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- 1 This issue of the *Interfaces* journal brings together written articles and video essays that explore the ways in which the production, circulation and reception of images involves “rescaling” the visible, radically transforming our perception and experience of the world in visual, spatial and temporal terms. As recently restated by Zachary Horton and Mary Ann Doane, while measurement is not an absolute but a culturally, politically and symbolically informed phenomenon, scale itself is connected to appearance (the proportional depiction of size), and therefore, to perception and to (potentially deceptive) effects (Marston; Horton; Doane 6). By *rescaling*, we designate the ways in which scale is further complicated, altered and unsettled through the multiplicity of modes of display and reception that coexist in our image-saturated world.
- 2 From a European perspective, this change feeds on a long-lasting tradition of thought and shared imaginary that arguably anticipated some of the transformations brought about by the industrial revolution (Winston; Manning). At the same time as the world was reshaping according to the dual logic of the local and the global, optics made it possible for us to see and record that which is normally inaccessible to the human eye: the very close and the very far, the infinitely small and immensely large. In turn, the ubiquity of visual technologies generated by the advent of electronic, then digital media, further intensified the effects of the phenomenon both in terms of imaging and of screening modes. Recent advances in the fields of optics and visual technologies have opened up our access to the visible, as well as our visual sensorium, even further: computer-generated imagery, electronic microscopy, as well as electronic detectors imagery have all complexified visibility, by producing images which had hitherto been literally unimaginable. Cutting edge technologies of vision thus seemingly established new frontiers to be conquered, revivifying the promise of taking control over uncharted realms of the universe (Black).¹
- 3 The systematic process of rescaling involved in contemporary modes of visualization arguably extends such sense of mastery by giving even imperceptible domains a visual presence customized through a variety of modes of display. Amplified by the growing

rhythm of image consumption, rescaling also involves accelerated forms of habituation, whereby we learn to connect the represented not only across highly varying logics of size and scale, but also through disparate modes of appearance and technologies of display that have profoundly destabilized the perceptual grammar and coherence of our visual environments. “Rescale: The Art and Culture of Size and Scale” seeks to explore the epistemic, philosophical, social, political, technological, and aesthetic implications of this phenomenon, both in contemporary visual culture and in its histories.

- 4 Vividly evoked by Erkki Huhtamo’s coining of the term “Gulliverisation” (2009), the co-presence, in visual culture, of varying scales of depiction, can be traced throughout the history of humanity – in the disparity of scale of prehistoric wall paintings, or between large murals and miniature paintings from the medieval era onwards for instance. Although, as Robert Tavernor points out, “Nothing is more readily accessible in everyday experience than the human body and its constituent parts, and – once – nothing was more meaningful” (Tavernor 7), the centrality of the human body in our system of measurement has always been unsettled by the presence, in visual culture, of non-anthropomorphic scaling systems.
- 5 With the development of an optic- and screen-based visual culture, rescaling became a pervasive feature of perception and representation, and a defining characteristic of modern media. Here, the film image serves as the archetypal media model. Initially embedded in the process of analogue projection (whereby every second, 24 minuscule frames are projected on a large screen, thus revealing the countless amount of detail contained in each (Beugnet, *Le Cinéma et ses doubles*), scaling and rescaling are also part and parcel of cinematic technique and language. As Mary Ann Doane sums it up: “is the close-up larger, or closer?” (Doane 2). Furthermore, as images or sequences of images now routinely circulate from the expansive screen of a cinema to the diminutive space afforded by portable display devices, scaling takes place not only, or not anymore, at the level of the image itself, but also as *rescaling*, that is, a process operating at the level of its technical means of appearance (Beugnet, *Le Cinéma et ses doubles*).
- 6 With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, the impact of rescaling became a highly noticeable part of everyday life, lockdown turning domestic screens into the central element of our access to the visible world, cutting it down to size as it were. The dependency on personal viewing devices showed the potential as well as limits of a scalar logic relying on diminished scale and individual viewing. It raised anew the question of the role of collective spectatorship, and of large-scale images, in fostering a different spatial, corporeal and visual experience as well as a specific imagining awareness (Hanich; Kenderdine; Beugnet, “The Bigger Picture”). It also brought into relief the temporal nature of such evolution. The rescaling of time started with modernity but intensified with the introduction of contemporary, digital modes of production, distribution and reception of images – an issue that generated today’s debates on the economy of attention.
- 7 Rescaling thus involves formal and technical aspects of image production, but also the spatialization, massification, and temporal dimension of reception. From the massive advertising boards hung in city centers to the tiny mobile phones that most of us now carry through the same urban centers, from “binge watching” to flicking through Gifs, the ubiquity of scale-shifting technology works to normalize a practice of the

“miniature and the gigantic” (Stewart), and that practice, in turn, conditions much of our everyday perception of the world.

