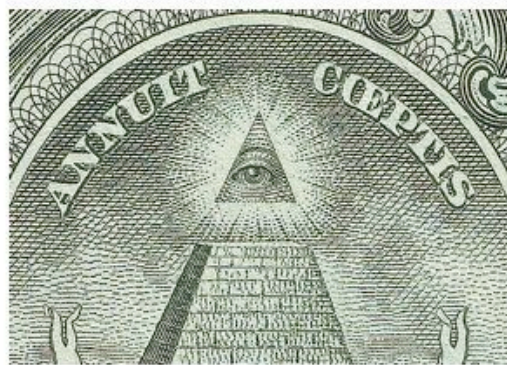
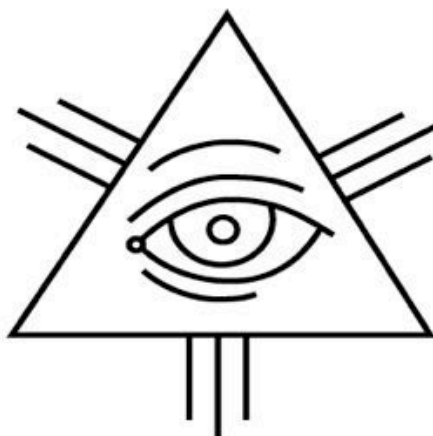
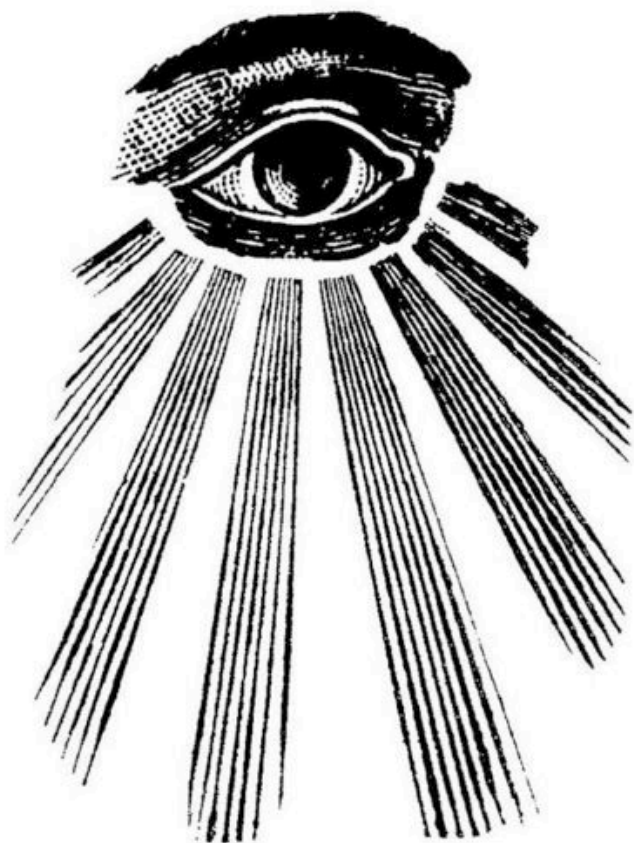


when I was very small, I used to imagine God as a voyeur  
actually, the ultimate one  
that's not my fault, he was presented like that at the doctrine :  
invisible, pervasive, sees everything & judges everybody  
they also provide you with some very effective symbols..



from the kabbalah to freemasonry,  
and eventually to the United States one-dollar bill,  
the all-seeing-eye (or Providence one) is always there, double-checkin' the world  
..not very comfortable, I must say  
and also, it seemed that every now and then this iper-peeping-tom  
could punish you from the top : with a massive earthquake, a universal flood,  
or more simply (and specifically) with a *lightning*  
- some sort of "ad personam" execution  
but not every lightning strikes a man, or a tree  
at least, not in the latest two centuries (thanks a lot, Benjamin)

so, always as a child, I started to imagine God not only as a voyeur  
- occasionally devoted to meteorological sniping, but also as a photographer  
(a flash-passionate one, of course)

“maybe he likes to take photos of his subjects, apart from constantly spying on them”

