GIF as an artistic support[1]

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Introduction

The visual arts have been connected to video and cinema for decades, and are increasingly linked to the internet, which serves both as a theme for and as a means of production, discussion and distribution of artistic works. Currently, more than ever, formats tend to mix, and art and entertainment often meet and overlap.

In this context, it is intriguing to think why GIFs, which have already existed for three decades, are still so little studied in academia. Although still very much connected to pop culture and humour, they are also interesting support for artistic creation that allows one to explore the terrain between a static image and video, in addition to offering extremely modern support. By presenting examples of artists who have used GIFs as a means for their production, this paper will discuss the use and inherent properties of this format from an artistic and conceptual point of view, as well as its relationship to appropriation and interdisciplinarity.

A brief history of GIFs

Created in 1987 by Steve Wilhite and his team at tech giant CompuServe, the GIF format promptly stood out for being a compressed, light image format that could display complex information without requiring much machine memory. Initially used only for static pictures, it was soon also adopted to create image sequences, introducing the element of movement in image file format, facilitating embedment. Especially for the early web, which could not count on great speed and bandwidth, this simplification of data was of utmost importance for designers, users and developers, making the GIF a resounding success, particularly in personal web pages, popular in the 1990s.

With the evolution of the internet and coding, compressed formats became less of a necessity, and the aesthetics of the early web soon turned outdated and undesired by the people who were now much more interested in high-quality image formats, vector art and high-definition videos. To add to that disfavour, in 1995, CompuServe entered a licensing agreement with Unisys after discovering that the LZW compression method employed in GIF format was subject to a patent. Subsequent license modifications in 1999 sparked concerns among webmasters, who feared potential charges for hosting GIF files. In response, the League for Programming Freedom initiated the "Burn All GIFs" campaign, urging users to adopt the patent-free PNG format instead of GIFs.

In the late 2000s and early 2010s, however, GIFs were retrieved by users, partly due to a nostalgia around the previously unsought appearance of the early web, and partly for its practicality for social media: MySpace, Tumblr and Reddit are a few examples of online communities on which people started using GIFs to communicate again. Jason Eppink notes how "Tumblr is also responsible for igniting mainstream interest in the GIF as an aesthetic form",[2] turning them to a sophisticated visual language used to convey emotions, humour and cultural references. This shift in perception led to the widespread adoption of GIFs in various online contexts, solidifying their place in popular culture. Not much later, platforms started offering embedding options for users: Facebook, WhatsApp and others collaborated with Giphy and Tenor – the two largest GIF hosting websites at the time – to add GIFs to their chats and posts.

It can be stated, then, that one important aspect of this format's popularity is its community-oriented character. As observed by Miltner and Highfield in the article *Never Gonna GIF You Up: Analyzing the Cultural Significance of the Animated GIF*, "while GIFs may be organized by platforms or repositories, their creation is not dictated or constrained by them: users can make and distribute their files".[3] This differentiates GIFs from other visual communication resources used online, such as emojis, that are created by companies to be adopted by users. The authors also reflect: "It offers rich opportunities for remix and intertextual play; user-created and remixed GIFs provide further examples of 'vernacular creativity,' as users appropriate existing media and produce new content using digital media."[4]

Another aspect to consider regarding this topic is how the meaning of GIF is established by groups. The source of the material may often target a specific public, and its use and recontextualisation are built in different online communities to create their own humour and inner logic. In that scenario, the same image can be used in different groups to reflect different meanings, and the meanings attributed by online communities can be distinct from that of the material's source. In *In Defense of the Poor Image*, Hito Steyerl comments: "The condition of the images speaks not only of countless transfers and reformattings but also of the countless people who cared enough about them to convert them over and over again, to add subtitles, re-edit, or upload them."[5]

2   Jason Eppink "Tumblr is also responsible for igniting mainstream interest in the GIF as an aesthetic form", *Journal of Visual Culture*, Vol. 13, no. 3, 2014, p. 302.

