

**Media Arts at a Crossroads:
Where will the idea of creative industries take us?**

Before all else, I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to the organizers of this momentous gathering, and to say how deeply honoured I feel to present my thoughts to such distinguished company. This event comes at a crucial time in China's history, when many possibilities are opening up for the People's Republic. We know, however, that a time of opening is also a fraught time, a time of menace, for the possibilities that are opened also include the possibility of foreclosure of that which is of great importance—even of that which is of first importance. That which is of first importance is often overlooked because its significance is of a quiet sort whose call is easily lost amidst the cacophony of modernity. It takes much lucubration to recall that which earnestly desires to escape recognition, and deep reflection on first principles to summon into presence that which hides.

Among the possibilities that digital technology has opened up is the possibility of new forms in art will emerge, yet the question of art is hardly ever raised in the discussion of economic prospects of new media or future of new media in the era of creative industries. This is true not only in China, but also in Europe and North America—it is true, for example, of the school where I am employed, and where there is a proposal afoot to change name of the faculty where I work to the Faculty of Creative Industries. There, too, the question of art is never raised.

I won't apologize for continuing to accept a claim that that my compatriot, Marshall McLuhan announced four decades ago—the idea shocked people then and I know it that restating it, in a slightly updated form, still shocks people today. That idea concerns the role of art and artists. McLuhan contended that “Art at its most significant is a Distant Early Warning System that can always be relied on to tell the old culture what is beginning to happen.” The Distant Early Warning Line, a product of the Cold War, was a string of radar stations, mostly in Canada's far north but with additional stations along the North Coast and Aleutian Islands of Alaska, and in Norway's Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Iceland. The DEW Line, as it was called, was built to detect Soviet bombers flying any route that would lead from the Soviet Union to the United States and to provide early warning of a land-based invasion. Hence, the gist of McLuhan's comment that art serves as Distant Early Warning system is to assert that the function of art is to warn us about potentially destructive changes that are on their way. Art has a vital role to play in this time, when ideas about the economically constrictive effects of over-regulation (or even of legislation ensuring that industry serves the overall public good) have achieved nearly a world-wide hegemony. It should warn us of the effects—in my view, the impoverishing effects—such an hegemony will have on our psyches.

McLuhan, I suspect, is read less often in North America, including in his long-time home, Toronto, than he is in China. A reason he is unpopular in his home-town, and in North America generally, is that he was a Romantic thinker—even among those who admire him are many who seem incapable of recognizing how Romantic a thinker he actually is. McLuhan, like that paradigmatic Romantic thinker G. W. F. Hegel, understood history has being driven by the effort to develop new ways to extend ourselves, and especially (but not exclusively) our psyches, into the circumambient environment. This generally occurs in such a way that that circumambient environment becomes a reflection of the self; reciprocally the circumambient environment, in being sensed, is re-assimilated to the self.: The self is projected the other—it alienates itself in the other—and then this alien other, in being perceived or reflected upon, is reincorporated into the self.

In a second, and in my view, even more telling remark, McLuhan admitted to being curious to know “what would happen if art were suddenly seen for what it is, namely, exact information of how to rearrange one's psyche in order to anticipate the next blow from our own extended faculties” (UM: 71). Note that the stress in this statement is not on how our actions reshape the environment, but on how the environment rearranges the psyche—accordingly, the statement seems to me to confirm that a key aspect of McLuhan's works was his contribution to the history of mentalities (with the final word of that phrase taken literally). McLuhan also restated his insight into art's role in preparing our nervous system for the blows it is about to receive in another way, one that stressed that these blows are

delivered to us in the form of a cybernetic (“feedback”) loop—and, to boot, stressed especially the important role of avant-garde or experimental art: “In experimental art, [people] are given the exact specifications of coming violence to their own psyches from their own counter-irritant or technology” (UM: 66).

