Digital re-materialisation: towards a post-digital perspective in contemporary art research and practice

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Topics

1. **One century of foundational influences on digital (interactive) media art**
2. **An aesthetic of the digital media art**
3. **The post-digital perspective in digital media art**
4. **Discussion and final reverberation**

One century of foundational influences on digital (interactive) media art

Foundations: the DADA movement

"*Cut with the Kitchen Knife*", por

Hannah Hoech (colagem)

➢ The DADA years: began with the outbreak of the First World War as a protest against the war and the **bourgeois**, **nationalist** and **colonialist** interests seen as the root cause of the war, and against the **cultural and intellectual conformity** - in art and more widely in society - that corresponded to the war.

➢ DADA movement started in 1916 in Zurich (Cabaret Voltaire), then in Paris, Berlin, NY, ...

Foundations: the DADA movement

DADA characteristics:

✓ nonconformity to accepted rules and conventions.

✓ scandal was the leitmotif **to shock his audience by confronting them with self-awareness**

✓ embraced chaos (anti-logic) and irrationality

✓ presented **as anti-art**

✓ a certain **form of nihilism** (an extreme form of scepticism that denies all existence)

"Fountain", por Marcel

Duchamp

Foundations: the DADA movement

Marcel Janco recalled,

> "*We had lost confidence in our culture. Everything had to be demolished. We would begin again after the "tabula rasa". At the Cabaret Voltaire we began by shocking common sense, public opinion, education, institutions, museums, good taste, in short, the whole prevailing order.*"
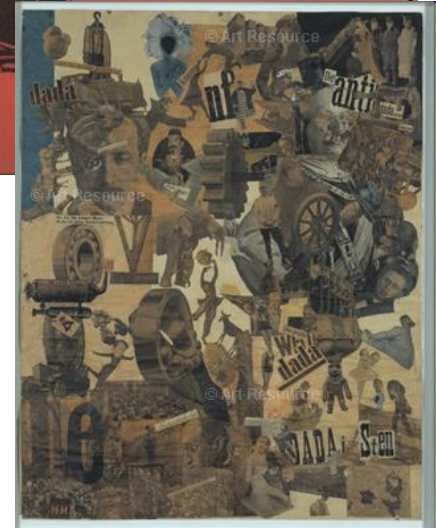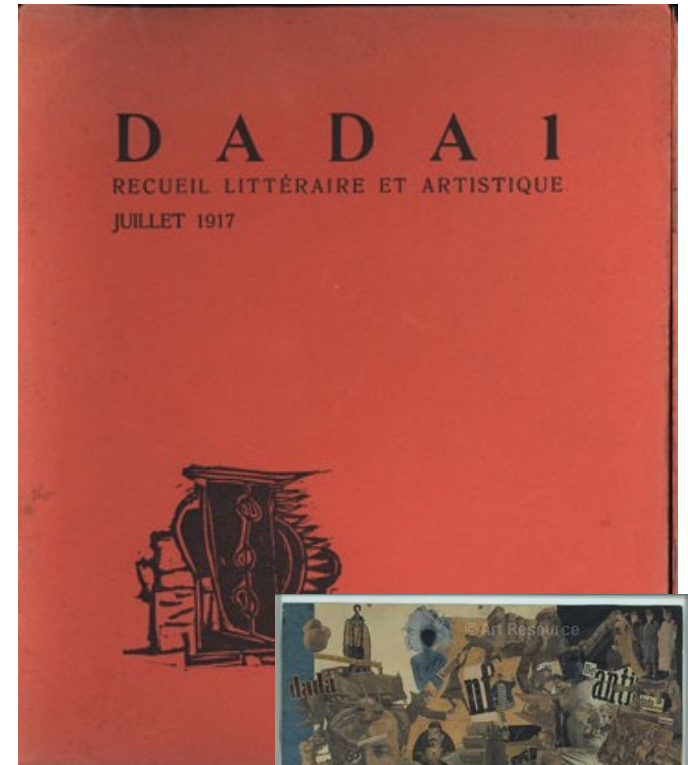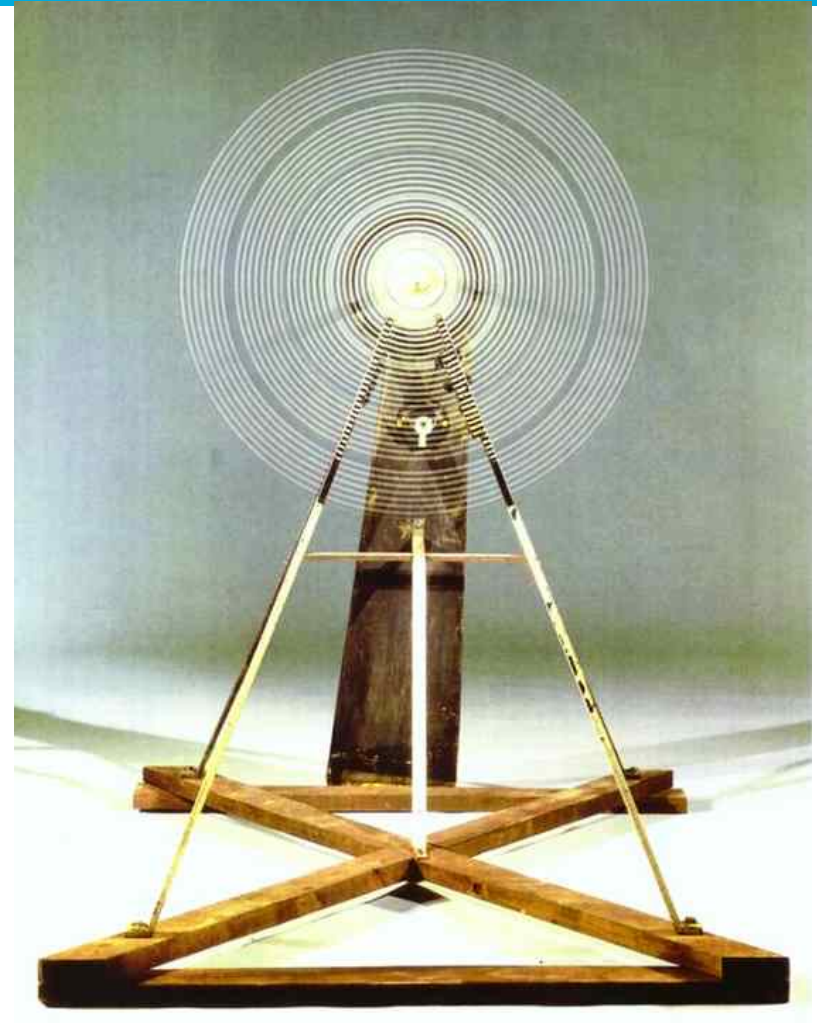
Foundations: the DADA movement