3   Kate Miltner and Tim Highfield, "Never Gonna GIF You Up: Analyzing the Cultural Significance of the Animated GIF", *Social Media + Society*, 3(3) 2017, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2056305117725223, p. 4.

4   *ibidem,* p. 3.

5   Hito Steyerl, "In Defense of the Poor Image", *E-flux Journal,* Issue 10/2009, https://www.e-flux.com/journal/10/61362/in-defense-of-the-poor-image/.

This and other aspects present in the use of GIFs have been widely explored by artists since the format's first appearance in the late 1980s – at first, as noted by researcher Paddy Johnson, mostly in Europa and North America, and more recently all over the world.[6]

The cyclic nature of GIFs

Looping and repetition are inherent to the GIF format. This feature can produce the intended humorous effect, reinforce the meaning of the message, or offer an interesting way of manipulating the image and catching the viewers' attention. Miltner and Highfield comment that "while looping may be a technical affordance of the file format, repetition as a rhetorical or communicative feature influences meaning and interpretation".[7] The automatic looping, say the authors, expands the image's meaning, allowing for reinterpreting the action, highlighting its aspects or even creating seamless repetitions in which it becomes impossible to identify the beginning and end. "A new temporal form emerges where fixity coexists with mobility, variation with monotony, change with stability", points out Monica Dall'Asta.[8] The repetitive and continuous image of a GIF, then, allows artists to explore such themes as time, motion and repetition. In this sense, GIFs can be seen as a contemporary manifestation of the longstanding artistic tradition of using circularity and loops in visual arts.

The loop is a subject frequently revisited since antiquity: the figure of Ouroboros, for instance, appears in ancient Egypt and Greece as a representation of self-contained circularity, embodying the paradoxical notion that endings and beginnings are interconnected, forming an unending cycle that cannot be unwoven. This notion continues to be present in art, literature and cinema up to the present day. *Anémic Cinéma* by Duchamp, *Box with the Sound of its Own Making* by Robert Morris and *Life, Death, Love, Hate, Pleasure, Pain* by Bruce Nauman are a few examples of the loop represented in modern and contemporary art that will be further examined in this paper.

6   Paddy Johnson, "A Brief History of Animated GIF. Part One", *Artnet,* 02.08.2014, https://news.artnet.com/art-world/a-brief-history-of-animated-gif-art-part-one-69060.

7   Kate Mitlner and Tim Highfield, *op.cit.,* p. 5.

8   Monica Dall'Aasta, "Gif Art in the Metamodernist Era", *Cinéma & Cie,* vol. XVI, no. 26/27 (2016), https://www.academia.edu/35372102/GIF_Art_in_the_Metamodernist_Era.

Marcel Duchamp's *Anémic Cinéma*, created in 1926, was a pioneering example of a loop and the notion of circularity applied in experimental filmmaking. Consisting of spiralling optical illusions and rotating discs adorned with puns and other wordplays, Duchamp's work disrupts traditional linear narrative structures, immersing the viewer in a never-ending visual and linguistic repetition. By employing circular motifs and text and images presented in loops, *Anémic Cinéma* creates a hypnotic and disorienting experience, challenging the viewer's perception and blurring the boundaries between the static and the dynamic.
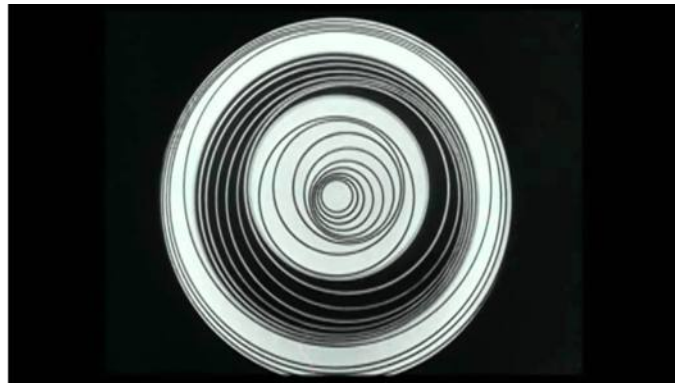

Figure 1. Marcel Duchamp, *Anémic Cinéma*, 1926. Still from the movie.