McLuhan recognized that knowledge has a mirror-form: we understand ourselves partly in what we project, and partly through the effects what we have projected has on ourselves. In the electronic age, we treat our essential being as though it were information and the capacity to process information according to what we now deem to be arbitrary rules of transformation, and we view the our environment (that which we think of as being outside ourselves yet deem to be real) as becoming a technological extension of consciousness. “Information in, information out,” we might say, crossing a famous slogan of computer science with James Joyce.

The artist is a specialist in understanding that the relation between self and reality is a cybernetic loop. Reality is continually reprocessed and, because it is continually being rearranged (or deranged), it continually wrecks vengeance on that (or who) rearranges it. The role of the artist is always a significant one, but especially so today, when the reprocessing of reality is turning it more and more into a map of the psyche: the danger of the self’s collapsing into the other and, conversely, the danger of this newly psychicalized reality, because of its likeness to the self, invading and colonizing the self, have reached an unprecedented level.

The psychicalization of the lived environment has reached the level of parlous similarity to the self. This historical development makes it urgent to bear in mind the role of art in our discussions of the future of new media and the contributions they might make to a nation’s economy. If we are not to lose sight of that importance, we must bear in mind some simple truths about art. Among these, in my view, the primary one is that the arts, when they function well, foster human be-ing and nurture it, so that it might flourish. The thrust of that claim might seem antithetic to the spirit of McLuhan’s writing, for he generally expressed his thoughts about the role of the artist in more negative terms. But I don’t think our views are irreconcilable. Modernity is the term we use to describe the regime that has reduced experience to its nadir by restricting all experience to the narrow band that lies close to reason. Those modes of experience that are more distant from reason—trance, dream, meditation, prayer, aesthetic transport (these sorts of possible experience I would argue are allied, in having a family resemblance to one another) have been enfeebled by the regime that was inaugurated when the senses, and bodily experience in general, were discredited. Thinkers embraced the claim that the world is nothing like our experience of it—we experience the world as wild, blooming confusion, but the real world, we believe, is regulated by laws that can be expressed in rational form. Underneath the wild confusion that is the reality we experience, is a lucid, proportionate, harmonious realm presided over by the Logos. Hence, the impressions the senses give us must be corrected by reason, if we are to know reality truly—the world that we sense is through and through the product of error and confusion, but reason emends the erroneous reports of the senses, to give us insight into reality’s underlying nature. This devaluation of the senses is another reason the artist has an important role. McLuhan remarked that “what we call art would seem to be specialist artifacts for enhancing human perception.” Given the devaluation of the senses that is characteristic of modernity, the artist, because he or she is a specialist in perception, and in enhancing perception, is needed more than ever.

Let us ponder the consequences of the claim that the role of the artist has to do with nurturing human be-ing so that it might flourish. One implication of the proposition that the arts promote human flourishing is that value matters. That art which sustains and nurtures life is rich, demanding, precise, complex. Bach’s music, Du Fu’s poetry, Balasaraswati’s performances of Bharata Natyam dance, Picasso’s greatest paintings, are what matters. “How does one quantify value?” is a question that troubles administrative reason.

Further, administrative rationality is self-aggrandizing. It is expansionist and colonizing (what it colonizes are realms of experience, all of which it turns into an image of itself). But the question of how far one can go in expanding the province of art without debasing it bears thought. The avant-gardes of the twentieth century dedicated themselves to cause of integrating art and life, a point the Peter Bürger made central to his theory of the avant-garde—and many have made the point that creative industries have taken on the role of extending the reach of art so that it will enter into every one of

life's provinces.

Accordingly, we might ask what the avant-garde of the early twentieth century proposed when they advocated the integration of art and life. What they meant to do has been almost universally misunderstood (including, I believe, by Peter Bürger himself). Bürger maintains that the avant-gardes of the early-twentieth century—the avant-gardes of the era prior to their becoming (in his view) a spent force—proposed to sublimate art into life. By many, including those who have taken up the cause of the creative industries, this has been taken to mean that products of the creative industries should penetrate into all areas of life and media experiences should become integral to all our daily activities—and more recently yet this has been interpreted to mean that should be able to take a peek at a movie on our mobile devices before entering the shopping mall. That sort of interpretation of vanguard's goal of unifying art and life offers a pathetically enfeebled conception of what the avant-garde intended. It construes their advocacy as proposing that art should enter everyday life in the terms of everyday life and that we should experience art rather as we experience the events of in our quotidian round. Understood thus, the effort to transforming life into art would result in life's events being tidied up and prettified. But that change wouldn't attack everyday *anomie* at its very core.