"an interactive machine that invited users to interact with concentric rotating glass plates to generate visual effects."

Key features:
- **interactive**
- **spontaneous and dynamic**
- **appealing to other senses** (e.g. hearing, tactile, in-depth vision)

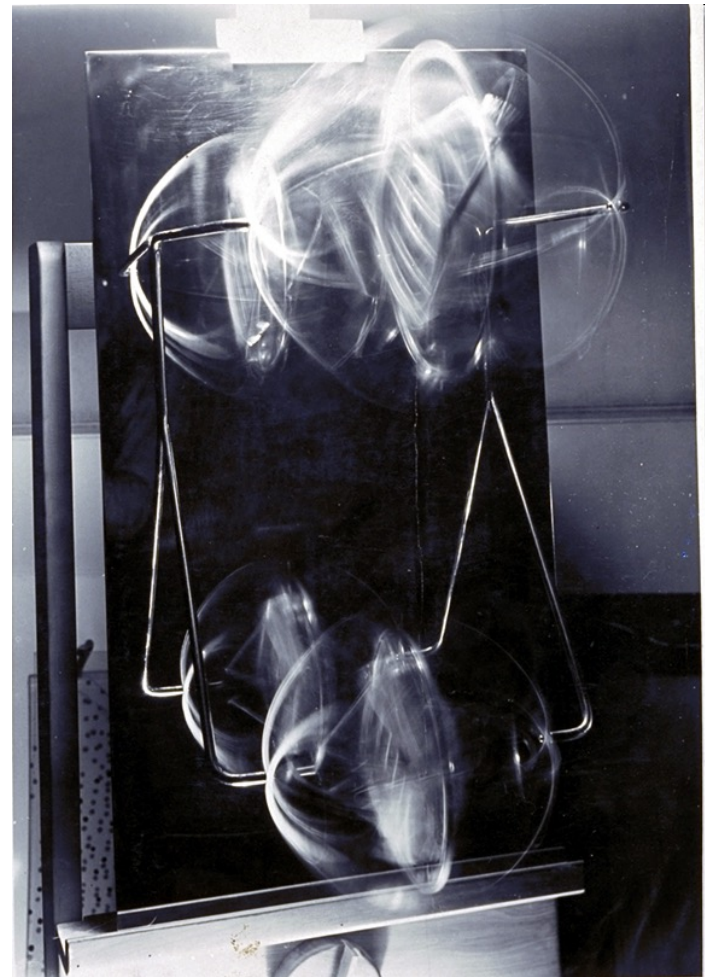*"Rotary Glass Plates", by Marcel Duchamp & Man Ray (1920)*

Foundations: the DADA movement

"a device for creating light sculptures by projecting silhouettes in movement."

Characteristics:

- **volatile** (a certain sense of **virtuality**)

- **spontaneous and dynamic**

- **appealing to other senses** (e.g. hearing, smelling, in-depth vision)

"Kinetic Sculpture Moving", by

László Moholy-Nagy (1933)

Foundations: the DADA movement

➢ The Dadaists adopted the principles of **<u>abstraction</u>**, **<u>spontaneity</u>** and **<u>chance</u>** and employed the technique of collage and strange juxtapositions of image and text to create a sense of absurdity.

➢ The Dadaists were united not by a common style, but by their **rejection of conventions in art and thought.**

> ➢ As the DADA movement declined in the 1920s, most of its followers moved to **Surrealism**.

"Euphoria Dada", by Marcel

Janco

Foundations: Conceptual Art

➢ **Conceptual art**: a movement that started in the 1960s, also with roots in the pioneering works of some Dadaist artists, mainly the **ready-mades** (art composed of ordinary objects) as for example "Fountain".

"One and Three Chairs", by Joseph Kosuth (1965)

➢ The American artist Joseph Kosuth in his 1969 essay, "Art after Philosophy", when he wrote:

"All art (after Duchamp) is conceptual (in nature) because art only exists conceptually".

Foundations: Conceptual Art

Conceptual Art: the **idea** or **concept** is the most important part of the work.

Main characteristics:
- ✓ the **concept** (or original idea) **is king**
- ✓ not necessarily aesthetic
- ✓ appeals to other senses

"Erased de Kooning Drawing", by Robert Rauschenberg (1953)