I must have been thinking

“or maybe he loves to collect chronological snapshots of his properties, since the very same subjects are now substantially re-arranging them..”

well, this is a very good story to start with

indeed everything I'm gonna speak about in this presentation is already here :

we've got *religion*, we've got *vision* and - the most important fact - we've got *the art of capturing visual slices of the real by means of some kind of machinery*



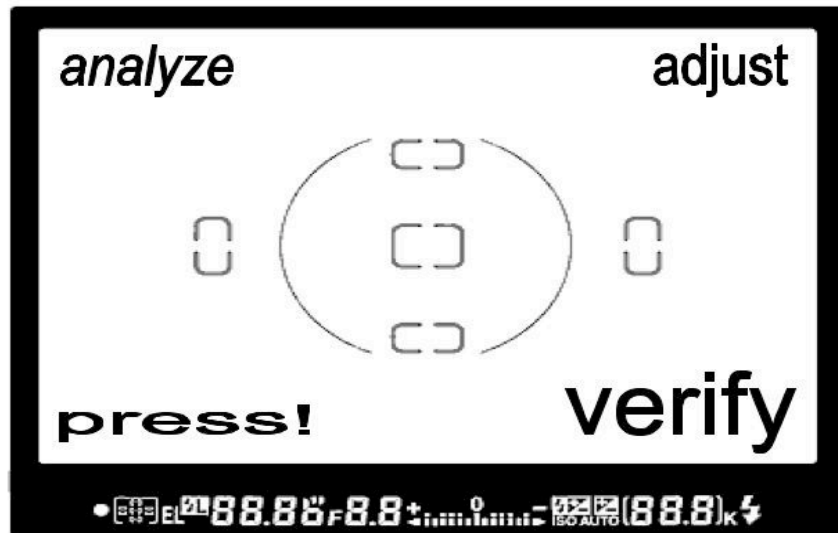
now, in the latest 10 years we experienced massive shifts in the video-photographic arena : everything is quickly turning digital, so prices go down while quality goes up, celluloid and film leave place to magnetic tapes and eventually to portable external memories, post-production (that now means tinkering with numbers, not anymore with light-impressed physical grains) can theoretically twist, re-arrange or even distort any kind of shooting - thus becoming the most important (sometimes obsessively over-rated) stage of cinema, video or photography assembly line

ok, these are features we're all pretty familiar with

but speaking from an artistic point of view, that I presume is midway between practice and aesthetics, the biggest revolution here is probably the small LCD screen, for the simple reason that it directly concerns the primary step of any visual art, that is *how to compose an image* or - if you prefer - *how to frame reality*

in the old days, photography was mostly about patience and expertise  
the viewfinder being just a small portable window, a neutral key-hole to temporarily  
reduce the human sight to the lens one, what you really had to do was :

- *analyze* the situation to be captured
  - *adjust* the camera settings according to the conditions (considering a highly sophisticated range of options like film exposure, shutter speed, light-sources, etc.)
  - *press* the button
  - *verify* afterwards, in the darkroom, if your strategy was right
- a typical trial-and-error procedure, empiric and pitiless, somewhat alchemical..  
very useful if you have plenty of time and money,  
a little bit discouraging in other cases..



- the LCD display completely turns this situation upside-down, 'cause
- 1) in the instant, cuty PREVIEW that it offers (where "what you see is (usually) what you get") the digital image has already been processed, and is presented to you as one possible final result - that you can choose to preserve, cancel, modify or whatever.. as an immaterial, completely unexpensive Polaroid
  - 2) the CLICK is disappeared, both acoustically and philosophically, 'cause now you're basically watching (sometimes recording) an endless real-time video, from which you decide to extract - here and there - singular frames to evaluate  
→ to better understand these first two updates, you can think about the differences - both in logistical and cognitive terms - between composing a text with a typewriter or creatin' it via a word processor, that actually turns the "page" into an open and recombinant flow of sentences
  - 3) the EYE is not forced anymore to a binding proxemics (or proximity) with the viewfinder, 'cause now you can look at your framed reality with both EYES from a distance, and this leads to :

