



# Study of Visual Garbage as Visual Ecology Perspective

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## Abstract

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The following article explores the notion of visual garbage and considers various strategies for its recycling, upcycling, and use. Visual garbage is investigated in the context of media sphere development and the theory of garbage itself. The authors propose to analyse such approaches of visual garbage use, as visual camouflage and glitch art, as well as to examine the principles of visual garbage recycling in terms of the Aristotelian conception of causality. Understanding garbage as a medium helps not only to uncover the features of its circulation, but also to consider garbage as a source of knowledge accumulation. Moreover, it helps to find new social, political and aesthetic strategies for understanding contemporaneity, which in turn allows us to draw conclusions about the untapped potential of visual garbage. Visual garbage not only becomes a source of visual pollution, but also contains a resource for reality conversion. In order to determine the criteria for visual pollution, it is necessary to examine the performative productivity of garbage and its effect as a mediating tool.

## Keywords

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Visual Garbage; Visual Ecology; Glitch; Noise; Camouflage; Computer Games; Media



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## Визуальный мусор как проблема визуальной экологии

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### Аннотация

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Цивилизация и мусор сплетены тесными узами: мусор – это то, что цивилизации хочется изгнать, отринуть, вытеснить, но что в конечном счете неизбежно возвращается. Мы живем в визуально-цифровую эпоху, поэтому часто имеем дело с визуальным мусором. В статье – в контексте медиафилософии и визуальной экологии – разрабатывается понятие «визуального мусора» и рассматриваются различные стратегии его переработки, адаптации, присвоения: визуальный камуфляж, глитч-арт и др.

Визуальный мусор понимается как медиа, что позволяет выявить его потенциал в системе современной коммуникации и рассмотреть как инструмент накопления знаний. Визуальный мусор выступает не только источником визуального загрязнения, но и обогащает реальность, его можно рассматривать как с точки зрения вреда, так и с точки зрения пользы. Исследование феномена визуального мусора приближает нас к определению критериев визуального загрязнения, что является актуальной задачей визуальной экологии.

### Ключевые слова

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визуальный мусор; визуальная экология; глитч; шум; камуфляж; компьютерные игры; медиа



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## **Problamtization of garbage in the context of Visual Ecology**

What is garbage? This concept has so many interpretations, it appears in so many forms that attempts to give it a single definition only lead away from the essence. Garbage is what we “reject”, what causes anxiety, disgust, feeling of powerlessness, or can become a potential resource and medium of knowledge.

A person in a relationship with garbage (as well as with technology) is in the process of becoming, an always open process of subjectivation, according to B. Stiegler. All real objects with which a person interacts undergo stages of decay, transforming from the sphere of the necessary into garbage or waste. Garbage is an active matter, busy with its evolution and animated from within by patterns of being and becoming. When a thing breaks, goes out of service – it (like the media at the time of glitches and failures) declares itself, its presence or absence.

Being in a borderline state is crucial for garbage. In “The Rubbish Theory”, Michael Thompson analyses the dependence of the life cycle of objects on social concepts of value. Garbage circulates between temporary objects that are depreciating and durable objects that only gain value over time (Thompson, 2017). The role of garbage seems insignificant in the social determination of values, but it is important as an indicator of obsolescence. Objects that have already become trash can again fall into the perspective of recognizing their value, as can be seen in the example of cyclical fashion or the popularity of vintage items.

One of the possible characteristics of garbage looks like this: everything that someone does not need somewhere. This, however, does not mean that it is not needed by someone or somewhere else. What is considered as waste, what is thrown away, differs among different nations, different strata of society, different people. “The dirt, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder” (Steel, 2008) pp. 11). The categorization of the concepts “necessary / unnecessary”, “ours / others”, “clean / dirty” is at the heart of the universal cultural codes necessary to maintain a social system. Culture sets its own boundaries each time, indicating what is beyond them and what continues to be valuable.

In “Purity and Danger”, British anthropologist Mary Douglas emphasizes that what is considered unclean in any culture is that which is out of place or for which the place is not defined. In nature, she noted, “there is no absolute dirt” – there are only various forms of the existence of matter. Dirt arises from our tendency to distinguish and organize the objects around us. Dirt underlies the structure and hierarchy: “Where there is dirt there is a system” (Douglas, 2002, pp. 65).

According to John Scanlan, the act of delimitation does not simply classify and divide into binary categories, but introduces an initial fundamental distinction between figure and ground, between singularity and plurality:

We only acquire or understand the valuable (or develop ideas of the relationship between the self and the object world) as the result of a galloping retreat from



an **undifferentiated** mass of things [...] Garbage is the formlessness from which form takes flight, the ghost that haunts presence. (Scanlan, 2005, pp. 13–14).