Foundations: the Fluxus movement

Fluxus explored the idea of **instruction-generated (algorithmic) art** as well as **audience immersion**, forcing forms of **interaction** between the audience and the artefacts.
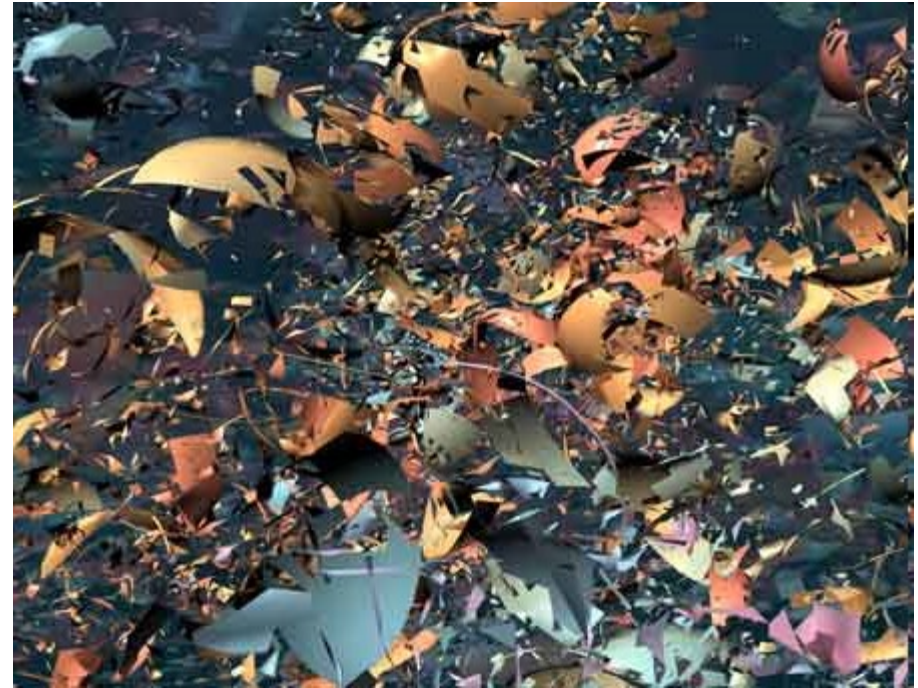
"Musique télépathique n° 5 (Telepathic Music #5)", by Robert Filliou (1978)

Foundations: the beginnings of Computing

"Fragmentation", por Charles Csuri (2008)

Art as a result of "experimental research in **computer-generated transformations** of visuals through mathematical functions."

O artista Charles Csuri foi um pioneiro nesta área.

Foundations: the introduction of life and artificial intelligence

Art that explores concepts of **<u>artificial life</u>** and **<u>artificial intelligence.</u>**

The basis of **<u>contemporary creation</u>** in these áreas.

"AVolve" (1994) by Sommerer & Mignonneau

Foundational influences from DADA to and AVolve (summary)

- non-conformity with accepted rules and conventions.
- adopted chaos (antilogic) and irrationality
- **interactivity**
- spontaneity and dynamics
- appeal to other senses
- volatility (a certain sense of **virtuality**);
- the concept is king
- not necessarily aesthetic
- **art based on pre-defined instructions**
- **immersion of the public** in the work of art
- computer generated procedures and **controlled randomness**
- exploration of the concepts of **life and artificial intelligence**
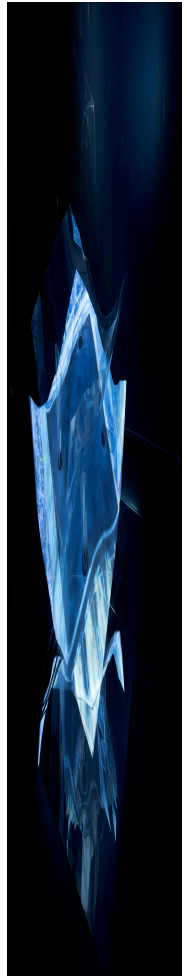
An aesthetic of the digital media

An aesthetic of the digital media

*"(...) Any discussion on aesthetics or aesthetic discourses inserted in contexts of contemporary practices, **<u>necessarily embraces Kant's thought</u>**, when he carries out a deep analysis of art and **<u>its impact on the life of the human being</u>**, differentiating the issues related to art, itself, the form of the judgments of aesthetic character, **<u>on art objects</u>** and others; and those issues of a more theoretical nature.(...)"*

(Fernandes-Marcos, 2017, p.144).

An aesthetic of the digital media

*"(...) It is completely unknown to us what the nature of things in themselves may be, independent of all receptivity of our sensibility. We know of them **only the way we have of perceiving them**; a way which is peculiar to us; but which must not necessarily be that of every being, even if it be that of all men.(...)"*

(Critique of Pure Reasoning, Kant, cited in Gil, 1992, p. 75)

An aesthetic of the digital media

"(...) Kant is at the genesis of the definition of **meaningful experience**, of **aesthetic contemplation**, in vogue in the theory and practice of various contemporary arts, which (...) expand to definitions around the **artefact** and the **polysemic perspective** that it can trigger in the observer, leading the latter to assume other roles, including that of **co-creator of the appreciated object itself**.