In *Box with the Sound of its Own Making* from 1961, Robert Morris explores the loop's self-referential nature. The piece consists of a wooden box that contains a tape recording of the sounds produced during the construction of the box itself. When viewers approach the artwork, they hear the repetitive sounds of sawing, hammering and sanding, forming an auditory loop that mirrors the physical construction process. This recursive audio element draws attention to the act of creation and the labour involved in making art. The loop in *Box with the Sound of its Own Making* reinforces the idea of the artistic process as an ongoing, cyclical endeavour, highlighting the continuous relationship between the artist, the artwork and the viewer.

Finally, Bruce Nauman's artwork *Life, Death, Love, Hate, Pleasure, Pain* from 1983, utilises the concept of a loop to explore the human condition and the cyclical nature of emotional experiences. The installation features a fixture made of neon with the title's six words arranged in a circle. Words light up one by one and the process is repeated endlessly. Through it, Nauman emphasises the rhythmic and often contradictory nature of emotions and human existence, with the looping structure serving as a reminder

that the fundamental aspects – life and death, love and hate, pleasure and pain – are inextricably intertwined and reoccur interchangeably. This can be connected to Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of the *eternal return*, which suggests that life and history are but a constant repetition of certain events.

A different concept that introduces an element of a loop in certain types of art is *mise-en-abyme.* Meaning "placed into the abyss", it refers to a technique in which an image, story or a work's detail introduces a smaller, self-contained representation of itself, creating a recursive structure. In visual arts, *mise-en-abyme* often manifests itself as a painting within a painting: a mirror reflecting another mirror, or a frame within a frame. This technique creates a sense of depth, perspective and repetition. The two emblematic examples are Jan van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait* (1434), which contains the representation of a mirror that reflects the whole scene, including the painter himself, and M.C. Escher's *Drawing Hands* (1948) – an iconic lithograph depicting two hands, each holding a pencil and drawing one other. In this last example, the interplay between the hands creates a loop-like structure, where the acts of drawing and being drawn become recursive. In the same vein, also Yayoi Kusama's *Infinity Mirror Room* (1965) can be seen as a representation of a loop, with its mirrored walls endlessly repeating the room and the viewer.
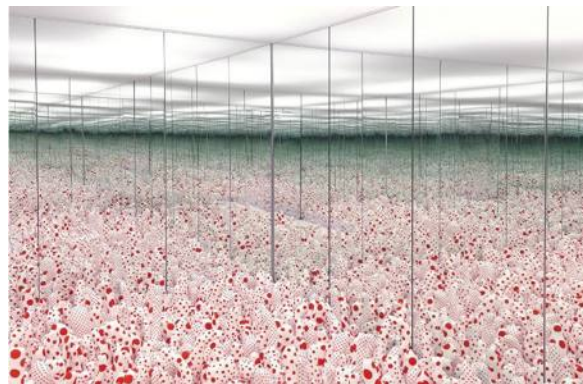

Figure 2. Yayoi Kusama, *Infinity Mirror Room*, 1965. Phitography by Cathy Carver.

Brian Hatton, Professor of Architecture at John Moors University, suggests two ideas to consider when regarding loops in art: first, that the loop can be seen as a structural form that contextualises contents in symbolic conditions intrinsic to circulari-

ty; and second, that the loop itself can be a phenomenon of form and aesthetics.[9] This convergence of the loop as both content and medium speaks directly through GIFs and makes them a unique form of expression, which can be explored not only with the intention of communication and humour but also in an artistic context as the following examples should prove.