Garbage is both the cause and the effect of the cleansing action. On a social scale, garbage structures link social relationships and hierarchies, but also show the failure of attempts at absolute separation and demarcation. It is not enough to accept garbage as a passive result of the practice of human differentiation, since it retains an active, transgressive potential and generates innumerable consequences that challenge new regulatory mechanisms.

We are in a situation of constant processing of visual images, converting them from the format of garbage to the format of cultured images, but a certain amount of “first matter”, primary material, that is, visual garbage, must be kept as a database for processing. As Mary Douglas writes:

Granted that disorder spoils pattern, it also provides the material of pattern. Order implies restriction; from all possible materials, a limited selection has been made and from all possible relations a limited set has been used. So disorder by implication is unlimited, no pattern has been realised in it, but its potential for patterning is indefinite. This is why, though we seek to create order, we do not simply condemn disorder. We recognise that it is destructive to existing patterns; also that it has potentiality. It symbolises both danger and power (Douglas, 2002, pp. 95).

Garbage, waste, “alienated”, persisting in their spontaneous accumulation, are pushed from the periphery to the centre of the: city, attention, gaze – and thereby challenge the ontological boundaries of material worlds. These stubborn and self-willed objects, “sticky” in every sense: as “clinging” matter (*le gluant*) or as an obsessive image (*le visqueux*) (Sartre, 2000, pp. 607) – create their own dynamics of time and space. Garbage in the form of “alienated” can accumulate in the subconscious, be stored in memory resources, multiply in basements and attics, or be embodied in artistic practices. For example, avant-garde artists disposed of unnecessary items to create their works.

German Dadaist Kurt Schwitters invents the concept of the aesthetic exploitation of garbage by integrating garbage into a visual image. In this case, the garbage becomes a sign of the authenticity, the authenticity of the image. In his works, Schwitters “removes” rubbish from the original context and topos and plunges it into the context of fine art. Thus, on the one hand, non-artistic materials of various origins were discovered as artistic material, on the other hand, this worthless material was turned into art, recycled or upcycled. In his autobiography, Kurt Schwitters writes that his first creations were born out of post-war poverty:

...Out of parsimony I took what I could find to do this, because we were now an impoverished country. One can even shout with refuse, and this is what I did, nailing and gluing it [gluing his collage art] together. I called it 'Merz'. (Schwitters, 1981, pp. 335)



At the same time, in the 1920s, a member of the OBERIU group, Konstantin Vaginov, published several ironic novels in which he tries to present the structure of the world in the form of an absolute systematization of garbage. The plan of the Vaginov's garbage collectors is to gather everything that has been repeatedly used and thrown away by the revolution to the periphery of a new life, and resemble it in the form of a new totally pervasive classification (Podroga, 2016, pp. 227).

The depletion and “flattening” of images in contemporary artistic practices can be viewed as a reaction of art to the hyperfunctionality of objects. The things that occupy the space of life absorb the aesthetics of kitsch along with comfort, qualities and functions. The sphere of taste goes to the mercy of designers and trendsetters, influencers and mass media control. Art, on the other hand, turns to the formless in its search for dysfunctional objects with the demand to return to the Kantian “to be beautiful without a reason” (Podroga, 2016, pp. 230). And this formless, which cannot be mastered, it is impossible to cope with it, it differs from the same practices of the Dadaists and avant-gardeists in the irreconcilability of refusal. The formless is not found by chance, it is done, they strive for it as a kind of aesthetics of the disgusting, as a gesture of resistance to gloss, fashion, geometrism and functionality (see, for example, “Big Clay No. 4”, Fig. 1).



**Figure 1. Sculpture “Big Clay #4” by Urs Fischer on the Bolotny’ Quay in Moscow. Common view with a guard. The 25th August, 2021. Photo: Timur Maisak.**

Garbage, including visual garbage, is an important indicator of the living and cultural space of the urban environment. The mass consumer, created in the course of global modernization, literally lives in an urbanized “garbage space” (R. Koolhaas) (Hlabov, 2014). The urban environment forms its own image and collects identities