Artefacts of digital art and culture not only take the form of expression or statement of human subjectivity, **but are inseparable part of the affections of the soul** (...)".

(Fernandes-Marcos, 2017, p.144).

An aesthetic of the digital media

"(...) the current challenge of artmedia is not, therefore, in the mere naïve apology of the current possibilities of creation: artmedia must, on the contrary, draw a clear difference between what is, on the one hand, the industrial **production of pleasurable stimuli for the mass media** and, on the other hand, the search for **an ethic and an aesthetic** for the digital age. (...)"

(Machado, 2004, p. 6)

An aesthetic of the digital media

"(...) **Virtual reality**, <u>**artificial life**</u> and <u>**artificial intelligence**</u> as systems incorporated into art presuppose <u>**new participatory and interactive experiences**</u>, which allow the <u>**spectator to be integrated**</u> into the context of the work. (...)

The dialogue between work and spectator is established not only on the basis of language or reflection, but, above all, in a practical and intuitive manner, in the circular sense of communication, insofar <u>**as the public's own action in the work's surroundings is stimulated**</u>. (...)"

(Giannetti, 2012, p. 23)

An aesthetic of the digital media

It follows that the **aesthetics of digital media** is intertwined with the aesthetics of **computer artefacts** that integrates or unfolds in the various aesthetics of the **artefact as a mediator of significant experiences** for an **intervening public**, taken as an individual or group.

An aesthetic of the digital media: multiple dimensions

➢ of the **ephemeral and volatile**, when the artefact, in part or in whole, is constituted by components of fleeting existence, even if without harming the adequate times for the realization of the experience

➢ of **sociability** and **networked experiences**, when the set of knowledge and practices accumulated in a given cultural context or interest group serve to support and enhance the **experience of aesthetic contemplation**

➢ of **learning**, when the artefact provides learning processes

An aesthetic of the digital media: multiple dimensions

➢ of **games** and **leisure**, when the artefact assumes dimensions of **game and entertainment**;

➢ of the **post-human**, when the artefact assumes characteristics of an **artificial and autonomous intelligent entity**, a non-human subject "able" to create and "empower" creation

➢ of **one's own aesthetics**, based on the freedom to define criteria capable of evaluating one's own creation and on an appropriate ethics
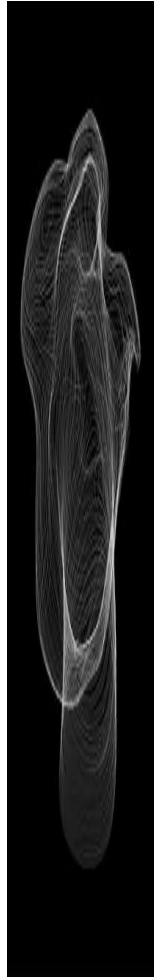
The post-digital perspective in digital media art

The post-digital perspective in digital media art

"You're not a real hipster until you take your typewriter to the park"

✓ The image used by Florian Cramer (2013) to define post-digital, reflects the **boundary between analogue and digital media**, which post-digital aims to blur.

✓ Post-digital appeared related to the concept of **materiality of digital aesthetics**.

Meme de Florian Cramer

The post-digital perspective in digital media art

"(...) The **post-digital perspective of contempor**aneity is characterized by two fundamental lines of thought that intersect and complement each other (…) by assuming, (…), **the inevitability of the omnipresence of digital computer technology** in all aspects of life, that is, its **concrete ubiquity**; and, (…), by noting the **emergence of new materiality or re-materialisation in the practices of digital creation** in art and culture, where tangible physical materials **assume an equal role to the digital** while expanding and repositioning it in an aesthetic that is vested with its own distinctive characteristics. (...)"
(Pereira & Fernandes-Marcos, 2020, p. 1)