- a lot more freedom and/or experimental attitude in terms of framing
- the possibility to use the camera as an extension of your sight or even of your memory, “shopping the real” for future double-checkin’



→ think, for example, to the up-skirt phenomenon (where you’re basically hunting for images out of your “educated” reach), or think about how an increasing number of conference participants (much more politely, I must say), are getting used to take snapshots of powerpoint slides during a presentation, so that they can totally focus on what is said and browse the additional information later on

**SAY  
CHEEEEEEESE!**

moreover, a lot of technical obstacles are now mitigated by automatic or user-friendly presets, as well as picture-making application “for dummies” are powerfully contaminating other media such as cell phones..

now, this refreshed (maybe also refreshing) state of the art make the photographic attitude - along with its related devices - ontologically omnipresent : after all, if starting a visual safari it’s so painless and easy, why not?

as a matter of fact, here we are :

submerged by evanescent photos and questionable photographers, livin' in an environment dazzled not only by urban maxiscreens but also by preview miniscreens, organizin' photocam-free parties in order to keep our parents or employers away from accidentally discover on facebook our exuberant night life, and in the end wondering if nowadays PHOTOGRAPHY is still an artistic gesture or maybe - much more simply - some kind of *emotional collecting* (that occasionally can become, or be considered, "art")

quoting Italo Calvino :

"The line between the reality that is photographed because it seems beautiful to us and the reality that seems beautiful because it has been photographed is very narrow. (...) The minute you start saying something, 'Ah, how beautiful! We must photograph it!' you are already close to the view of the person who thinks that everything that is not photographed yet is lost, as if it had never existed, and that therefore, in order really to live, you must photograph as much as you can, and to photograph as much as you can you must either live in the most photographable way possible, or else consider photographable every moment of your life. The first course leads to stupidity; the second to madness."



well, looking at photography's LCD-nourished ubiquity from this bulimic perspective, the very first image that pops up in my mind is the "stereotyped Japanese tourist", ecstatically running around some western historical site while compulsively taking hundreds of photos with his "point & shoot" camera

I come from Italy, where apparently is stored 72% of world's archeological heritage, so I've been encountering millions of these Japanese guys throughout the years, but now it seems that the invasion is turning transnational : I'm afraid we're livin' a universal Japanese moment, or - more precisely, also because I don't have nothing against Japan - a dream-like, never-ending sunday photography session, that is to say : *a general touristification of the photographic gaze*



indeed, all the qualities that I mentioned before are greatly emphasized and sometimes specific of what we can call “the touristic framing” : nothing is closer to a “shopping the real” approach, a purely emotional involvement and thus a superficial (or at least slavish) artifact than a quick-and-dirty picture of the Mona Lisa and the funniest part is that paintings, sculptures and even old architectural spaces (that means : isolated relics) are already icons, or highly iconified manufactures so, if you consider photography as the possibility to isolate or immortalize a discrete image extractin’ it from the continuum of space & time, the Mona Lisa - but also the Colosseum - is already some kind of metaphorical, old-style, tangible snapshot.. and this makes the Japanese attitude pretty paradoxical not only because tourists are here unconsciously producing squared photos, but also because they perfectly know that the icon has been already photographed billions of time (indeed they saw the classic shot in the guide before leaving home and they will probably buy the souvenir postcard at the exit..) but still, as strangers lost in a museum-like world, first thing they wanna do is optically *touch*, double-check the promotional shot



then, they probably wanna *enter* the icon area (or aura)

→ to feed themselves (via their photocams) with a portion of it

it's not very different from what happens during big concerts or gatherings, where crowds of enthusiastic fans, too far from the stage, keep on taking photos of the maxiscreens; or what happens in any remote "Club Med", where an exotic but iper-realistic scenario is arranged precisely to prevent you from getting in touch with the external reality, and you accept the game enjoying what is clearly an uncanny and goofy simulation

it's a matter of *faith*, and you want to believe - expecially because usually in this situations you're on holiday, away from a stressful ordinary life

so, when we speak of vision, here, we're not sure if we're addressing the faculty of see or the will to witness and be part of a "larger-than-life" event