In Laura Brothers's work, which explored themes of memory, nostalgia and the cyclical nature of emotions, the loop is part of how the dreamy and surrealist convention, and it evokes a sense of enchantment and nostalgia. Seamless repetition is also present in the works of Giselle Zatonyl and Micaël Reynaud, who both create scenes that, through loops, produce an effect of suspended temporality. In the case of the former artist, the 3D-created images are often animated in loops to present abstract landscapes and sensorial images that allude to the human body, while the latter manipulates pictures to repeat a moment in time or change a perception of a specific object. Similarly, the Japanese collective rrrrrrrroll explores the idea of a loop to manipulate time and play with three-dimensionality by creating scenes in which a single person or object turns infinitely in full circles, forever stuck in a moment of simultaneous movement and stillness.
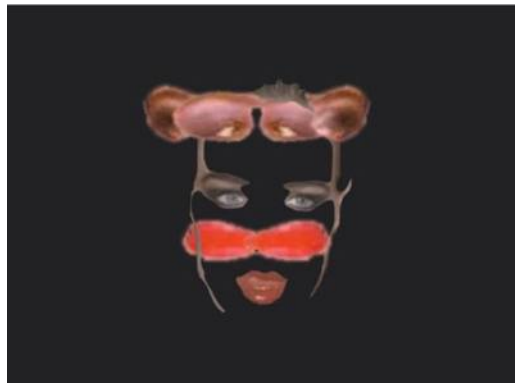

Figure 3. Laura Brothers, *I Can See It in your Eyes*, 2007. Still from an animated image.

9   Brian Hatton, "Looping the Loop", *Art Month,* issue 406, 2014*,* https://www.artmonthly.co.uk/magazine/site/article/looping-the-loop-by-brian-hatton-may-201, pp. 6–10.

Figure 4. Giselle Zatonyl, *Wombstretch*, 2007. Still from an animated image.

Figure 5. Micaël Reynaud, Untitled, ca. 2002. Still from an animated image.

Figure 6. rrrrrrrroll, *R_76*, 2013. Still from an animated image.

GIF and appropriation

Another aspect that is intrinsic to the GIF is the possibility of working with appropriation. A great number of GIFs made and shared on the internet are, in fact, reproductions of short snippets taken from other media – TV shows, movies, concerts, interviews, viral videos, etc. By selecting a certain scene from the original work and adapting it to a GIF format, a person ends up highlighting a specific message, which may gain new meanings every time it happens to be used online. To quote Nicolas Bourriaud, art critic and curator: "Since the early nineties, an ever-increasing number of artworks have been created based on preexisting works; more and more artists interpret, reproduce, re-exhibit, or use works made by others or available cultural products. This art of postproduction seems to respond to the proliferating chaos of global culture in the information age, which is characterized by an increase in the supply of works and the art world's annexation of forms ignored or disdained until now. These artists who insert their work into that of others contribute to the eradication of the traditional distinction between production and consumption, creation and copy, readymade and original work."[10]

The repetition or reproduction of other media and other artworks is commonly discussed in contemporary art. Richard Prince, Sherrie Levine and Elaine Sturtevant all tackle this controversial topic and raise several questions: Who owns a work? What sets up authorship? Is the art in the intention and conception or the final product? The first of the mentioned authors is known for the exploration of appropriation, particularly through rephotographing and recontextualising the already-existing images. One notable example is his series *Cowboys* (1980–1992), in which he reappropriated photographs from Marlboro cigarette advertisements. In this particular case, Prince removed the original text and logos, isolating and enlarging the figures of cowboys against monochromatic backgrounds. In 2014, however, he proposed a reappropriation of some non-commercial photographs, namely photos published by Instagram users. In *New Portraits*, he used screenshots of other people's posts – primarily selfies and other kinds of self-representations – that got enlarged, framed and exhibited as his artwork. Through these acts of appropriation, Prince challenged notions of authorship and originality, prompting viewers to question the authenticity and power dynamics inherent

10   Nicolas Bourriaud, *Postproduction – Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World*. New York: Lukas & Sternberg 2002, p. 13.

to mass media representations, as well as the matter of privacy once someone shares their image online.