What the Dada, Surrealist and Constructivist artists advocated was the transfiguration of everyday life so that it would be experienced with all the intensity with which we read Molly Bloom's monologue in James Joyce's *Ulysses*. The cause of elevating life to art is undoubtedly a moving one, and I harbour unstinting admiration for those who have proposed it. But I have doubts that it can ever be realized. I think the demands of an art that enables human being to flourish are so great that such art is rare—and there is likely little we can do (including following Ezra Pound's and Norman O. Brown's counsel to repaganize our experience or McLuhan's to resacralize it) to make it common.

The tendency of instrumental thinking and administrative rationality to colonize experience should be a key topic in all our deliberations on the creative industries. We can think usefully about this aspect of the "creative industries" thus: the pronouncements of the executives in the creative industries so often sound like those of people who work in advertising. McLuhan remarked, "Ideally, advertising aims at the goal of a programmed harmony among all human impulses and aspirations and endeavours. Using handicraft methods, it stretches out toward the ultimate electronic goal of a collective consciousness" (UM: 242). Of course it would be quite unfair to accuse everyone who works in the administration of creative industries of promoting "programmed harmony," or some species of group-think. And I am not certain that groupthink or programmed harmony is a necessary consequence of the media becoming ubiquitous (or at least, nearly all-pervasive). But I do think that there is bound to be a tension between artists and the executives in the creative industries. It is easy to understand the reason for this (though none of the senior academics, from provosts to deans of faculty of creative industries to whom I have made the point seem to get it at all). I could state the reason in an easily memorable way, by saying the bureaucrats who preside over cultural industries are left-hemisphere dominant, while artists are right-hemisphere dominant. That is close enough to right, though for the sake of greater precision, I would prefer to express the insight in terms I have derived from the great mathematician and cosmologist, Alfred North Whitehead. Whitehead, too, writes of two modes of experiencing: "Perception in Mode of Presentational Immediacy," the executive mode of experiencing, and, "Perception in Mode of Causal Efficacy." Experience in the mode of causal efficacy arises in the earlier stages of the construction of experience (a process that Alfred North Whitehead refers to as concrescence), and so presents only ill-defined *sensa*, that largely remain below the threshold of conscious experience. Perception in the mode of presentational immediacy, arises in the later stages of concrescence: it seizes upon these vague feelings involved in the earlier stage of concrescence and transmutes them into well-defined qualities that are then projected into the region of experience contemporaneous with the percipient occasion. "An administrator in a bureaucratic world is a man who can feel big by merging his non-entity in an abstraction," McLuhan once quipped. He or she does so by reducing experience to something that can be apprehended clearly and distinctly, with measurable quantities. That is, he or she operates by eliminating from conscious (or even near-conscious) experience—from perception in the mode of presentational immediacy—as much as possible from the *sensa* of perception in mode of causal efficacy. The utmost of simplicity and a mechanical regularity become the satisfactions this new mode of concrescence. More to the point, the

bureaucrat accomplishes the end of bringing forth a world of administrative rationality by pushing out of near-consciousness as much as possible of what is distinctive to perception in mode of causal efficacy, to bring into under the aegis of good form. McLuhan continues the quotation I gave by stating that “a real person”—and I think we can take the artist as the real person here—is “in touch with real things inspires terror in him.” He is in touch with real things, I would argue, because the artist knows one secret thing that those who live the world of administrative rationality have forgotten: that experience is corporeal through and through, and that all experience is whole-body experience. Every act of seeing involves the entire body. If you doubt that, consider how fundamentally your moods (your sadness, your exhilaration), colour your experience. Every artist learns this secret understanding, one way or another—it is the understanding that this secret knowledge vouchsafes to the artist that has made body art the avant-garde of our time.

