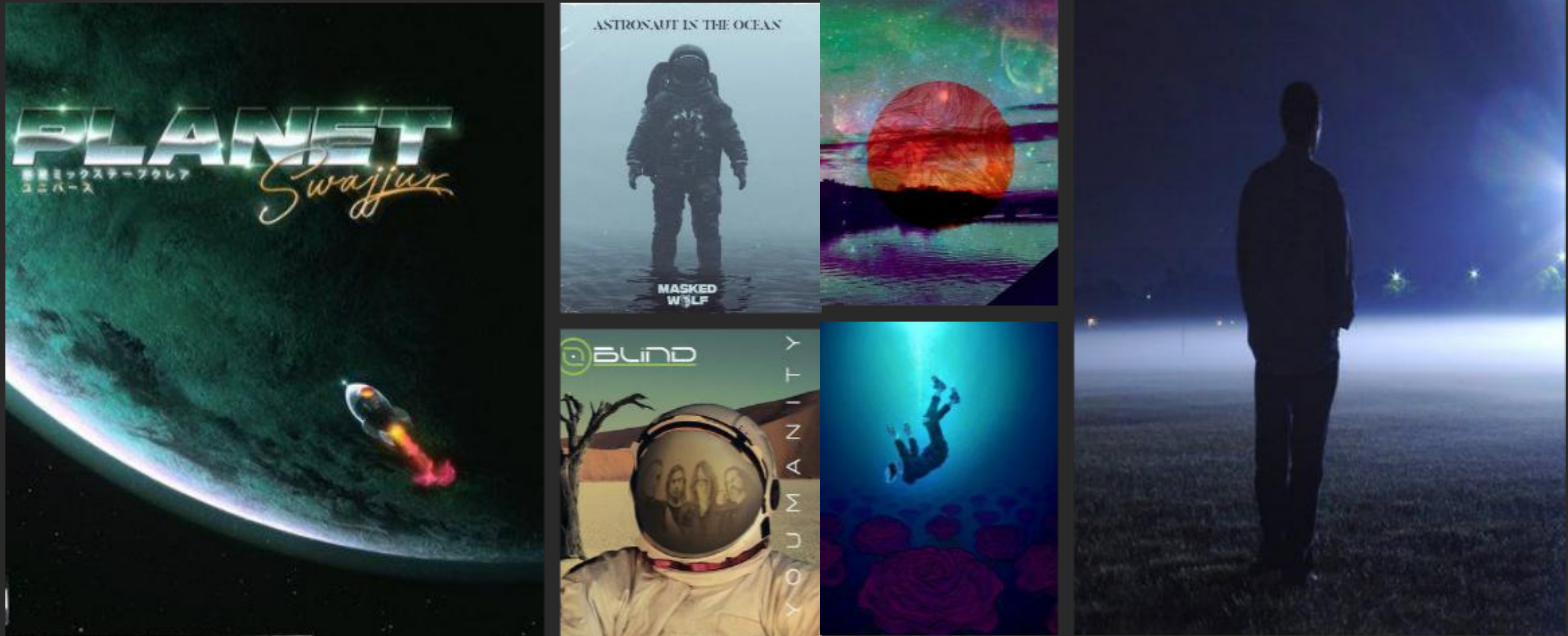


Approaching the
Unknown
astronaut



Spaced Out Atlas

Iconological Exploration of Album Covers from 2015- 2021

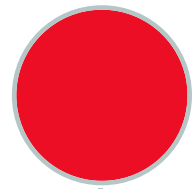


How is the worldview of being 'spaced out' depicted through specific identified visual themes, signs, codes and tropes?

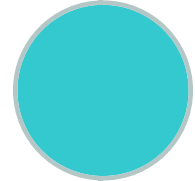
Research methods and process

- The album cover is an iconologically dense artifact that provides brief insight into artist's worldview consisting of image and text
- The mining of album cover images from the *Album of the Year* (AOTY) site - images are all of same size, easily comparable and manipulated
- So far albums covers from January to December 2021 have been downloaded **30 798 images** in total
- Imported into Tropy software a free and open-source desktop knowledge organization application that helps users manage and describe photographs of research materials. It was developed by the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University.