Sherrie Levine is another artist known from rephotographing and reproducing existing works. One of her most notable series is *After Walker Evans* (1981), in which she photographed and reprinted photographs from the renowned album *American Photographs* (1938). By reappropriating Evans' iconic images, Levine raises the question of the nature of artistic creation and the artist's role as a mere reproducer or interpreter of existing cultural artefacts and phenomena. In this case, through the act of copying and presenting famous photographs as her own, Levine puts to trial the romantic notion of the artist as a unique and autonomous creator, while asking where lays the boundary between repetition and invention. In consequence, she puts to the forefront the ways through which meaning is constructed, reproduced and transformed in the realm of art.

Sturtevant's practice, in turn, evolved around creating meticulous replicas (or reenactments) of other artists' works, including those by Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Marcel Duchamp and Joseph Beuys. Nevertheless, it calls attention to similar problems as Levine, from the notion of an artistic genius and the aura of the original artwork to the nature of cultural and commercial systems that help to elevate certain creators. Her work often carries an undertone of subversion, highlighting the tension between the original and the copy, while forcing viewers to reevaluate their own understanding of the art object and the artistic process.

Another layer of meaning is brought by the act of a woman reappropriating a male artist's work, for which both Levine and Sturtevant happen to be good examples. In such instances, what becomes apparent is the questioning of the power dynamics and traditional gender roles within the art world, and the criticism of the myth of the creative genius as one usually attributed to male artists. Through this kind of reappropriation, female artists scrutinise factors that influence the cultural and market value of artworks. Simultaneously, they assert their presence within the historical narrative and challenge the tendency for omitting, marginalising or – quite ironically – disregarding or misattributing the authorship of works produced by other female artists.

Figure 7. Elaine Surtevant, after Martial Raysse's, *Paeinture a Haute-tension*, 1968.

The history of reappropriation in art is undoubtedly linked to GIFs and their contemporary use in the internet culture, where content from different sources is commonly repurposed and exploited by anonymous authors – and, quite interestingly, so far without any copyright controls established to prevent this practice. Moreover, as it has already been mentioned, the meaning of a GIF can change drastically depending on who uses it and in what context, with perpetual sharing naturally accentuating the medium's malleability.[11] This is often used for humorous purposes when the knowledge of the original content that generated the GIF contrasts with the unconventional situation to which it was applied, creating a new layer of meaning. In other cases, the knowledge of the original content leads to an instant sense of connection and belonging for a viewer.

The creative exploration of both reappropriation and recontextualisation can be seen in other artists who employ GIFs to their practice. James Kerr, for instance, selects characters from different Renaissance paintings to relocate and present them in new context in order to obtain a comic effect that not only configures a completely new narrative but also excavates the humoristic potential of the original artworks, which are normally put on a pedestal as representative of a highly inspirational moment in art

11 Kate Miltner and Tim Highfield, *op.cit.*, p. 5

history. Thus, by composing digital works as complex as their Renaissance versions, the artist offers a rereading of the past and present. A somewhat different approach is characteristic to Bill Domonkos' works. In them, he takes paintings and photographs from other authors and manipulates them by adding information or animating the characters to create loops that would change the meaning of the original work.
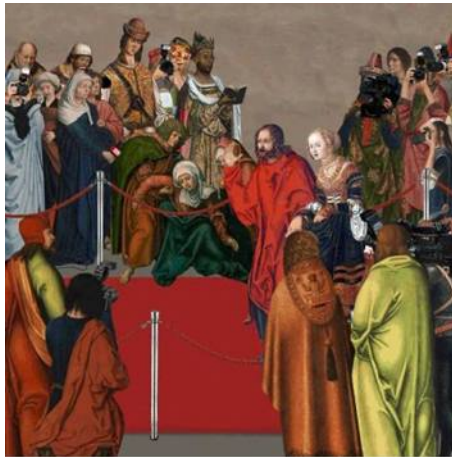

Figure 8. James Kerr, Untitled, 2015. Still from an animated image.