This secret understanding of the whole-body nature of experience is what makes the artist unruly. Why that follows can easily be misunderstood, so that entailment merits comment. The dynamics of the artist’s understanding tends toward the unruly not because the body itself is unruly—after all, bodies can be tamed. Rather it tends to be unruly because the artist accords an enhanced role to perception in the mode of causal efficacy. Whatever cannot be brought into the realm of clear and distinct representations (into the world erected by the perception in the mode of presentational immediacy) can be explored only by acting upon its dynamics—it can only be worked with by acting upon it, so as to re-experience its dynamics again and again. Even though this form of experience resists representation, it can thereby be brought into an accord with the self, or, rather, something like the self. That qualification is necessary because the ego itself is an artifact of experience in the mode of presentation immediacy. Moreover, what this experiential dynamic is brought into accord with, finally, is something much larger than ego: in the 1960s, artists would have characterized that with which it is brought into accord as “cosmic.” But the administrator cannot tolerate vague thoughts—for he or she believes that the spurious precision (precise answers to pseudo-questions) of the social scientist takes us closer to the truth.

But, as McLuhan noted, bureaucrats and administrators want to control artists. And, as he also noted, for their part, artists resist. “The artist must ever play and experiment with new means of arranging experience,” McLuhan noted, “even though the majority of his audience may prefer to remain fixed in their old perceptual attitudes” (UM: 254). But where does the executive in the creative industries stand in relation to audience interests (*interests?*—an overloaded term if ever there was one)? Does he or she believe that media makers should serve as educators who understand the dangers posed by the audience’s outmoded sensibility and who are committed (whether the audience wants it or not) to prepare their sensibilities for the future? Is that really the goal their audience surveys serve?

If we fail to allow the artist her unruly role, we risk turning ourselves over to a form of soft tyranny (the sister, perhaps, of soft power). I do not mean by tyranny anything like the unfreedom produced by jack-boot tactics of a Adolf Hitler or a Joseph Stalin. My use of the term tyranny has much more to do with that term’s use by Greek philosophers of the Classical Era (and particularly Plato and Xenophon), for it has been influenced by the George Grant, who revived ideas from the Greeks to order to think deeply on the topic of tyranny. Grant was at once a theologian (the role in which I came to know him) and a political philosopher, and his understanding of tyranny could only have come forth from a thinker who , brought together those dual roles. Grant argued that tyranny is the inevitable outcome of the realization of the modern idea of freedom, which originated in the rejection of an earlier idea of the Good that came partly from Classical Greek philosophy and partly from Judaeo-Christian dogma. The early modern philosophers rejected wholesale all claims that there is any reality greater than humanity towards which humanity might be directed and by which humans might be measured. By the time of the Enlightenment, this doctrine became received truth. We could reinterpret the modern idea of freedom for the present age of communication technology somewhat differently than Grant did—as being a form of freedom defined by immediate and unfettered access to information—to information *qua* information—that is, as facts, untethered to value. Grant argued prophetically that a state in which the modern idea of freedom was realized would be a universal homogenous state: when no one any longer had the skills to understand facts through values, all differences between people

would be eliminated. In such a state, there could be no philosophers to trouble the unthinking collective consensus, for that consensus would make impossible all forms of higher contemplation (including religious awe). When no one apprehends the Good, then every person is alike (lacking any sense of the Good, no one feels an impulse to resist), and no person is truly a philosopher.