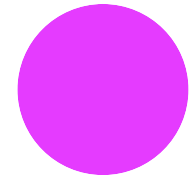
IMAGES HAVE BEEN TAGGED BY USING THE FOLLOWING ICONOLOGICAL IDENTIFIERS:



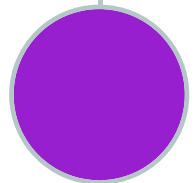
Astronaut (84 items)



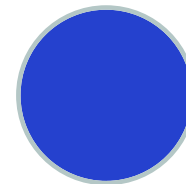
Levitation (197 items)



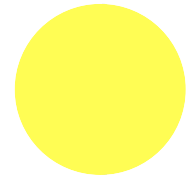
Flight



Space Travel



Planetary (604 items)



Cosmos

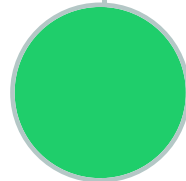
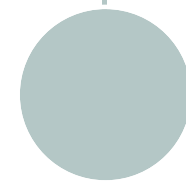


Figure in Landscape (619 items)



Pandemic(19 items)

Iconological notations are open and constantly negotiated:

astronaut >visor; immersive suit, aeronaut

flight >figures with wings; birds, aeroplanes

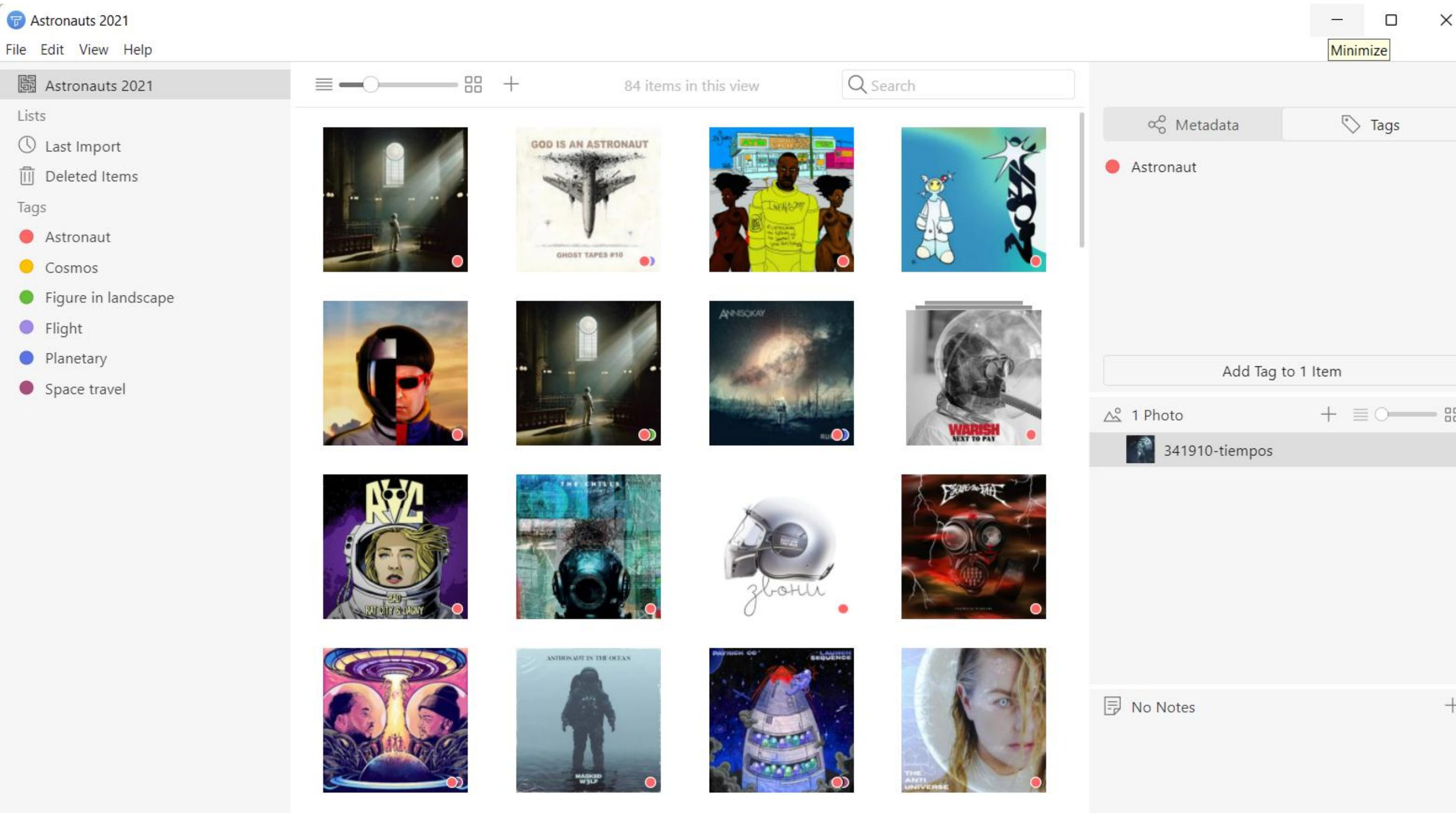
levitation > suspended in air; diving; falling; drifting; floating in water