(end of the boring introduction)

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## *synopsis*

this video-project is about how the increasing proliferation of digital photographic equipment among common people & the astonishing overlapping of the framing activity around famous spots, crossed with the visibility given to the photographer's choice by the LCD technology, can give birth to a peculiar visual panorama around the "target". In a formula :

*Proliferation of digital cameras*

*with LCD preview-screen*

+

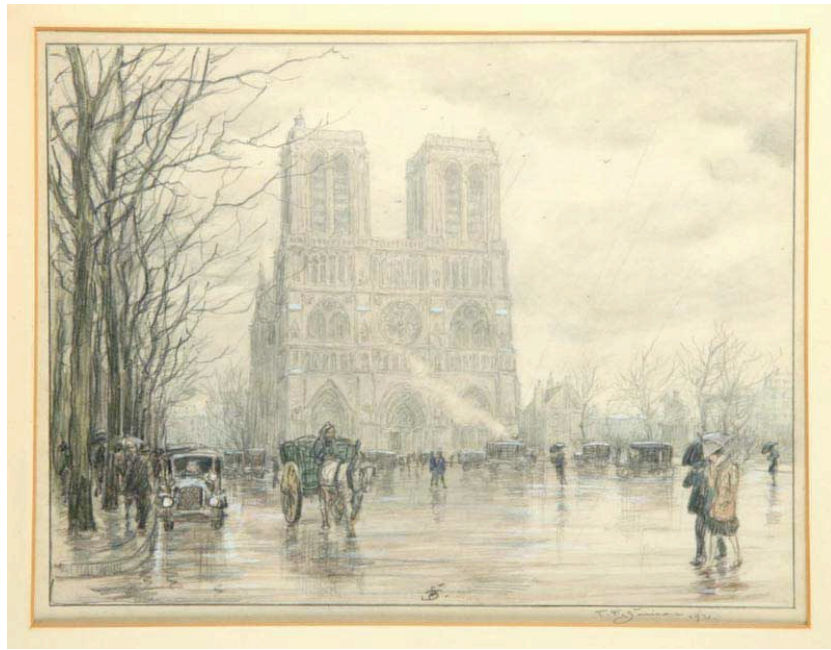
*the act of touristic framing*

=

*multifaceted & redundant*

**POSTCARD-ISM**

(press PLAY and watch the VIDEO)



That was me, in Paris, last Christmas

I decided to visit the cathedral of Notre-Dame,  
and *the first time* I went there - let's say - armless

It was holiday time, so - of course - it was packed with tourists of all nationalities,  
and most of them were frantically taking photos, despite the cosy atmosphere and  
the big “no photos” symbols at the entrance

so, in order to simply access the right position to just *look* at the main attractions of  
the church, I had to find my way through the silently clicking swarm, and while  
trying not to get caught by the ever-flashing little arsenal, I caught myself spying  
into other people's LCDs (I don't know if “spy” is the right word, since the dozens  
of preview screens that surrounded me like alternative votive candles were very  
sparkling and appealing - especially in that warm half-light typical of churches , and  
their owners were doing nothing to hide them..)

the next day I decided to come back with my camera,  
to investigate the touristic fever by hysterically *cubing* it  
..and that's the result

the focus is on the northern stained-glass window rose : a multilayered and very  
refined gothic artifact, sort of old-testament visual database, captivating and  
hypnotic - especially if rekindled by the sunset light

I never show the *rose* on camera, but you can look at how it is prismatically  
redistributed, spread, serialized in the LCDs all around : an astonishing *iper-icon*  
*infoscape*, vivid allegory of our highly mediatized era - not necessarily invoking  
postmodernism, multitasking or window-based interfaces here..

moreover - precisely because of its centripetal nature - this miniscreen-cluster rings several bells : for example, you may think at one of the founding short-stories of cyberpunk, "fragments of an holographic rose" by William Gibson, where all the pieces of a broken laser photo contain the whole picture information or you can sense a warholian deja-vu, considering that not every white balance in the house is calibrated with the same values, so you're looking at slightly different replicas of the original silk screen and obviously - since we're in a church - you can easily build a parallel with the Holy Communion, where the body of Christ is symbolically divided into smaller units and delivered to the believers



as we already pointed out, the CLICK is disappeared, but there's still a fantastic moment (my favourite one) in which the LCD becomes suddenly blank, soon after the silent click / a second before the appearance of the photo