Figure 9. Bill Domonkos, Untitled, 2019. Still from an animated image.

Lorna Mills is another artist who frequently works with found visuals: sometimes her

GIFs feature TV characters, other times they include snippets from internet videos. In each instance, the looping effect and incorporation of the aesthetics of low-quality digital images create a sense of comedy or critique. This exploration of the poor quality universally associated with the GIF format resonates well with Hito Steyerl's reflections on the poor image. In her words: "Poor images are poor because they are heavily compressed and travel quickly. They lose matter and gain speed. But they also express a condition of dematerialisation, shared not only with the legacy of conceptual art but above all with contemporary modes of semiotic production."[12]

Figure 10. Lorna Mills, *Eight Wanda*, 2021. Still from an animated image.

Multiplicity and interdisciplinarity

In *GIFs as Floating Signifiers*, researcher Camelia Gradinar states that "art GIFs exploit the strategies of intertextuality, irony, pastiche and collage, and thus their meanings are not fixed".[13] This multiplicity can be seen not only in content but also in how GIFs

12　Hito Steyerl, *op.cit.*
13　Camelia Grandinaru, "View of GIF as floating Signifiers", *Sign Systems Studies*, 46(2/3), 2018, https://doi.org/10.12697/SSS.2018.46.2-3.05, p. 304.

have been incorporated into multimedia works. In addition to allowing multiple layers of meaning, GIFs attract different forms of artistic expression, from photography and video, to dance, painting, graphic design and technology. For this reason, any serious analysis of a GIF, says Marisa Hayes, requires an interdisciplinary look at the different means that are part of its construction.[14]

Petra Cortright, a contemporary artist who works with digital painting and video, also creates works in GIF format that bring the compositional thinking of painting to it, combining traditional qualities of media with these of contemporary technology. Her works focus on the place between physical and digital, exploring the contemporary aesthetic and behavioural culture. A similar aesthetic is explored by Faith Holland, who investigates themes present on the internet – from content produced and consumed by an extensive community of cat fans to several works that point to the immense quantity of erotic sites, photos and videos available online. In the *Visual Orgasms* series, several GIFs present montages of mundane images such as bells, explosions and popcorn, which are re-enacted through the title.

Figure 11. Petra Cortright, *System Landscapes*, 2007. Still from an animated image.

14   Marisa C. Hayes, "Brief Thoughts on the Art of the Animated GIF", *Screen Dance Studies*, 08.04.2016, https://screendancestudies.wordpress.com/2016/04/08/brief-thoughts-on-the-art-of-the- animated-gif.
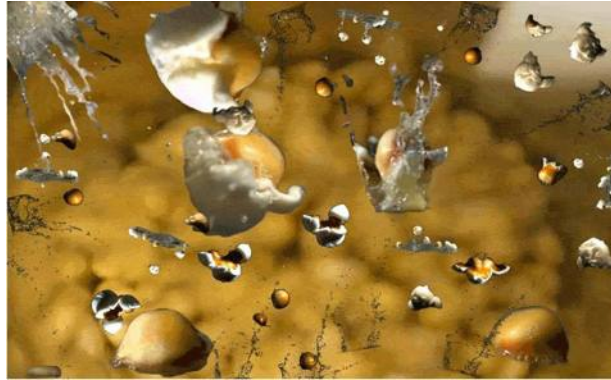
Figure 12. Faith Holland, *Popcorn (Visual Orgasms)*, 2013. Still from an animated image.