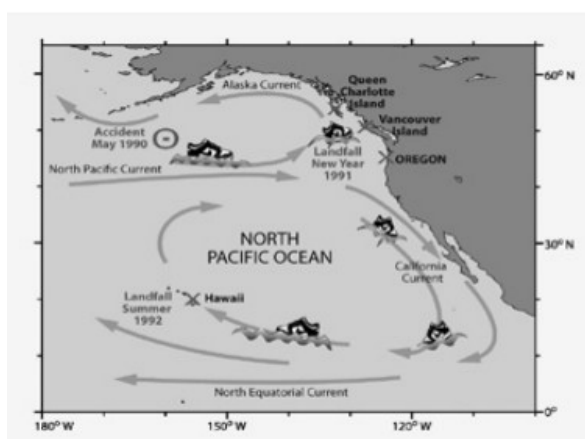




from many hybrid reservoirs: modernist “pure forms” (directed towards the future), non-modernist (basically mimetic, based on the narratives of the past) and various forms of synthesis of media, visual images, and architecture (urban screens, mural, street art).

With the development of media technologies, there is a differentiation of types of pollution by dividing into *hard* (material waste) and more parasitic – *soft* (“soft” pollution of linguistic, communication and visual waste) (Desai et al., 2015, pp. 66). But at the same time, visual garbage can become a medium for generating new knowledge and data circulating in the digital environment: the techniques of drifting pictures, migrating memes, the virality of the dissemination of images.

The use of various metrics and tracking to collect data with the help of garbage contributes to the study of microcirculation and the dynamics of the development of the language and culture of various microcommunities and their environments. So, garbage has become an inevitable part of media operations related to the sea. The garbage that floats in the oceans (garbage patch) serves as a tracer medium. Volunteers and garbage collectors in the ocean not only collect it, but also create a huge database, classifying this garbage by types, brands and barcodes. This data is called *flotsmetrics*, used in computer studies of the oceans and seas and continues to improve the accuracy of flow models such as the Ocean Surface Current Simulator (OSCURS) or the high-resolution global ocean model. In one such project – the driftograms of Nike sneakers and rubber ducks in the Atlantic Ocean (Fig. 2), described in detail by Curtis Ebbesmeyer (Ebbesmeyer & Scigliano, 2009, pp. 17), – the medial function of garbage as connecting systems of order and disorder is clearly reflected.



**Figure 2. Shoes “Nike” and the resin ducks: Curtis Ebbesmeyer’s iconic accidental drifters and their circulation.**



Understanding garbage as a medium helps not only to reveal the features of the process of its circulation, but also to consider it as a source of knowledge accumulation. To develop criteria for visual pollution, it seems necessary to further study the performative productivity of waste and its importance as a mediation tool.

### **Visual noise: techniques of camouflage**

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Let's turn to the game *Unfinished Swan* (2012)<sup>1</sup>: from the very beginning a gamer sees a sterile white space in front, in which he/she needs to throw ink balls to identify objects around with the ink blots and find a route. Here visual noises (the ink appeared after missile explosion) play positive role. On the one hand, his example shows that some measure of visual pollution is necessary, on the other hand, it demonstrates that visual noise may be integrated into (digital) culture. As an instrument of communication. It is a mean of *distinguishing* and *entertainment* at the same time. In this part we will talk about decisive role of visual noise in the view of communication and camouflage, because sometimes it becomes a screen between us and thousands of eyes of digital Argus Panoptes, which permanently accumulates and processes our visual information.

#### **Is It Possible to Blind the “Vision Machines”?**

The visual noise is habitual for a citizen of contemporary megapolis and his/her digital avatar – an internet user. Wherever we are: Varanasi, Vorkuta, Sydney, or Astrakhan – we deal with a plenty of visual messages. Clothes, tattoos, masks, advertisements, graffiti, holograms inside the augmented reality glasses, or images on the smartphones' screens. Signs have become mobile for a long time. As the professor of Modern Art and Theory at Columbia University in New York Jonathan Crary writes, already in the XIX century a modernized subject of vision has appeared – a contemporary observer, which has a habit to the kaleidoscopic shifts of images, to the sauntering, to the consumption of visual signs and goods. Exactly this subject demands *normal* functioning of capitalism:

Very generally, what happens to the observer in the nineteenth century is a process of modernization; he or she is made adequate to a constellation of new events, forces, and institutions that together are loosely and perhaps tautologically definable as “modernity”. [...]

Modernization is a process by which capitalism uproots and makes mobile that which is grounded, clears away or obliterates that which impedes circulation, and makes exchangeable what is singular (Crary, 1990, pp. 10–11).