I guess that's the emotional climax, then the *tourist-photographer-believer* receives his personal sacred wafer, and goes away, satisfied

of course, according to the Eucharist ceremonial, all the wafers are equal; nevertheless, each of them has to be perceived and regarded as a precious and intimate gift - and that's what happens here, where catholic iconophilia meets transnational technological iconoconsumerism

(while, in the background, a real mass is taking place : in the church and simultaneously in its CCTV.. priests are always forward-looking)

if you consider the *body language*, we're facing some kind of spiritual, rapt activity as well; literally throwing themselves upon the scopic altar, photographers tend to raise the arms, stay on tiptoes, open the mouth, goggle the eyes; they all wanna touch the rose with their lens, but unfortunately not everybody is equally equipped so, as you probably have noticed, as the movie goes on we come closer to the target by switching from long shots of small prosumer cameras to close-ups of professional ones that are zooming the rose at that very moment



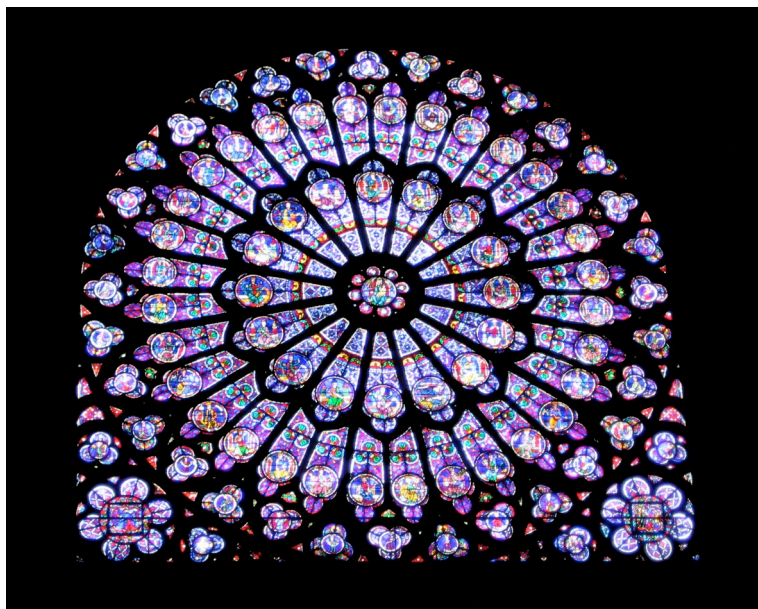
particularly amusing is also the interaction between “shooters” and “jaywalkers”  
I was behind the lines, but there was a pandemonium going on out there..!

about the emphatic music in the background :