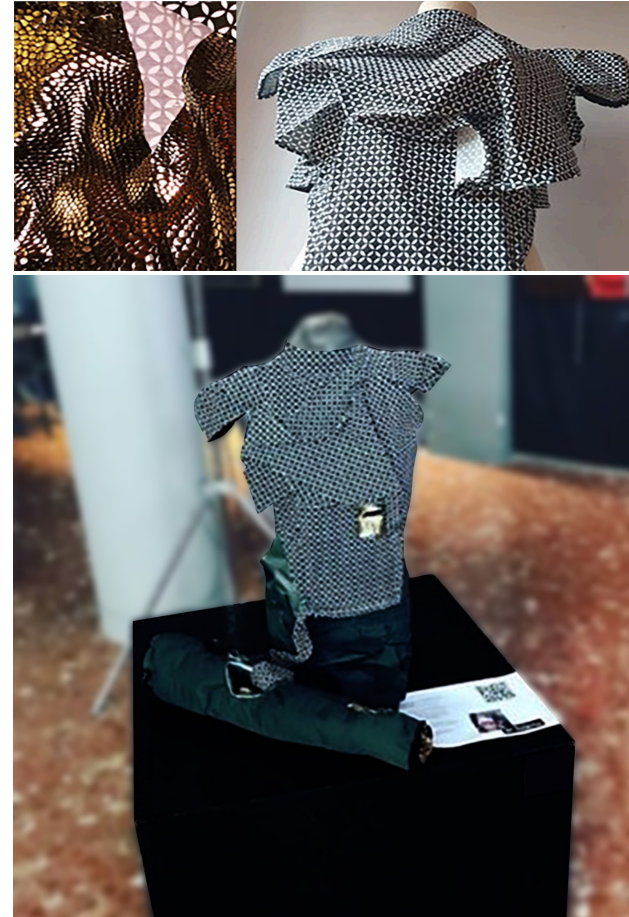*The post-digital perspective in digital media art*

✓ The installation consists of a theatrical performance space, and scenography that integrates **textile sculpture**, **ceramics**, **soundscape** and **video projection**.

✓ Tangible **physical materials assume an equal role to the digital**.

✓ There is an **own aesthetics of re-materialisation**

"Ecoações" (2015) by Acácio Carvalho e Selma Pereira

The post-digital perspective in digital media art

- ✓ Hybrid installation combining **textile** sculpture and **augmented reality** technology.

- ✓ Hybrid **re-materialisation** invites viewers to interact and immerse themselves in the fashion artefact.

- ✓ Tangible **physical materials assume an equal role to the digital**.

- ✓ There is an **own aesthetics of re-materialisation**

"Nature of a Digital Dream" (2020) by Selma Pereira

The post-digital perspective in digital media art

- ✓ Textile art combines **textile** sculpture, **interactive sensors** and **augmented reality** technology.

- ✓ Textile art is appealing to the **touch**, **smell** and **handling of materials**, aiming for a **multi-sensory** immersion in the work.

- ✓ Tangible **physical materials assume an equal role to the digital**.

- ✓ There is an **own aesthetics of re-materialisation**

"Wearable Computer EcoTechDress" (2016) by Teresa Barradas

An aesthetic of the post-digital media (?)

"(...) Post-digital media artefacts take the **encounter of materials**, **design** and **artistic expression** to a **new experiential** level enhanced by multimedia contents that complement, expand and **complete the physical object**; and by the **interaction layers** that provide levels of immersion and perception **beyond physicality/virtuality**.(…)"
(Pereira & Fernandes-Marcos, 2022)

An aesthetic of the post-digital media art (?)

✓ The **<u>tangible nature</u>** of fabrics, fibres and materials, providing haptic perceptions of various kinds (touch, roughness, filament, temperature, surfaces and volumes), including odours;

✓ The **<u>wearable</u>**, when the artifact takes on the characteristics of art-fashion and can be worn;