So, we live in the epoche of the emancipated signs. Our visual messages are mainly noise. Exchange of the visual images becomes a pleasant necessity: it accelerates communication and creates an effect of emotional involvement. For instance, users with a big pleasure share their photos in the Instagram and get instead of this investment the investment of attention. However, this exchange is not purely

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1 Earlier this example was considered from the visual ecology perspective (Skomorokh, 2016, pp. 346).



market: it is possible to capitalize the account, but mainly it is a scene for a sort of phatic communication, in other words, for communication, which is enjoyable itself. Moreover, not always the exchange takes place, sometimes it may be a self-sufficient process of the visual production. In spite of the fact that emancipated signs became a condition for industrial capitalism development, after all they have formed an autonomous sphere, in which a creative potential of individuals and – it's worth adding – technical apparatuses is liberated.

It is appropriate to remember a parallel between capitalism and schizophrenia in “Anti-Oedipus”: both includes emancipation, disenchantment of desire, but capitalism in contrast to schizophrenia use the desire as a trapp. Individual's desire in the end is reterritorized and caught in the endless loop of the certain consumption strategy (Deleuze & Guattari, 2000, pp. 34-35). Whereas the desire machines of schizophrenic continue breaking down, it is impossible to normalize them, he/she always choses something new. The same picture is with visual images: at the beginning they serve to strengthen capitalistic machine, however, very soon they become autonomous and open their own playful nature (the simple examples are pop-art, cinema, computer games)<sup>1</sup>.

Let's return to the emancipation of visual signs: autonomy of this sphere is in fact questionable. Exchange of visual noises (emoji, mems, photos) is the communication for communication, and N. Bolz writes about it (Bolz, 2011, pp. 95-101). Participants transmit noises for amusement, coherency, and involvement. This is a pure act. The game. However, the different visual noises – from the colour and the brand of shoes to the hair colour and the nose form – are mapped easy enough, they are analysed and treated with technical machines, for instance, with the big data algorithms, to inscribe individuals into the economic apparatuses. At the moll entrance you may be registered with cameras, the algorithms find your profile in social networks and suggest a subscription, advertisement, or good. What is the visual noise for communicants, for marketing agents, governmental control and normalization, calculation and prediction of the citizens' behaviour it becomes the useful information. In this situation the following question is legal: is it possible to inverse this relation? It means to transform the visual noise for us into the visual information to master this territory, and vice versa to transform the visual information used by “vision machines” (Virilio, 1994) and control machines into the visual noise (a measure of citizen safety).

### ***The Visual Noise as a Camouflage***

Panopticism, which had been analysed by Michel Foucault (Foucault, 1995, pp. 195-228), transitioned to the new technical phase long ago: drones, surveillance cameras, artificial neural networks, facial recognition algorithms, big data, all of this form a net of technical apparatuses – a system of mathematical control, which is founded on transparency, calculation and statistical analysis. Concerning this point, Norbert Bolz notes: “computer turned all media processes into calculation

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1 To compare there are reflections on photo apparatus as a toy presented by V. Flusser (Flusser, 2000, pp. 21-32).





processes” (Bolz, 2011, pp. 12). An example of how it works is the system Face Pay, which since 2021 allows to pay for transportation in Moscow with the face<sup>1</sup>. There is no need to have tickets, cards or cash, the only thing citizen needs is to present his/her face. It is not hard to suppose that the data base of application, containing faces, may be a source of information for police and special service, for instance, during the protests and other events. As long as the technical processes cannot be stopped, people need to find technological decisions, which will be a foundation for the visual field safety.

In this context Giorgio Agamben writes about identification without personality - biometrical identification (Agamben, 2009) - which destroys the political space. Paul Preciado admits that because people need to relocate to digital space a cause of quarantine the “soft prison” is born (Preciado, 2020). Grégoire Chamayou adverts to the more accurate example in his book “A Theory of the Drone” and describes a new military doctrine which is based on the video surveillance and registration, on the archiving, gathering and analysing data taken from social networks, geolocation, etc. This doctrine in fact turns any person into target:

...one slips from an epistemology of manifest observation and statements of fact into an epistemology of suspicion in which a targeting decision is based on the identification of behavior or a pattern of life that suggests membership in a hostile organization. For example, your pattern of life might suggest a 70 percent chance that you are a militant, in other words a combatant, and we accordingly have the right to kill you. [...]

Beneath the mirages of militarized ethics and state lies, this is the assuredly humanitarian and ethical principle of drones: the targets are presumed guilty until they are proved innocent - which, however, can only be done posthumously (Preciado, 2020, pp. 145-146).