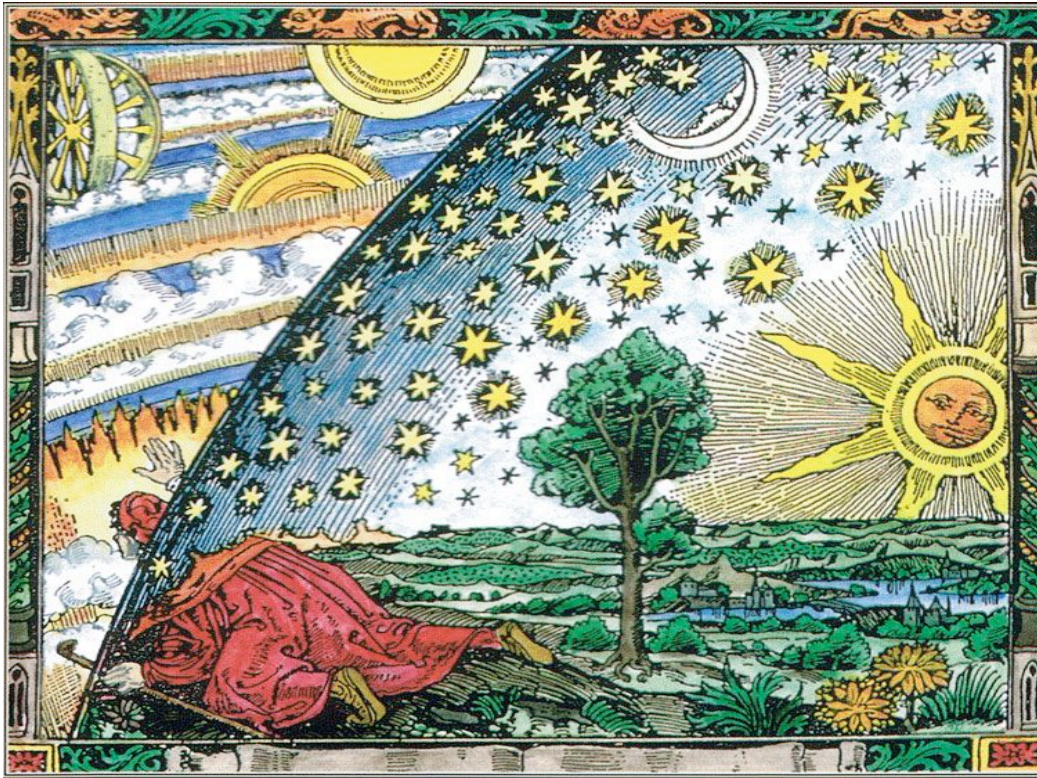
the *soundtrack* is based on two cantatas by Alessandro Scarlatti, an Italian baroque composer bridging 17th and 18th century

the first, “Bella madre de’ fiori” (literally “Beautiful Mother of Flowers”), is a “profane” cantata, and celebrates Venus and love; the second, “Magnificat”, is a “sacred” one (frequently sung liturgically during Christian services), and contains an excerpt from the Gospel of Luke - where the Virgin Mary praises God

although these two cantatas are based on two very diverse, maybe opposite concepts of “ecstasy” and “emotional transport” (and specifically composed to be performed in different spaces & occasions), I intentionally decided to mix them here since they both can describe the fascination for the the magnetic element that we’ve been discussing so far, the big-colourful-window :



indeed, what is defined as a ROSE can be read on one side as a symbol of nature and fertility (even an allusion to the vagina) and on the other side as the nth symbolic representation of the divine pupil I was discussing at the beginning of course, we can also perceive it as a mesmerizing western mandala, an esoteric map to be interpreted or (following an easy technological parallel) a *maxiscreen* : sort of analogue megaLCD, primitive father of all the digi-babies down there → in fact, both a cathedral stained-glass window and an LCD screen work only if properly backlit (and here we definitely come full-circle..)



Let's conclude with this polysemous, multilingual and symmetrical rhyme-formula :

*"Magnificat anima mea Dominum"*

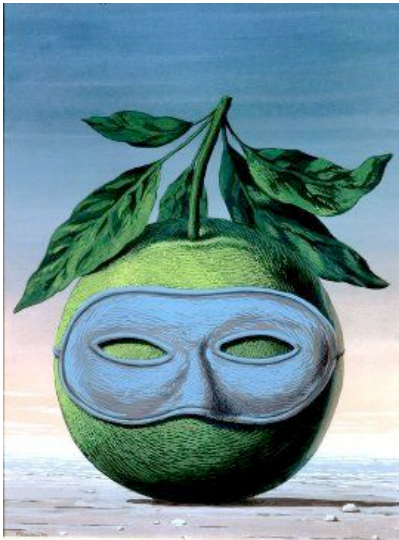
(the refrain of the second cantata, latin for : my soul glorifies the lord)

versus

**My magnifying tool dominates**

(take your conclusions)

@lbert figurt  
*multimedialchemist*  
[insalatamistica@yahoo.it](mailto:insalatamistica@yahoo.it)  
+31.(0)6.83292263  
+39.328.8440099



**René Magritte, Souvenir de voyage (1961)**