- 8 Today, shifts in scale routinely inform our access to the visible, the strangeness of their visual manifestation (as when we exchange through visio-conference with the live frieze of match-box size talking heads that lines up our screen) absorbed by the increased speed of familiarization. At the same time, visual rescaling still has the power to astonish us. While advances in the fields of optics and digital technologies continue to expand the limits of the visible world, technologies of display further transform our everyday experience of size and scale. Together with the proliferation of fixed and mobile screens of all sizes that systematically rescale images, visual reformations thus work to further dis-anchor representation from natural perception, and from human scale or measurement relative to the size of the human body. Though we are told we now live in the era of the Anthropocene, notions of scale seem more disconnected from human experience than they ever were. Yet imagination works to fill gaps in perception and understanding. As Michael Clarke and David Wittenberg remark, “humans’ ineptitude in comprehending scale in the real world is likely the flipside of the tremendous ease with which we are able to rescale things in our imaginations” (Clarke and Wittenberg 4). Hence for all the disorientation and sense of contingency potentially entailed by rescaling processes, the coexistence of multiple scales of representation and display also result in a complexification of the visible that is potentially generative of new imaginaries and creative assemblages (Beugnet, *Le Cinéma et ses doubles*).
- 9 This issue of *Interfaces* brings together scholars in all fields of visual culture, interested in art and popular culture as well as scientific imagery, including painting and graphic arts, photography, film and video, video games and immersive environments. The subjects of the assembled articles and videos span a time period from the 16th century to the present. Together, they aim to historicize, as well as identify the impact and effect of scale and rescaling on visual culture, on the techniques and aesthetics, as well as on the re-mediation, circulation and reception of images.
- 10 The collection opens with Valérie Dulac’s examination of the political dimension of scale in Renaissance royal portraits produced in England and France. Looking in particular at the part the work of French painter François Clouet and British goldsmith Nicolas Hilliard was intended to play in Elizabeth I’s marital arrangements, Dulac makes the case that questions of proportion were of central concern to both the artists, their patrons, and the recipients of the portraits in question. The two men – often referred to as miniaturists but more appropriately here dubbed ‘limners’ – worked across various forms from the tiny to the cabinet-sized to (mostly accurately) render a sense of the sitter’s size and stature: an act of rescaling that could have, as Dulac argues, tremendous political implications.
- 11 Moving from this detailed focus on the miniature at a particular moment to a broader, historical perspective, Tomáš Dvořák’s essay draws on Claude Lévi-Strauss to demonstrate that the process of image miniaturization is integral to, and congruent with, the process of establishing larger image infrastructures and the rescaling of visual culture towards the numerous, instrumental, and generic. Like Dulac, Dvořák draws on specific art-historical examples to make his case, but whereas Dulac binds the miniature to the social and political climate of Renaissance Europe, Dvořák understands it in terms of much broader global and historical forces, and in the

article's later part he turns towards the technology of reproduction and miniaturisation – in the form of the photographic and digital regimes – bringing us up to the present.

