

# Equivalents II

**Dans le domaine numérique, tout existe sous forme de flux de nombres qui peuvent être transposés d'un mode (texte) à un autre (image ou son)**

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**In the digital realm all things exist as streams of numbers that can be transposed from one mode (text) to another (image or sound)**



Shapes, as such, do not interest me unless they happen to be an outer equivalent of something already taking form within me  
Alfred Stieglitz

Nothing essential happens in the absence of noise  
Jacques Attali



*Equivalents II* (1992) A text prompt generates an abstract cloud-like image, Fotomuseum, Winterthur, Switzerland (1996)

# Natural Language Processing, Brownian Motion, and Database

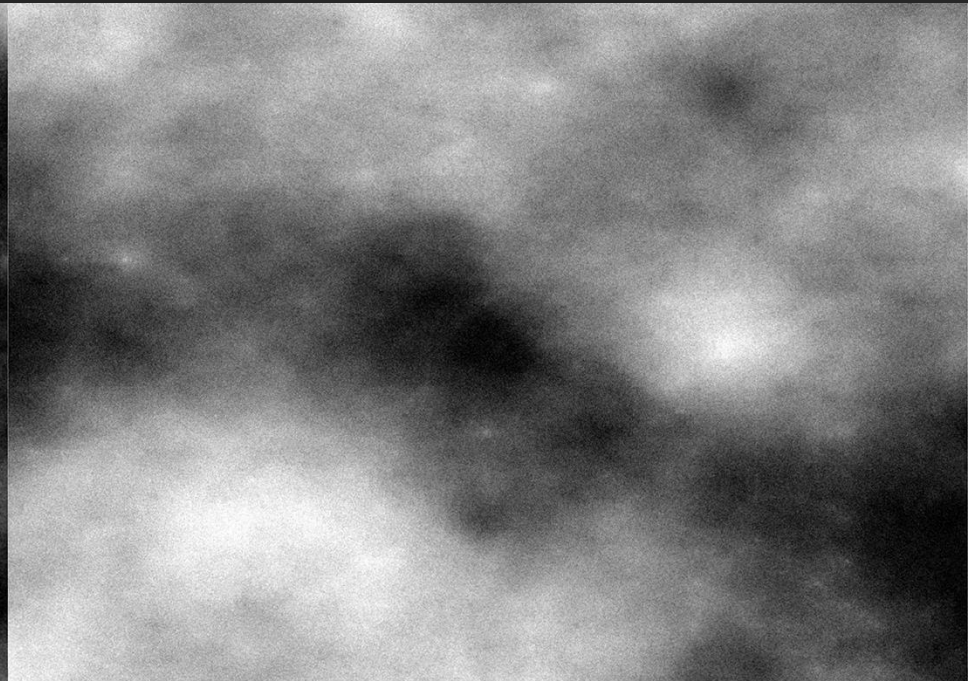
**Equivalents II**, realized in 1992 was an early experiment in text-to-image generation, designed to explore how language could shape visual form. It draws on the French literary theorist Roland Barthes' analysis in his article *The Photographic Message*, which suggests that the combination of text and image can convey complementary - or at times contradictory - meanings, as the text imposes a meaning onto the image.

The custom software realized in 1992 asked exhibition viewers to type in a text that then produced an abstract, cloud-like image. The program uses an iterative process based on Brownian motion to generate tonal complexity, starting with values gathered from the texts provided by the viewers.

For the updated 2025 version presented at the Jeu de Paume, The **Python NLTK (Natural Language Toolkit)** library is used to get semantic (**meaning**) and sentiment values (**a positive / negative rating**) out of the texts contributed by viewers, which are turned into numeric parameters by which to shape the composition of the image. Each text produces a specific image composition.



Loch Ness *researchers now say this 1934 picture was faked*



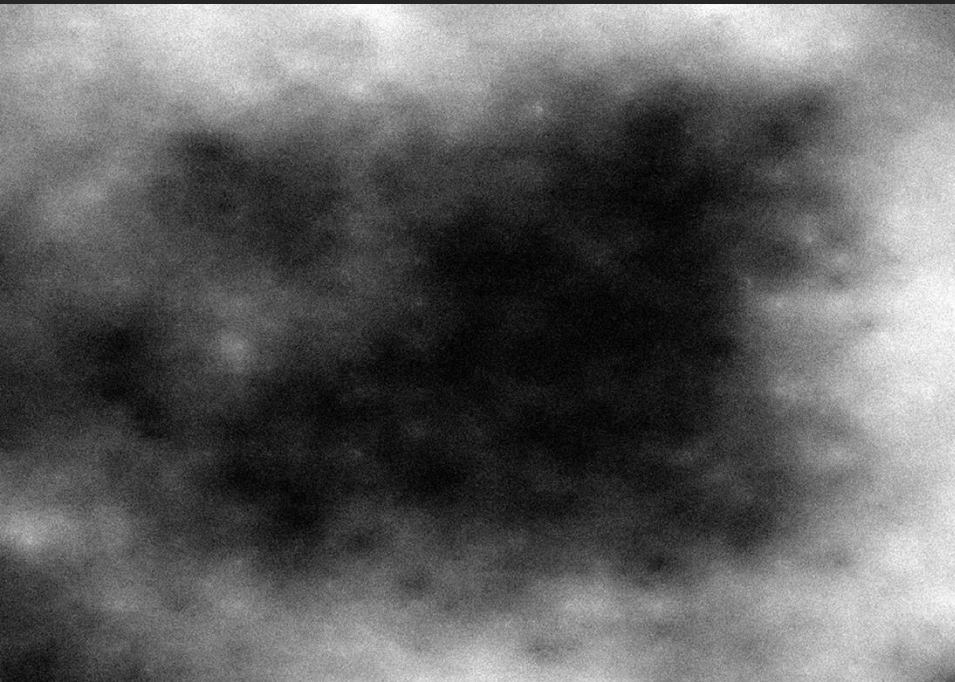
*Survivors removed a body yesterday from Sarajevo's main market*