Often one claims that system of media surveillance is harmless, that it is used only for criminals, terrorists, military enemies. However, it is not true. As least, because application of the drones is not localised on the territory of military actions, any person may be endangered. Chamayou writes that the big data mechanisms filter diverse information and recommend destroying target. In the book author considers the presuppositions of the automatization not only on the level of analysis, but also on the level of decision making, e.g. in the “ideal” situation the decision of extermination won’t be made by human. Sufficiently to remember the protests in Hong Kong, Russia, and Belarus to see the possible extrapolation of the following logic to the civilian population.

However, the question is not only about legitimacy of application of such technologies during military actions or protests. Metaphorically speaking, launching a missile from the drone is local case of targeted advertising. In other words, these technologies are applied on the large field. Identification with the artificial neural networks, gathering and analysis of data, are used primarily for enlarging sales.

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1 <https://facepay.mosmetro.ru>



People more and more penetrate to the filter bubble getting all that is already known and desired. This situation is also called a “filter of relevance” (Burkhanova-Khabadze, 2020). At the same time, it is possible to defend from Internet advertisements using the simple system of filters. For instance, a browser may send invisible queries every second to cover the real user’s queries. How to protect oneself from marketing manipulations in the conditions of visual transparency?

Soon the glasses and lenses of augmented reality will be popular, and the visual potential of the city will be enlarged. The battle for the vision will be launched. Gathering data about people’s visions, algorithms will replace their visual experience with advertisement noise. In this situation visual noise made by individual through special clothes, masks, gadgets, will be a form of necessary dependence and safety. “Society must be defended” - wrote Michel Foucault. The existing ways of blinding cameras, algorithms, machines are laughable and eccentric, the next step is the fashionable technical devices creating noises for the machines, which in their turn decode the noises which contain the new visual noises. Ad infinitum. Media blinding media and working on visual garbage. It is the brave new world, isn’t it?

## **Glitch: digital recycling/upcycling of visual garbage**

### ***Consumption and Profanation***

Cultural production inevitable generates garbage. Although the majority of the garbage is not use, a part of it may be actualized, recycled, and inscribed in the process of new, for instance, visual production. In the epoque of circulation of signs (Baudrillard) and rupture of reference ties (Bart), an image exists by itself, and becomes “useless” for its material carrier, to which it was bound earlier. And vice versa a thing becomes unimportant for word. The sign is self-sufficient. The sign has no history, it is contextual and in this sense is not durable. It is created in anticipation of disappearing in the nearest future, as a result it transforms into garbage – something spent and useless or not mastered and unnecessary. However, should a contemporary human get depressed as he/she lives inside the “cemetery of signs”? Of course, not. Especially if we may reverse the situation and recycle semi-otic garbage. Contemporary capitalist way of production is the production of signs first of all. The question is how to master these signs, to reflect on them and finally to recycle.

Restoring juridical sense of the term, Giorgio Agamben calls a process of returning a thing in the actual usage “profanation” (Agamben, 2007). He detects in contemporary capitalism the production of the unprofanable. In other words, of what cannot be used and what does not belong to us (from this perspective the displays in the museums, the images in the glossy magazines, etc, are similar). The ritual practice of the Ancient Rome things were taken from the profane area and put into the sacred one, which is inaccessible for the everyday usage. However, there was an inverse process as well - profanation, returning of the thing into the everyday usage:



To profane means to open the possibility of a special form of negligence, which ignores separation or, rather, puts it to a particular use (Agamben, 2007, pp. 75).

The goal of capitalism - to product objects of consumption. Referring to the bull of John XXII, Agamben notes its prophetic character in accordance with contemporary consumption:

In things that are objects of consumption, such as food, clothing, and so on, there cannot exist, he argues, a use distinct from property, because this use coincides entirely with the act of their consumption, that is, their destruction (*abusus*). Consumption, which necessarily destroys the thing, is nothing but the impossibility or the negation of use, which presupposes that the substance of the thing remains intact (*salvo rei substantia*). That is not all: a simple de facto use, distinct from property, does not exist in nature; it is in no way something that one can “have” (Agamben, 2007, pp. 82].

Thus, capitalism is not interested in using things, as it supposes a long-time interaction with them, not to mention the unpredictable character of this usage. Such slow techniques are an obstacle for production, and for capital grow as well. The same is relevant for visual sphere: memes, ads, photos, videos, etc. are created to be consumed, destroyed as soon as possible to clear space for the new ones. The expiration date of these signs is coming closer, that almost immediately turn the image into a trash. However, the profanation of image is possible, it's recycling and inscription in up-to-date practices.