In another work, the artist plays with the relations and boundaries between the GIF format, the video and the performance: in *Wire Bath*, a triptych of GIFs accompanied by a video, she submerges in a bathtub filled with electronic cables. Here, once again, the limits of the physical and the virtual, the digital and the analogue are explored, along with our intimate relationship with technology which is scrutinised by an artist who, through a satire, addresses the problem of the female body's sexualisation, especially in the digital world. A different approach to similar topics can be seen in Olia Lialina's *All Work and No Play* – a short film using GIFs instead of filmed scenes. The work is presented as an online webpage, which gives it an interactive character, enhanced by the act of scrolling being employed as its important part.
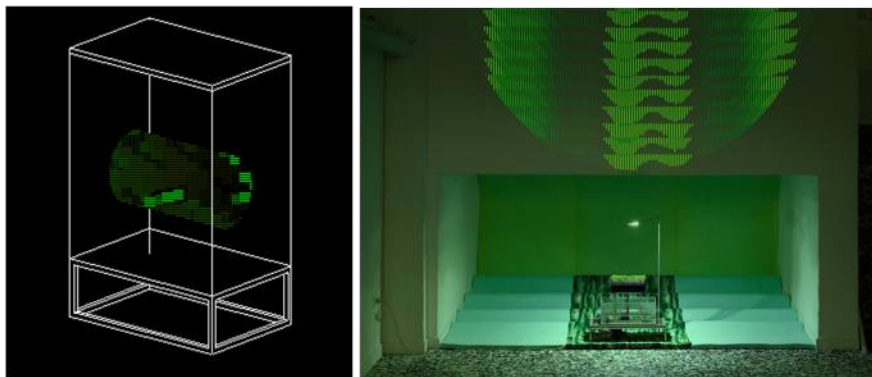

Figure 13. Faith Holland, *Wire Bath*, 2017. Still from an animated image.

Another contemporary artist, Nicolas Sasson, creates GIFs using digital means only, such as 3D modelling software and binary code models that were commonly used in the early years of computing. Nevertheless, his works transgress also to the material world, be it at the individual or collective exhibitions or video mapping projections on architectural elements. In the series *Vessels*, his GIFs serve as models for sculptures of plants and algae, which are then assembled and displayed alongside the original animated images. "INDEX, AVENUE and SKYLIGHT" is an example of a large format GIF presented on a website, in which the composition of the images is determined by the space between them, as well as by scrolling the page by a user. As full-room installations, these works create an immersive ambience.

Figure 14. Nicolas Sasson, Vessels, 2017. Still from an animated image.

GIFs and the art market

Since the early 2000s, artists have already created a number of alternative, online platforms to share GIF art, with the two most notable examples being Digital Media Tree and Computer Club. Gradually, this format also gained space in galleries and art spaces, finding the support of the contemporary art market. In 2011, digital art organisation Rizhome sold a selection of GIFs at the Armory Art Show, and, in partnership with GIF creation and exhibition platform Giphy, it promoted the 2016 exhibition LOOP DREAMS in New York, which featured works of 25 artists. The gallery TRANSFER, also in New York, has been promoting different artists who employ the GIF format, including Faith Holland and Lorna Mills – both having presented their works at solo shows in 2020. These two artists, in collaboration with Wade Wallerstein, have been also engaged in the promotion of GIFs through the Well Now WTF website, which currently features works by more than 100 creators.

Another example of promoting this unusual format was the 2011 exhibition dedicated to GIFs called Graphics Interchange Format at Denison University, curated by Paddy Johnson, founder of the platform Art F City, who has since then discussed the impact of GIF on the art world and its relation to contemporary culture. Her take on a brief history of GIF art can be read on Art Net's website.[15] A major shift came with GIF Free For All produced in 2014 in collaboration with Computer Art Congress 4 in Rio de Janeiro and launched both online and offline. Since the following year, the FILE Festival in São Paulo has been reserving a fraction of each exhibition for presenting GIF works, having already shown dozens of artists from all over the world, including Bill Domonkos, Sandra Crisp and Sabato Visconti. Moreover, in 2017, the festival introduced a GIF Award, to acknowledge the input of the artists working with this format. The very same year, the exhibition Surface, held at the gallery Mana Contemporary presented works of five resident GIF artists, focusing on the materiality of these works. Finally, over the past few years, the Museum of the Moving Image in New York City also featured exhibitions dedicated to GIF art, including The GIF Elevator (2017–2019), The Situation Room (2019–2022) and Refreshing the Loop (2023–2024).