✓ The **<u>physical and/or virtual immersion</u>**, when the material and digital components constitute a harmonious and consequent whole, providing **<u>integrated immersion experiences</u>**;
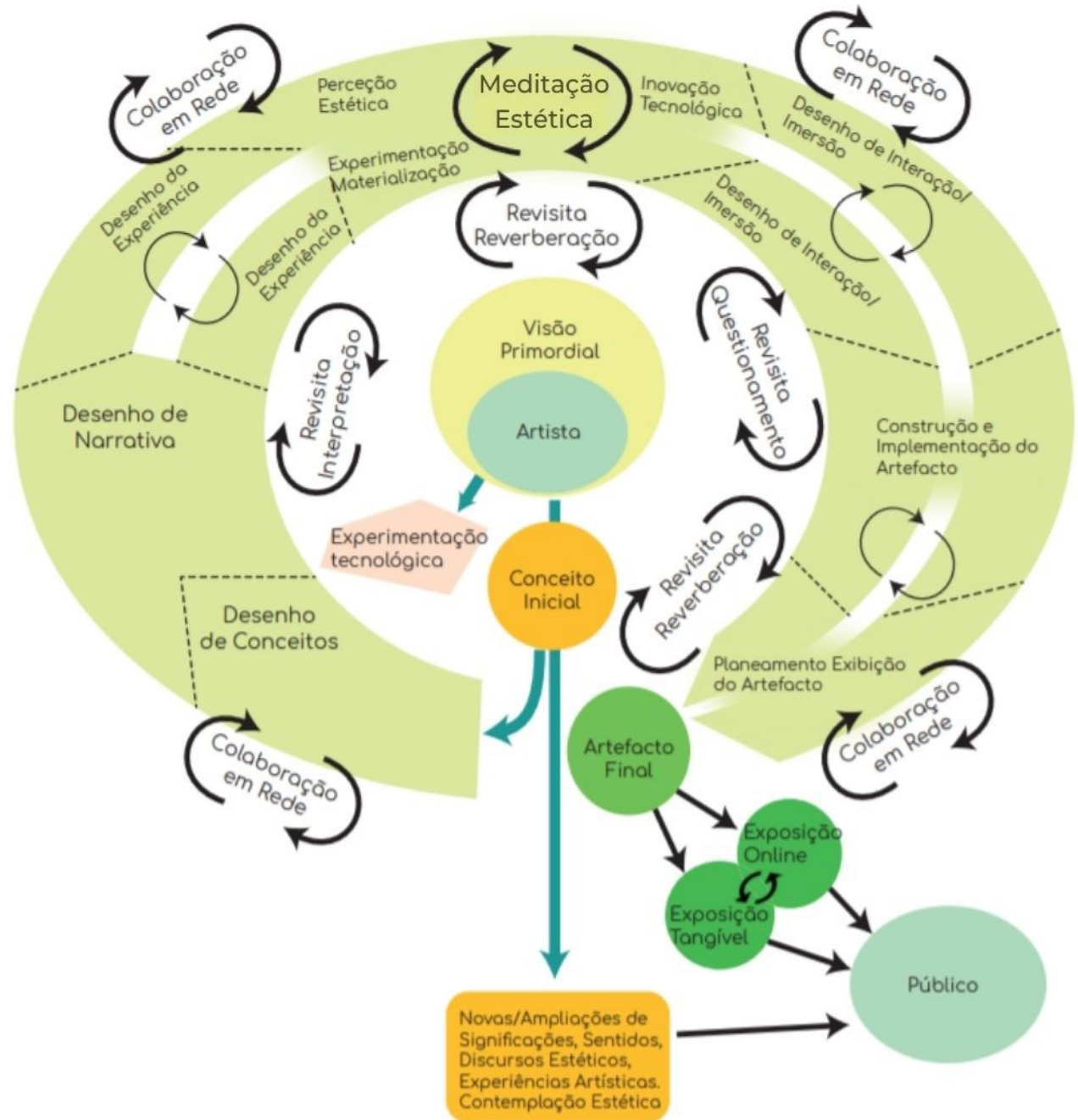
Digital creation and research cycle in media art
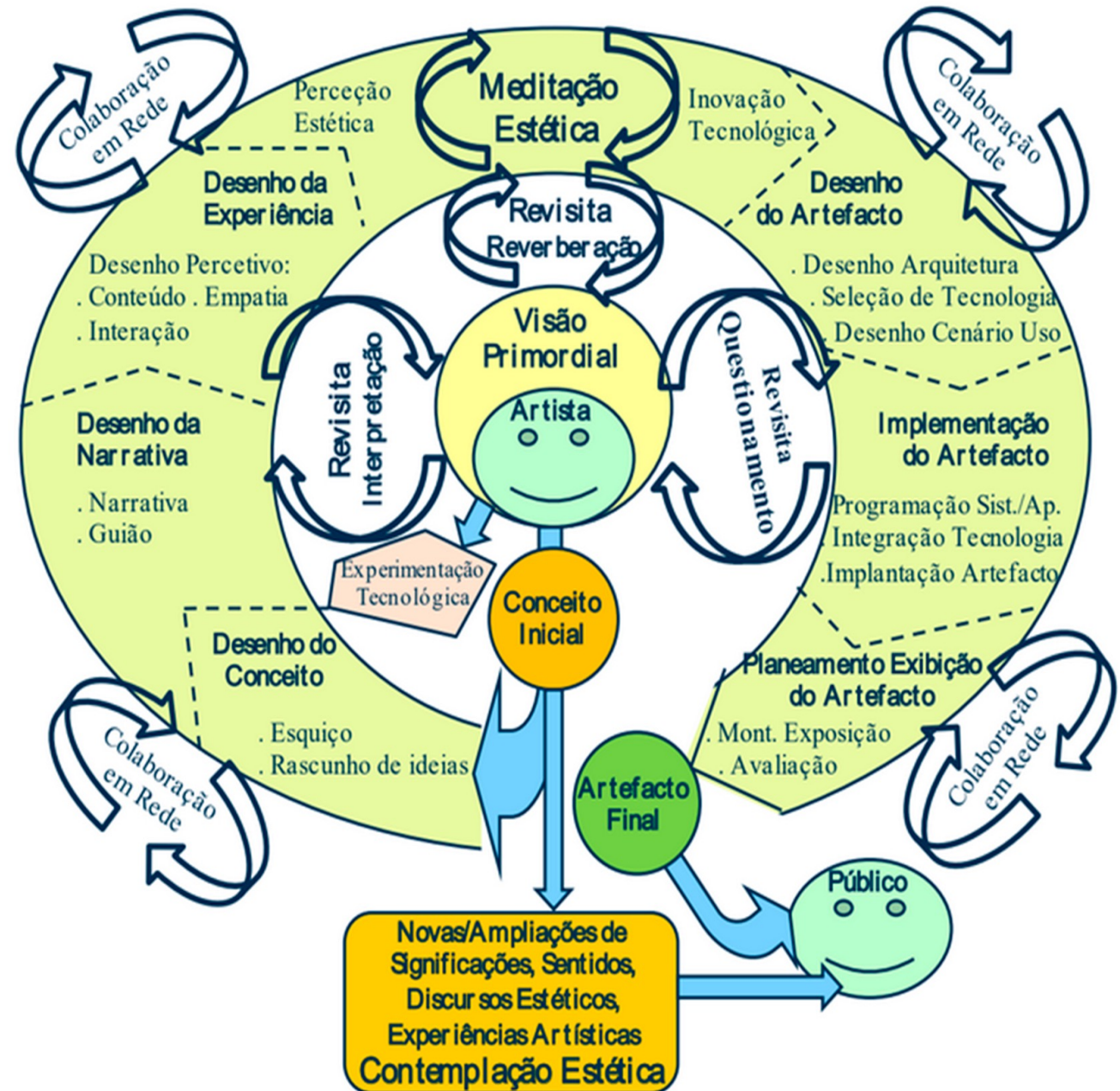
Post-digital creation and research cycle in media art

Conclusion remarks:

- The **post-digital era** is synonymous of a contemporaneity characterized by the **ubiquity of digital technology**

- It brings to the fore the discussion **on materiality and conceptual and dematerializing artistic practices** within the creative processes.

- The post-digital conveys **new domains and interpretations in art** while empowering the creation of new expressions and aesthetic narratives where digital equals the physical materials.

- The creation and research cycle for the post-digital artefacts embraces the dimension of **experimenting and extending tangible materials**.

- The Discussion and Critical Thinking on this **subject are just beginning!**

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Obrigado