### ***Glitch Art as a Strategy for Visual Garbage Recycling***

How is it possible to recycle/upcycle visual/digital garbage? Digital art and glitch art come to help. Rethinking of breaks and failures, cultivating bugs, and inscribing them into up-to-date practice give opportunity not only to create a new exhibit, but also to launch a lively practice of *glitch* “use”.

The glitch is a wide notion, which characterises a state of a failure of electronic (digital) systems: break, error, bug, etc. In 1962 astronaut John Glenn used this notion in his book “Into Orbit” to describe technical problems, which he had met with during orbit flights. In 2000s the term came to visual art. In the context of computer games glitch has been recently considered (although the phenomenon itself appeared earlier). Glitch may be called such technical error of the program execution when its elements (images, sounds, code, etc.) are disintegrating, crashing, or meshing. This error may be inscribed into an art practice: video art, digital photo, or other direction of media art (more detailed history of glitch art see at: (Zhagun-Linnik, 2019)). However, glitch art may be considered not only as a part of contemporary visual art, but also as an art (technique) of glitch use within the game practice. Here the skill of exploiting glitch becomes a sign of mastery, which can be gained only by trainings (Latypova, 2016). For instance, bugs may be used in speedrunning – “practiced practice” of computer games playing (Scully-Blaker, 2016).



It is worth mentioning that glitch as a phenomenon has already left the area of spontaneous activity of media, it is mastered, inscribed into aesthetic register, implemented into everyday practices. The simplest examples are filters in some photo and video editors, which express the glitch style, or a various media production using glitch aesthetics in its design (Pomerleau, 2019). Glitch discovery happens not in the wild desert of code, but at the field carefully cultivated by game designers: glitches are kept and created. Now they are initial part of gameplay, which conserve the attention to the game. Something appears accidentally, but something is kept on purpose, as well as something is not fixed. The illusion of freedom and borders overcoming reveals. Implemented in classical games opportunities for cheating are inscribed in contemporary games (for instance, for getting infinite health points or infinite money). Thus, in *Dark Souls III* (2016) it is possible to make a combination of actions and gain infinite number of souls (what is an equivalent of action points on other games). This is more cheat, than break or vulnerability of system which was kept on purpose by game designer, but at the same time this bug is not fixed. Another example may be found in *Valheim* (2021), the glitch allows to double amount of metal (important game resource), if before entering the portal gamer makes some operations with the cart and puts it in front of the portal. This manipulation creates unequal conditions between gamers and opportunities for cheating.

Nowadays many games are published before being finished (so called “early access”). And the rawer game is, the more bugs may be found inside. In this term games turn into laboratories for searching successful glitches. The sensational game *Cyberpunk 2077* (2020) criticised for various bugs nevertheless gave birth to series of videos demonstrating game glitches. NPCs passing through walls or getting stuck into the textures, it has been already classical bugs. Not all of them game designers would like to fix. Part of these glitches may be inscribed into game process, and as a result may be *return to usage* (profaned in the sense described above). For instance, the *Red Dead Online* (2018) has a bug, which allows to jump on the one of the bridges over precipice like on the trampoline. If to throw an axe to the one of the bridge sections, the amplitude of bridge oscillation becomes so high, that the avatar standing on the bridge may fly up. Interestingly, that the game is multiplayer, and this bug may be exploited by several people at the same time. It causes a phenomenon, which may be called a “cooperative glitch”.

Another remarkable glitch in digital environment is presented in the game *Red Dead Redemption* (2010). According to the glitch, textures of human non player characters cover animal non-player characters. This phenomenon got name “manimals”. As a result, the comic, or even the uncanny effect takes place: flying, leaping, snarling people attack a gamer like zombies. The inversion of the similar experience appears in *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim* (2011), where gamer may literally find him/herself into the body of his/her horse and use this texture as an avatar.





**Figure 3. The avatar glitch in The Sims 3.**

In the visual area it is worth paying attention to the famous glitch in *The Sims 3* (2009), which allows to manipulate with the avatar's appearance settings in a special way to create a comic or a monstrous character (Fig. 3). Thus, the glitch is not reduced to the breaking the process of playing or to the fixed unusual way of representation, the glitch gained constitutive power, which open a door for the new practices, which we not in majority planned by developers, and therefore, they were not inscribed into the initial normalisation structure of game. The result is that digital visibility is leaving the zone of the unprofanable, expected and predictable, and entering on the territory of possible actions. In the area of the workable, not the signified. In the area of profanation.