It is crushingly obvious, I suppose, that today's tyrant—the agent who brings about the universal homogeneous state—rules not by brute force, but by deploying the tools of market research. Globalization of the market-place has ensured the universal character of this tyranny. The tools of the market research prove a more effective instrument for tyranny than jack-booted control ever did: consent manufactured by controlling the message (that is, the media) is more effective at remaking us inwardly so as to reconcile us with commercial interests. The market apparatus now deploys media to remake us in a way that ensures there is no *dissensus* between recognition of the poverty of artificial world constructed in perception and the human longing for the enduring and on-going satisfaction of what are deemed fundamental human needs. It does so by pushing out of consciousness as much as possible that comes to us in the form of a *sensum* (the legacy of perception in the mode of causal efficacy), thereby eliminating what is required for experience to assume an organic form. Thus it imposes an external, mechanical unity on the dynamic of experience (concrecence). This transformation of the experience implants in the individual an entity that thwarts the individual's impulse towards individuation; this antithetic form is then used to reconcile this non-individual with the group-thought constituted by the collective experience of all those in whom a similar process is implanted similarly antithetical entities. The purpose of this reconciliation is to eliminate difference and so create a programmed harmony, the same purpose as that which the jack-boot tactics of the Third Reich served: a wholly artificial unity is imposed on the agglutinated mass by manufacturing an unthinking loyalty. It is chilling to realize tyranny's goal is met more effectively when opposition, *dissensus*, is thwarted by means that operate inwardly, through remaking us, rather than outwardly, by crushing it with shows of brutality.

Contemporary tyranny, soft tyranny, operates by turning our will against our own natural interest in freedom, and weakening it to the point that it becomes complicitous in binding everyone and all to a programmed uniformity. As tyrants did, market researchers guide people towards the utility and comfort of an artificially composed unity. The most potent market-research tools of the present are social media. Information networks now know far, far more about us than any centralized bureaucracy (centralized bureaucracies belong to the era before the proliferation of information networks) ever could: the flourishing of social media give us evidence that we are more than willing to comply with the interests of those who would control us through data-mining.

The ubiquity of media, programmed in uniform forms, can easily create the message that to depart from the norm in any way whatsoever is to be strange, weird, unlikeable. Many of us will have noticed that so many of our students, raised in the era of ubiquitous media, are distressingly similar to one another, not only outwardly (in their dress and comportment), but inwardly (in their values and thought). The global monoculture consolidates its hegemony through the ubiquity of media and the distressing pervasiveness of a few common media forms. The ultimate effect of ubiquitous media is to make everyone a performer who is continually on stage. No matter what we are doing (eating, sleeping, performing our morning ablutions, preparing a meal, or visiting a doctor), we have seen instances of others recorded (sometimes unwittingly) engaged in the same activity. The unthematized and so unassimilated realization that every one of our activities is the potential subject of a recording has converted our lives into an unconscious form of theatre. Our lives no longer belong to us, but to any other and every other—we give ourselves to the thin role of a anybody-and-everybody rather as an actor adopts a character, without having a long-term commitment to it (though there is this important difference: a good theatrical character possesses depth, while the role of anybody-and-everybody does not).. Accordingly, our lives are ruled over by the same laws mandating immediate pleasure that all pseudo-representations are. When pleasure turns into a commodity, it becomes thin and unsatisfying, because the law of market economics is that craving for renewed pleasure must arise again in the shortest possible time.

The effect of turning life into unrelenting theatre of self-presentation is to destroy politics. The effect of economic demands that every pleasure must be thin and finally unsatisfying is to destroy true

thought (and therefore art). Life and art (cinema and digital media) have come to operate under the comparable economic laws: industrialized cinema and digital media have been brought under the laws of capital, including those that relate to the goal of amortizing investment in the shortest possible time. Because the cinema is a time form, its constructs are structured like consciousness. Digital media are fundamentally less material and more intensely synaesthetic forms of cinema. So they tend even more to be avatars of consciousness. Accordingly the industrialization of digital of media (along with its ubiquity) has industrialized consciousness itself to the point that now operates under an economic law that mandates that consciousness achieve in the shortest possible time the satisfaction of any energies it has invested in an object or process. The result has been an infantilization, or even bestialization, of humanity, as this acceleration of the speed of gratification works to undo the work of self-regulation. The elimination of non-standard, singular experience (which is the condition for media forms to have become standardized and ubiquitous) evidences the tyrannical effects of media operating under the influence of the temporal imperative of rapid capital amortisation: consciousness —perception/imagination—is increasingly organized as cinematic compositions of image and desire, agglutinated in increasingly standardized temporal forms. Any potential conflict between a recollection (as a secondary retention, to use Edmund Husserl's phrase) as a singular experience and the merely factual impression organized through a more automatic, and therefore standardized, primary retention is eliminated, as the secondary retention more and more is shaped by the standardized cinematic/mediumistic forms of montage. An excessive, pre-emptive industrial production of the self is effected through the production within the individual of an industrial temporal object, a time-form that requires the acceleration of pleasure. This sort of interior tyranny, the tyranny of standardized, ubiquitous forms of temporal experience joins a social/external effect (that was pointed out decades ago by the philosophers Leo Strauss and George Grant), the anti-philosophical animus of an aimless value-free culture. Each effect reinforces the other, adding energy to a feed-back loop that turns through its cycle at a rate that by now has reached a resonant frequency and become precarious.