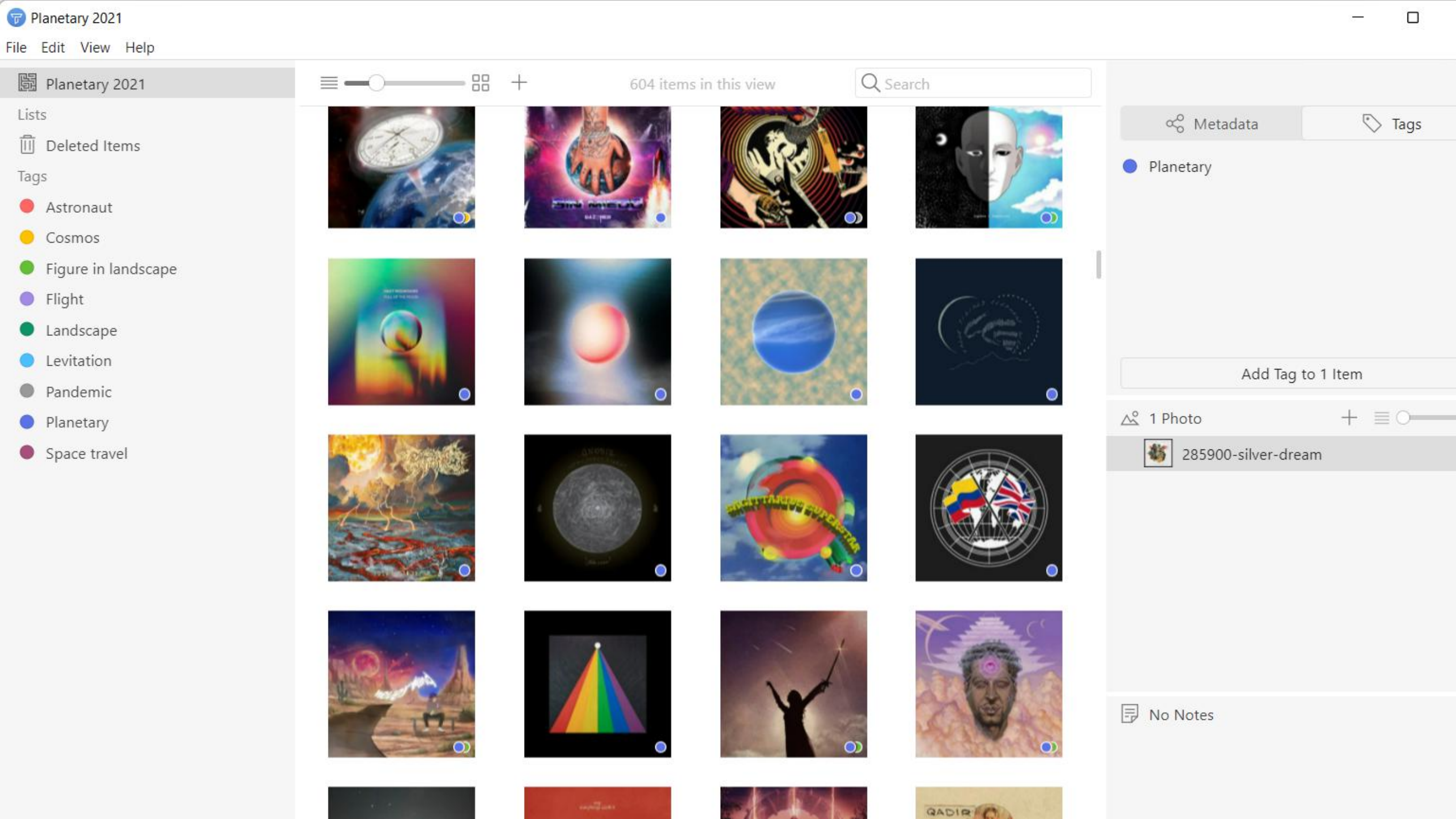
planetary> reference heavenly body, Earth, Moon; Mars; comets