### **Principles of visual waste recycling**

The question of garbage is a question of the reasons. It is no coincidence that archaeology, linguistics, psychoanalysis and ecology – disciplines whose relevance has only grown over the last century, are in a sense focused on garbage. After all, they are looking for reasons and other principles. Just as fragments of artifacts, a set of unreadable words or forgotten dreams speak of what is repressed in our culture, so (breaking the rhythm of the relationship between culture and nature) garbage islands in the ocean and garbage belts in orbit point us to isolation in our own hermeneutic and existential projects, lack of dialogue with radically different. If we recognize as rubbish everything that resists use, and maybe even recycling, then everything that, being in the field of view, narrows the border of the visible, turns out to be visual rubbish. Garbage is generally a paradoxical object, which can





not only give an indication of an alternative type of relationship to the world, but also can enclose us into a crisis of causation.

Let's turn to Aristotle's *Theory of Reason*. Firstly, it was the first time formalized the mythopoetic vision of the world as a cosmos (that which, according to Plato's definition from the *Timaeus*, feeds on its own decay, and therefore does not know garbage). Secondly, it made it possible to think of the physical as biological, the world as a living whole, that is, it became a protoecological model. Thirdly, it is that technology is identified with poetic art and makes it possible to move from thinking about nature to thinking along with it, from exploitation to harmonious coexistence. We use it now in order to understand when visual garbage becomes not an enzyme of social imagination, a source of noise, irritation and depression, but a factory of meanings. Traditionally, there are four types of reasons: formal, material, (co) acting and purpose (teleology).

### **The Question of the Form**

The first thing that causes irritation and reproaches in the ill-conceived development of the city, the deliberate commercial exploitation of urban space, the proliferation of visual images is a violation of the scale. Not only the map can destroy the territory – remove the burden of the body, sense of movement, live time, and efforts to overcome obstacles. Visual images can swallow the city, just as the inaction of the instances of taste can prevent the city from acquiring a holistic image (Portella, 2016, pp. 9-14). Measure is a category associated with an entity, or a quantitative expression of an entity. Violation of the scale leads to the fact that the unity of the world is cut like a puzzle, a number of fragments becomes lost, a row is inappropriate, everything does not fit in with everything. The singular does not achieve integrity and connection, but we withdraw into ourselves from the other and from the world. Each closes in his own dream. How is opposition possible here?

First, it needs to be embedded in the environment. Communications are already disguised as nature: the pillars are under the trunks of trees, communication lines are either hidden under the ground or hidden in the architectural relief. Likewise, an image can be organic in its distribution, pointwise embedded, it can take into account the climate, environmental colours (natural and cultural, due to climate and time), architectural design, the size of buildings and streets, focus on the local, not the global.

Secondly, images can be brought to new territories. We are not surprised when we are warned that communications, interruptions in the supply of water and electricity have not yet been brought in the new district. But we would be terribly surprised if we were told that the area is completely new, so there are no such categories as “good”, “truth”, “love”. Why are we not surprised at the lack of beauty and taste? The situation could be rectified by placing advertisements in new areas to increase their aesthetic appeal. Zones of new aesthetics could be more open



in experimental projects, and fluctuations in market demand for real estate here could indirectly affect the quality of images.

Thirdly, the redundancy of visual aggression can be unloaded through the transfer of images to augmented reality. Advertising might not destroy the environment, provided that it existed in an application that could not be opened. And nevertheless, such an alternative vision of the environment through the application would inevitably awaken interest, and it would find its users. And in general, we can imagine how augmented reality would open up alternative types of urban planning, since a smartphone is a mobile device, it is carried with them, which means that images, like a landscape, would be perceived in it dynamically with the involvement of the body, kinaesthetic effects of perception, adjusted for speed and attention modes. Augmented reality could again make a living body a measure of the city, returning it to a human-sized form, which previously seemed like a utopia.

### ***The Question of Matter***

The images that fill the city: visual, sculptural, architectural – are united by a claim to eternity. They do not reveal the status of monuments, but they belittle the time of our life, everything is made futile except for the exaggeratedly overgrown desires.

First, self-destructive materials must be considered. Temporary images, which can dissolve at any moment, return to the environment, are perceived as wind, rain, snow, as something accidental and transient. “This too will pass” is an imperative that adds value to an image or design and reduces visual pollution and therefore tension.

Secondly, remember: the weak image must be destroyed. It is not necessary to break down the walls of houses, dig up streets or blow up monuments in reality. For this, you can use virtual reality. At the same time, this (taking into account the network interaction) would give a map of aesthetically weak territories and areas of increased visual irritation, and would also indirectly indicate interest, would give negative recommendations to increase the quality of the living environment.

