

## Thresholding. Cracks in the “landscapes of experience”

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In a literal, psycho-physical sense thresholding seems an impossible undertaking. It would be the conscious maintaining - a sort of stretching or bending- of an experiential zero point of time, in which an observer maintains the experience within the realm of the first momentary observable difference. By the event of passing the threshold something gets captured by our senses (visible, touchable, audible etc.) after, for example, the retina's photoreceptors registered about 120 million points of light intensity and in pre-attentive perception, a first sketch of a retinal image is formed- that cognitively is initially useless - and is then transformed by the brain along visual pathways and perceptual routines from an instable proto- object to a conceptual image-object that is stabilized in front of my eyes for the first time

The jumps over the threshold (the notable limit) of something appearing to us, can be seen as the rupture, or as a void being crossed from the pathos side of sensible stimuli - *the still not observable/notable* - in the chaos of impressions towards what actually *just appears to me attentively*. In Sergio Costa's "Thresholding" this suspension of time- in holding onto the first moment of noting- by passing over the threshold, becomes visible: The first instance of the just getting noticed in experience is my personal threshold. This seems more a *cut*, a *fissure* or a *crack* in the continuity of the landscape of experience than a gradual or smooth unfolding.

The thresholding is a double event of appearing from the affective pathos side and from my side of noting something: this happens for instance in a kind of template matching or a chart comparison process of recognizing a known pattern (of a planet) or in noting that something is new (a new highlighted area behind a planet appears). A threshold is a limit being crossed from a notion of equality of what I observed before to an non-equality in relation to what I observe after something jumps over the threshold. Something is actually happening to me when it jumps out of the equally distributed, the normal, the ordinary, and the regular, the flat mono-coloured plane. This happens when something shows the *cracks in my landscape of experience*. These “landscapes”- in the sense of Sérgio Costa's work- are collections of transformable synthetic artefacts or systems of spatial-visual places created by humans for reasons of self-organisation and orientation. If the lived experiences -alias human landscapes we live in- are *maps of orientation*, thresholding would be a kind of compass activity of showing where we are and where we go next at this specific point and when we experience a differing from the planned and repeated paths and actions and how our experiential maps are changing or have to be transformed over time, when something passes the threshold.

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Already Ernst Heinrich Weber (1834) - as did Fechner (1860) and von Helmholtz (1866)- had researched on thresholds, in what could be called the fundamental law of human perception as a *relational* phenomenon in noting psychophysical stimuli. In the early psychophysical studies- however- this was done in a mere *quantitative* empirical manner. Weber saw the threshold as the experiential possibility of sensible change. It was defined by the measure of sensibility characterized as the *difference in magnitude relative a (changeable) baseline-intensity*, in which a difference of two sensible moments (two moments of touch or between non- touch and touch) was noted. However, continual fine-grain processes of change often do not enable us with the possibility to note that something is different or has changed. If too

quick, or the more soft the gradient of change happens (too slow) over a time period, we might not observe the different stimuli follow each other: we are “blind” to note the difference. “Thresholding” therefore seems to make this necessary jump over the limit in order to notice something, an artistic task and method for experience. But, can we hold onto these fragile cuts and cracks inside our constitutional “brokenness of experience”? By noting these thresholds repeatedly, the fragile difference between them might disappear in the repetition of the same threshold...

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Thresholding in the realm of the *artistic creation of visibility* is also a basic and simple technical method of image segmentation (*sampling*) and composition (*puzzle*). Hereby Sérgio Costa researches on the long-term cracks in the landscape of experience as the theme of the double image of the rocks as his exhibition: “*Strata: a geopictorial collection*” (2008) shows. In the “*Strata*” series Costa introduced an almost invisible difference line of experience in between the two images that could pass unnoticed as *an illusion of unity* of being one and the same image. By the introduction of the fine separation line, experience breaks into the reality of the presented image sujets of the “strata”, and cracks up into two images-samples.

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The image- sujets of the “Thresholding” project are worth mentioning: In contrast to the mainly political aesthetics - that we are used to attribute to stencil images and its’ most common form nowadays in the contemporary punk/resistance/anarchy street art expression of graffiti- Sergio Costa’s sujets, however, are not dealing with the actuality of small-scale political struggle within a specific political system, but show, in a visionary sense, an indirect geopictorial observer of long-term cosmological / micro-logical change by the appropriation process of the images of the strata of our experience and the creation of synthesis in long-term transformations in experience. Costa shows not only a struggle in between rural vs. urban life, but also the micro-/macrocosmic tension inside the *sedimentation and (trans-) formation of experience*.

The “Sampling Puzzles” remind me on repetitive, structural plans of modular computability, as in new quantum computers: schematic puzzles still under development. Here the appearing puzzles of patterns question the different velocities of change, in relation to our human temporality in between appearing/disappearing of landscapes of experience.

In “Planets chart” Costa seems interested in how we scientifically sample and cut our observations in pieces: “junks & phases of reality” to be compared, related and rendered knowable.

In “Untitled” the stone material of a roman head sculpture portrait after being photographed is “thresholded” and translated into a stencil template, in which the cut-out parts arrive by the colour that is sprayed on the paper surface. The colour leaves out the uncut on the template: colour islands appear. Also here the black cracks in the image that enter the uncut white female torso are signals of the brokenness and fragility of our landscapes of experience. In “Thresholding” these cuts and cracks in the stencil templates are not limited to the image sujets, but are constitutive parts for the appearing of the image itself: The cuts and cracks in the stencil template that let the spray appear on the paper plane. The cracks and the notable contrastive changes in the landscape of experience is a constant theme in Sérgio Costa’s work. He is not a researcher of the perception of natural phenomena, but of how these

natural phenomena are rendered possible to us and are transformable by us in our conscious experience by the cracks, flashes and cuts in a given experiential landscape, passing over the notable thresholds.

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Threshold *anxiety*. What passes over thresholds are not only visible phenomena. In the moment when a knife cuts into the surface of the paper-thin skin and passes through all my body make-up towards me: this passing over the limits from non-experience to experience shows what stays- *pain* to be noticed. Thresholds affect me in experience of the sensible world. There could be something as a “threshold- anxiety”, the slight feeling of nervousness and tension, that something could jump over the threshold and stay present, or that the intensity of the black colour after passing second by second another threshold step of noticing the growing dark regions, would blacken the uncanny difference to infinite complete darkness forever: Nothing more to be noted! In the video “Threshold Anxiety” the process of blackening appears as the proper anxiety of disappearance of the known, that something would never be the same after holding on to the new experience after the threshold, the implications of which I am afraid. The fear of loosing control, the fear of “loosing an old life”, a routine, a work, a relationship, or the image of the world as we know it, when a new territory of experience is just being cracked open. As if a child’s hand would hold on to an *invisible map* and tried to orientate without knowing how to use it: how to make the map visible?

The creation of a new landscape- *holding on to the void* of the (still) unknown: “*thresholding*”.