cosmos> void; outer space

space travel> rocket; starship; alien

figure in landscape> lone figure; back figure (*Rückenfigur*); on ground



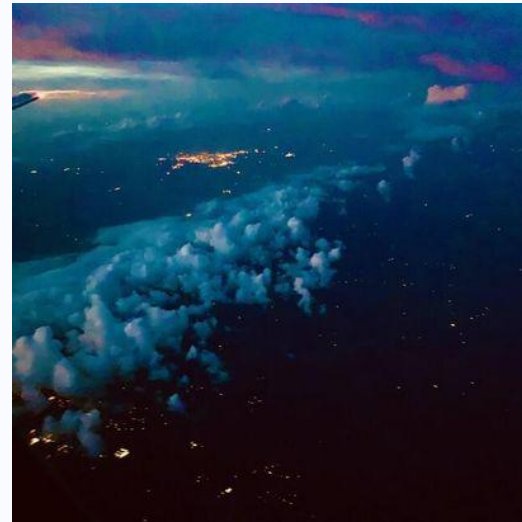


Tags Correspond and Meanings are Layered:



- Levitation
- Astronaut
- Planetary
- Space Travel

Green Montana/
Melancholia999



- Flight
- Planetary
- Space Travel

Arik Ancelin/
Diamond in the Rough



- Astronaut
- Figure in Landscape
- Planetary

Transmission Zero/
Bridges



- Figure in Landscape
- Levitation
- Planetary

Earthheater/
Scripture

Browse

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- ▶ 51H · Quantity and Degree
- ▶ 51HH · Quantity and Degree (opposing concepts)
- ▼ 51I · Space
 - 51I1 · Limited, Defined Space
 - 51I2 · Fullness
 - 51I3 · Location, Position
 - 51I4 · Nearness
 - 51I5 · Middle; 'Mezo' (Ripa)
 - 51I6 · High, Top
- ▼ 51II · Space (opposing concepts)
 - ▼ 51II1 · Unlimited Space
 - 51II11 · Expansion
 - 51II2 · Emptiness, Void
 - 51II3 · Dislocation, Displacement
 - 51II4 · Farness
 - **51II5 · Isolation**
 - 51II6 · Low, Bottom
- ▶ 51K · Aspects of Change
- ▶ 51KK · Aspects of Change (opposing concepts)
- ▶ 51L · Types of Motion
- ▶ 51LL · Types of Motion (opposing concepts)
- ▶ 51M · Quality of Motion
- ▶ 51MM · Quality of Motion (opposing concepts)

5 · Abstract Ideas and Concepts

51 · Generalities

51I · Space

51II · Space (opposing concepts)

51II5 · Isolation

Search with these related keywords:

Imitatione, Ripa, Solitudine, abstract idea, allegory, community, distance, generalities, height, human being, idea, imitation, isolation, personification, singularity, solitude, space, uniqueness

Also see:

51BB61 · Singularity, Uniqueness

59AA1 · Loneliness; 'Solitudine' (Ripa)

Add more detail:

51II5(+0) · Isolation (+ variant)

51II5(+1) · Isolation (+ personification)

51II5(+2) · Isolation (+ allegorical scene, i.e. two or more personifications involved in an action)

51II5(+3) · Isolation (+ symbolical representation of concept)

51II5(+4) · Isolation (+ emblematical representation of concept)

51II5(+5) · Isolation (+ 'exemplum', representation of exemplary (historical) event)

51II5(+6) · Isolation (+ situation or event (especially in genre-painting) with symbolical connotation)

4 sample images