Allow me to put this in another way. Our destiny, as denizens of present, is to live through the period when the digital world becomes our lived reality. It is clear to me that China's leaders recognize that the coming-to-be of that reality will constitute a landmark innovation, remaking at once the world economy, the forms of urban life, and the ergonomics (if I may be permitted use of that term) of lived reality: the home, factory, and workplace will become a single, totally integrated and totally designed environment, whose architecture will be contrived to strengthen whatever faculties economic realities deem are the most likely to be productive. McLuhan once again is instructive, for reading him against the grain allows one to see that what bodily forms especially will be strengthened will be those belonging to the nervous system: whatever electronic forms are grafted unto us, be they video or audio devices (headsets?), third hands, wired bodysuits, or, what is most likely, a video terminal as interface to whatever virtual environment we will come to inhabit will accelerate the nervous system into states yet unknown to us. The nervous system has always had the role of processing from information the environment to ensure our self-preservation. This new environment will step up the demands on the nervous system, by supplying information at an increasing rate: the interactions amongst of a great number of sensual elements will hyper-accelerate the nervous system to the point where changes to it enter a phase of non-linearity. At the same time, the co-penetration of thinking and making will become complete, as that gap between productive idea and its realization shrinks (virtual reality will shrink this gap to the point that conceiving an object and bringing it into being will be identical). In the end, this co-penetration of thinking and making, this identity of conceiving something and its becoming real, will create social regime in which all value and all reality will be intelligible—but intelligible only instrumentally, as providing for the immediate (though ultimately incomplete) satisfaction of desire. The *vita contemplativa* will become a thing of the past, and as it does so, humans will become the bestialized "last men" of the end of history.

Utility has become a coercive everything, an above-it-all that mandates emptiness. The furnishings of our environment are no longer embedded in a sacred space and time, or in any space and time in which the body has a place—we now inhabit a world that has been organized according to principles of information storage and retrieval. Even physical relations amongst bodies will become wholly abstract, informational, determined, as all other relations to physical reality are, by principles of

utility and organized into networks to maximize effective action. This penetration of technology into our inner being should be cause of concern, yet is being greeted with, at best, utter docility, and more often a sadly misplaced enthusiasm, as professors, curators, and pseudo-artists extol ubiquitous computing. Technological development seems destined to become seize hold of the human perceptual apparatus and to transform it so as to eliminate the need for contemplation—with that, the public sphere, which has helped defend us against tyranny, will also be eliminated, as the well-being of the public sphere is tied to the degree of importance accorded to reflection. These intrusive developments really ought to alarm us, but that has not been the response of the new academy, the academy remade for the times. Nor has the academy been alone in failing to see what is afoot: the news media and governmental agencies, not wanting to be left behind by “progress,” have also greeted these developments with a terrifying exuberance, so enthralled are they by the promises of the wired world.

Clearly barbarism is our future: an entirely artificial, completely reprogrammable, totally synthetic world offers nothing to which we are beholden, and nothing to which we have to answer. Lacking embedded value, we are entirely our own. And in the state, we are damned. The productivist imperatives of capitalism will eliminate all values: indeed, what cannot be thought as the noise-to-signal ratio climbs to unbearable levels is the idea there is ultimate worth.