- 12 Martin Charvát's subsequent article likewise thinks across different time periods and media forms in order to examine how visual technologies reveal the ways human labour is re-scaled in the 20th and 21st centuries. Charvát stages a conversation between American engineer and theoretician Frank B. Gilbreth and filmmaker Harun Farocki in order to argue that labour takes on a new expression and functions as an analytical and operative concept at the moment when the technology of visualization fragments human movements into a multiplicity of micro-sequences in order to evaluate "usefulness" and "efficiency." In the digital age, he concludes, the human is ultimately diminished.
- 13 The place of the human in relation to machines and machine vision, and to questions of the non-human more broadly, is a running concern throughout many of the contributions to this volume. Tiago de Luca unpacks the use of the term "intimate epic" to describe Alfonso Cuarón's *Roma* (2018), revealing the ways it gestures to the film's work of re-scaling the personal in terms of the monumental, historical and planetary. At the same time its presentation is rescaled from the cinematic to the domestic, as the film – a Netflix release – is viewed on the small screen.
- 14 For Benjamin Campion, also thinking through the rescaling of moving images, an aesthetic approach to scale can be a response to this perceived "cannibalism" of cinema by television. He looks at the close-up, and in particular its juxtaposition with deep focus panoramas of the city of Chicago, to argue that director Gus van Sant both maintains his authorial signature as he moves across media, and reinscribes the human into the cinematic space, through an intimate emphasis on hands, faces, eyes and mouths, that renders them larger than life.
- 15 Johannes Binotto's video essay "capricorn sunset" likewise offers the chance for the viewer to both experience and consciously reflect upon questions of scale, questions that the viewer must work to answer. Highlighting the epistemic breaks within the visual and auditory rescaling processes, the video essay also reflects upon its own technique and ethics: showing us that videographic engagement with media can be seen as a practice of *différance*, that opens up gaps through transformative processes, like that of scaling. Binotto's concluding reflexive twist suggests that scaling is, or at least may be, an act of estrangement: that things by being scaled can fall apart – a lesson perhaps not only about our perception but also "about our fragile world at the verge of tipping points."
- 16 In their respective essays, Maggie Flinn and Matthias Grotkopp yoke questions of scale to environmental matters. Flinn turns to the work of Jacques Perrin, including *Microcosmos: le peuple de l'herbe/Microcosmos* (Claude Nuridsany & Marie Pérennou, 1996), *Le Peuple migrateur/Winged Migration* (Perrin, Jacques Cluzaud & Michel Debats, 2001), *Océans/Oceans* (Perrin & Cluzaud, 2009), and *Les Saisons/Seasons* (Perrin, Cluzaud & Alexandre Poulichot, 2015), in order to explore matters of spatiotemporal scale in contemporary nature films. She concludes that these films – popular, family-friendly works aimed at mainstream audiences – play with scale in order to encourage the viewer to "experience the self itself as ecological" (DiCaglio 265), a rhetorical strategy aimed in particular at galvanising younger viewers towards eco-activism.

- 17 Grotkopp meanwhile focuses on a single film, the 2018 documentary/essay film *Anthropocene - The Human Epoch* by Jennifer Baichwal, Edward Burtynsky and Nicholas de Pencier to argue for the radical possibilities of a poetics of scale: one that can make graspable the tensions and contradictions between the human as a global force – the multiple assemblages of human beings, technologies, other beings and materialities – and the human as an individual. By differing means, they each see rescaling as a rhetorical or aesthetic device that opens onto ethics and politics; a formal device that might be mobilised for the mutual benefit of our planet and ourselves.
- 18 In her video essay, too, Clémence Folléa thinks about the ways in which rescaling can connect to the non-human turn. Through close attention to the 2017 video game *Everything*, Folléa argues for the possibilities of rescaling as an interactive, ludic process. Playing on a dynamic of immersion and inhabitation, *Everything* emerges as a fictional experience that has the power to disrupt the distinction between the human and the non-human, and as such is able to alter the player’s perspective and transform their subjectivity, if only they are open to it. Sheung Yiu, on the other hand, proposes a more radical decentering of the human that stems from documentary or computational images: the factual, rather than the fictional. Put otherwise, questions of scale and rescaling become epistemological, as, in the present era, they bear witness to truths inaccessible to human vision, positing a visual regime that is indifferent to the questions of perspective of subjectivity raised by Folléa.
- 19 In the final contribution to the volume, Julien Nègre brings us full circle, looking backwards towards ancient maps and forwards to the ways in which developments in VR might allow us to engage differently with them through their digitization. In the digital environment, Nègre argues, questions of scale are reframed and the human reinstated, as the miniature – in the form of the map – is *re-re-scaled*, and now becomes a landscape within which the human body must learn, once more, to orient itself.
- 20 Whether in relationship to paintings, maps, video games, photographs, magazines or movies, then, each of these essays works from the fine details of media form outwards towards broader questions of politics, epistemology, ethics. The questions they pose remain unresolved; nonetheless, the pieces gathered here – individually and as a collective – perform their own act of rescaling, putting the matter of scale under the microscope in order to demonstrate its monumental significance for understanding how best to make sense of, and to live in, the world. To quote from Folléa’s video essay (itself quoting from Alan Watts in 1969), what the collected essays demonstrate is “the different points of view you get when you change your level of magnification.” Which level of magnification is the correct one? To cede the final word: “Obviously, they’re all correct. They’re just different points of view.”
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NOTES

1. Looking at discourses generated by the rapidly evolving field of nanotechnology, Daniel Black thus observes that "While the realm of molecules has been a source of fascination since the nineteenth century, the more recent appearance of machines able to intervene at a molecular scale has given rise to the hope of human mastery over this invisible domain" (Black 101).

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