An alternative model applied by some art institutions relies on the organisation of online exhibitions and creation of virtual platforms that offer access to GIF art. The gallery Klaus von Nichtssagend, for instance, has created the website Klausgallery.net, where it promotes online events and shows. Another example is the Whitney Museum of American Art, which designed Artport – an online platform to exhibit net art, which not only presents and documents new media art from the museum's collection but also makes commissions. Similarly, in 2020, Arebyte Gallery invested in Olia Liliana's "Hosted"[16] – a network performance, as the author herself calls it, presented online as a series of links to hosted images that should be opened in different tabs of a browser and then navigated with a browser shortcut, allowing all pieces to be seen in sequence, with the effect of a frame-by-frame animation.

Given the scope of this phenomena, there are surprisingly few examples of art galleries and art fairs that incorporate GIF art as part of their collections and exhibitions. Still, this increase in interest suffices to attract collectors who slowly begin to realise the potential of digital art, including works produced in a GIF format. At the same time, alongside mainstream recognition, many independent initiatives blossom, such as The

15   Paddy Johnson, *op.cit.*
16   The work can be accessed at: https://hosted.z21.web.core.windows.net.

Wrong Biennale, SPAMM, Ani-Gif and the Off Site Project. The first one has organised, since 2013, digital art exhibitions that are exclusively online. With the intention of decentralising access to art, this initiative encourages anyone to apply for open calls, either as an artist or a curator. GIFs are welcomed and often well-represented at the exhibitions they are organising. A similar model characterises SPAMM – or Super Modern Art Museum – which brings together international artists under the curatorship of a French creator, Michaël Borras. Ani Gif is an exceptional case here as it is an online gallery focused exclusively on GIF art. So far, they have created two online exhibitions: one between 2011–2012 and another between 2013–2014. The last of the initiatives mentioned, the Off Site Project, is an online platform founded in 2017 and dedicated to creating opportunities for emerging new media talents. It specialises in online exhibitions and downloadable ZIP shows.

The examples presented above demonstrate well that to many contemporary artists and curators being integrated into traditional art institutions is not necessarily the only – or even the best – way to explore GIF art and to exhibit it. In *The Affect of Animated GIFs,* Sally McKay states: "For online artists, the use of the animated GIF demonstrates a willingness to plunge into the vernacular of online production, blurring boundaries between art and non-art categories."[17] This may mean that for some of these artists, the very choice of the GIF format may be a statement against the imposed limits of what is considered acceptable or desirable on the art market.

Conclusion

GIFs are a unique medium that allows artists to navigate the space between static images and videos. The history of GIFs, from their early popularity on the web to their resurgence in the 2010s, demonstrates their transformative power and their ability to convey meaning in diverse contexts.

The cyclic nature of GIFs, with their looping and repetitive structure, opens up possibilities for exploring such themes as time, motion and repetition. This is reminiscent of the earlier artistic traditions that often utilised recurring structures. In the case of GIFs, however, the loop used both as content and a medium encapsulates the cyclicality of

17 Sally McKay, "The Affect of Animated GIFs", *Artfcity,* 16.07.2018, http://artfcity.com/2018/07/16/the-affect-of-animated-gifs-tom-moody-petra-cortright-lorna-mills/.

the digital era, where images and information circulate endlessly and rapidly. It reflects the constant flow of content online and the way in which digital media are consumed, shared and revisited often blurring the line between the creator and the consumer, as well as that between what can be considered art and what cannot.

This discussion is also prompted by the acts of reappropriation common in GIF art, through which artists challenge notions of authorship, originality and autonomy, provoking viewers to question the power dynamics and meaning-making processes within mass media and the art world. Apart from that, GIFs have already been incorporated by multimedia artists and gained many different platforms of exposition, both online and offline.

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