But is all lost? We might remember Hölderlin’s counsel in his hymn *Patmos*, which Heidegger remembers in “Die Frage nach der Technik” (The Question Concerning Technology): “Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst / Das Rettende auch” (But where danger is, there grows / that which can save us). Hölderlin’s profound comment is truly relevant here, for that danger that digital media have unloosed, of decorporalization and a-location, might a dialectical process that Hölderlin would have understood, turn into the opposite. This a-location might turn into a beyond-space-and-time, a beyond being that Grant insistently reminded his class, is the realm of the Good. The present danger might seem so terrible a power, that it can darken all that is, and entirely obscure the good in things, including the beauty that is an aspect of be-ing, but the nowhere-ness of a-location may yet unleash a force that deposes instrumental reason, since no concept of it can be constituted by reason. As uncomposable within rational consciousness, it might yet become the Dark Other that bears witness to that which Enlightenment humanism could not father. This alien Other might yet provoke anguish and terror sufficient to render consciousness delirious. And with that thought, I come to my deepest critique of the cultural industry’s attempt neuter the arts. The role of art is an ontological task: it is to bear witness to order of being. It is not serve an end—and certainly not the end of eliciting pleasure. Nor is it any sort of game, whose rules can be laid out in the form of a method. Rather, the experience of it promotes anamnesis, the act of remembering higher things that our involvement in the realm presided over by life’s material imperial imperatives. Grant taught that the encounter with authentic otherness can be an occasion to exercise love and to experience beauty. (for the Good and Beautiful are not of this world). Despite the terror prompted by the present danger, we are called to remember that love is stronger than death. Hölderlin’s *Rettende*, the saving power that grows in the presence of danger, would be that historical dynamic that would turn that act of remembrance towards that the forgetting of which condemned us to the poverty of modernity. When pondering this terrifying, and potentially tyrannical phenomenon of a-location, we do well recall Grant’s teaching—it is, really, an article of faith—that the “supremely beautiful”—which is beyond time and time, beyond, even, being, “may be eclipsed, but cannot disappear from [humans].”

Comparing the present moment with the era of the cinema’s invention might also be instructive. That historical moment, too, spawned a medium that became associated to aggrandizing economic drives and the standardization of thought. A counterforce appeared that hardly seemed capable of changing of the mainstream cinema. That force was the avant-garde cinema—and it tapped very deeply into the cinema’s emergence as a transformative force. Most readers will know how potent a force it was, at least until CGI emerged to coarsen perception further. Will a newcine artform appear that might play for the digital age the role that experimental film played in the post-WW II era, when American was consolidating its hegemony? We might take inspiration from the remarks of Jonas Mekas, one of the people who shepherded the earlier counter-cinema, made on the occasion of the cinema's 100th birthday :

I have seen the brochures, the programs of the museums and archives and cinemathèques around the world. But these say, "we don't care about your cinema." In the times of bigness, spectaculars, one hundred million movie productions, I want to speak for the small, invisible acts of human spirit, so subtle, so small, that they die when brought out under the clean lights. I want to celebrate the small forms of cinema, the lyrical form, the poem, the watercolor, etude, sketch, portrait, arabesque, and bagatelle, and little 8mm songs. In the times when everybody wants to succeed and sell, I want to celebrate those who embrace social and daily tailor to pursue the invisible, the personal things that bring no money and no bread and make no contemporary history, art history or any other history. I am for art which we do for each other, as friends.

I am standing in the middle of the information highway and laughing, because a butterfly on a little flower somewhere in China just fluttered its wings, and I know that the entire history, culture will drastically change because of that fluttering. A super-8 millimeter camera just made a little soft buzz somewhere, somewhere on the lower east side of New York, and the world will never be the same.

The real history of cinema is invisible history. History of friends getting together, doing the thing they love. For us, the cinema is beginning with every new buzz of the projector, with every new buzz of our cameras. With every new buzz of our cameras, our hearts jump forward my friends.

Will a digital media vanguard come forth, to combat the destruction of which, within digital media itself, is of first importance? Or is that possibility already foreclosed?