Thirdly, most of the objects claiming attention could be made mobile, this would allow them to be transferred from district to district, and would also equally distribute the visual load.

### ***The Question of Action***

Any action can be perceived either as the exercise of the will, or as an encroachment on freedom. Therefore, the city needs zones free from passivity and technologies of interactivity. By means of augmented reality, the urban environment could be turned into a socially interactive object.

Firstly, it would be possible to change individual qualities, color, size, environment of images in a special application, compare, mix and create ratings of the best projects.



Secondly, it would be possible to virtually correct annoying building elements, even if this did not change the current situation in the area. The possible help of machine intelligence is noted in this matter (Ye et al., 2019).

Thirdly, collective projects of thinking through the urban environment, even if they were not implemented, would strengthen social ties.

### ***The Question about the Purpose***

Here we come directly to teleology, since the living space in the city and outside it ceases to be a place of universal struggle or common cause. A visually polluted environment is a space of universal indifference: the only thing that it provokes is the feeling that the more we do, the further we are from the goal. Visual garbage turns off context. How to reclaim it ecologically?

First, by applying the ban on universality. The image should reflect the dynamics of local trends, and not an empty universality that claims to be a standard (Rendell, 2016). Common spaces – the uniformity of hotels, department stores, offices – give birth to monsters (it's not for nothing that they are loved by creators of horror, disaster films and thrillers). They lose their orientation and there is an anxious feeling that anything can happen, so everything drowns in indifference.

Second, the landscape should reflect sentiment, not reinforce it. Initially straight lines and geometric patterns are more of a place for the dead. For example, the labyrinths of the Chukchi shamans resist the correctness of the lines, as they are a trap for the dead. In order not to be a dead person trapped in right angles, we need tactile media, that is, spaces open to processing: soft landscape objects open to barefoot walking, objects open to touch – all this would provoke a collective sensitivity to topos.

Third, it would be possible to use not only street artists (Riggle, 2010), but also gamers. If a city cannot be a space for a common cause, it can still be a space for a common game. *Pokémon Go* (2016) and similar games show that even devastated spaces can be brought to life: through involvement in narrative, a sense of belonging to the story.

It is difficult to set a scale for everything that is subjective and concerns rather not a concept, but taste. Garbage is objective, visual garbage is subjective. And nevertheless, we can say that visual garbage is everything that offends the taste, but does not hold out to provocation, does not awaken thinking, does not play with the imagination, does not provoke a dialogue. We turn off our attention and close our eyes to the dullness of the visual environment, that is, we turn off from the environment of life ourselves, when garbage is for us what we exist with, and not what dialogue with is possible. Therefore, it is necessary to raise the question of the principles of processing visual garbage in order for the offensive taste and obscuring the gaze to become an alternative, a new beginning. Visual garbage is necessary, because without it the environment is sterile, but what are the limits of this need, when an increase in garbage leads to a decrease in the quality of life? Answer: when the garbage does not reveal alternative causal relationships



(and possible worlds), but closes in the existing ones. These recommendations may well be taken into account to create an environment in which we communicate with what we live and live with what we communicate with.

## Authors' Contributions

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The authors together developed the conceptual core of the article, including theoretical elaboration of the notion “visual garbage”. To expose the crucial features of visual garbage as an up-to-date phenomenon, Daria Kolesnikova prepared the paragraph 1. Problematization of Garbage in the Context of Visual Ecology; Alexander Lenkevich prepared the paragraph 2. Visual Noise: Techniques of Camouflage; Alina Latypova prepared the paragraph 3. Glitch: Digital Recycling/Upcycling of Visual Garbage; and Konstantin Ocheretyany prepared 4. Principles of Visual Waste Recycling.

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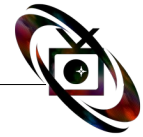
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Cyberpunk 2077 (2020), CD Projekt, CD Projekt RED.  
Dark Souls III (2016), From Software.  
Pokémon Go (2016), Niantic, Nintendo, The Pokémon Company.  
Red Dead Online (2018), Rockstar Games.  
Red Dead Redemption (2010), Rockstar San Diego, Rockstar Games.  
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim (2011), Bethesda Game Studios.  
The Sims 3 (2009), Maxis, Electronic Arts.  
Unfinished Swan (2012), Giant Sparrow, Annapurna Interactive.  
Valheim (2021), Iron Gate AB.

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