# Natural Language Processing, Brownian Motion, and Database

In the 1992 version, the program triggers **disruptions** in the visualization process when it encounters words in the viewer's phrase that match those stored in the program's database. The database is searched by an algorithm for matching words from the following sources:

- J.G Ballard's "Crash": (*torn, vinyl, flicker, cleavage, pistol, snake, implant, etc.*)
- Michel Foucault's "The Order of Things": (*frenzied, embalmed, tame, sirens, stray, flies, sucking, etc.*)
- Computer slang words: (*avatar, dump, flame, obscure, scratch, pop, tweak, etc.*)
- Gender labeling and identification: (*female, woman, lady, guy, masculine, his, etc.*)
- TV Talk shows vocabulary: (*soap, news, live, morning, hospital, world, current, copy, etc.*)
- and those that describe sentiment positive and negative attitudes: (*always, can, will, without, never, not, wont, etc.*)

This project may be the first artwork to integrate software-based *text-to-image generation, natural language processing, sentiment and gender analysis, a database-driven system* for tracking viewer input, and a *stochastic Brownian motion algorithm* for image generation



Amy Rink of Novato, Calif. throwing out her *latest batch of junk mail*



Peasants clear stones from a Beijing golf course *on land they used to farm*

*truth is a matter of fitting the desired words*

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Meaning is right there in the words

The ship is coming into view

The water turned into ice

in the heat of the night

wer flies in the pot

the sheets are dry in the warm air

machines take over the floor

naked flesh in the summer heat

in the density of sweat and nubile flesh

zack the man iac

you must become one with the rock nuclear holocau

*love needs funding or else it requires discipline*

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yesiiii love youy go

WOMEN IN LOVE

What I Need and Want Is To Dance, Flirt And Party

we love art

true love can be found with same sex

they made mad passionate love

ruth loves henri

Rob and Karyn ARE IN LOVE

rain,love,storm

rain, love, storm

plato would love this

To create a new image, press the mouse button.

To create a new image, press the mouse button.


In the 1992 version, viewers had the opportunity to view other texts by previous participants that contained similar words to theirs. To initiate the text comparison, a database of personals headings from a San Francisco newspaper were used to activate the process. They included phrases such as “*One Hundred Years of Solitude*”, “*Calvin Seeking Hobbes*”, “*Ebony Enchantress*”, “*Godiva Seeking Woman*”, “*Hot Bunny Latina*”, “*Hope Springs Eternal*”, “*Lipstick on Lipstick*”, “*Waiting for You*”, “*Dance & Deconstruction*”, “*Built solid and hot.*”

# Exhibition History

The installation premiered in the “**Iterations: The New Image**” exhibition curated by Tim Druckrey and Charles Stainback in “**Montage 93: International Festival of the Image**”, Rochester, New York followed by the International Center for Photography, midtown gallery, New York City (1994).

It then travelled in the “**Fotografie nach der Fotografie**” (*Photography After Photography: Memory and in the Digital Age*) exhibition organized by the Siemens Kultur programm, Munich, Germany, curated by Hubertus von Amelunxen, Stefan Iglhaut, Florian Rötzer (1995/97)

- Aktionforum Pratinself, Munich, Germany
- Kunsthalle, Krems, Austria
- Städtische Galerie, Erlangen, Germany
- Brandenburgische Kunstsammlungen, Cottbus, Germany
- Museet for Fotokunst, Odense, Denmark
- Fotomuseum, Winterthur, Switzerland
- Finnish Museum of Photography, Helsinki, Finland
- Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, USA
- Adelaide Festival, Adelaide, Australia



*The snows that crown the peak of Fuji melt on the mid-June day, by the Japanese poet Takahashi Mushimaro, from the “Manyoshu” (circa CE 759)*

*Les formes, en tant que telles, ne m'intéressent pas, sauf si elles se trouvent être l'équivalent extérieur de quelque chose qui prend déjà forme en moi*

Shapes, as such, do not interest me unless they happen to be an outer equivalent of something already taking form within me

Photographe / Photographer Alfred Stieglitz (1922)

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*Rien d'essentiel ne se passe en l'absence de bruit*

Nothing essential happens in the absence of noise

Économiste français / French economist Jacques Attali (1997)

*Under the Spreading Chestnut Tree, I sold you and you sold me*, from the novel "1984" by George Orwell

<https://cloudimage.pythonanywhere.com/>