Folded Distance: Towards A Techno-Ontology Of Distributed Aesthetics

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Abstract

This article proposes "folded distance" as a critical conceptual framework to theorise techno-ontological aesthetics in the context of networked media and digital culture. In contrast to representational approaches, it introduces the notion of *techno-ontology*—a mode of analysis that foregrounds the operational, recursive, and affective infrastructures of networked life. Through close examination of VJ Peter Rubin's live-mixing practices and the immersive architectures of techno-events, such as Berlin's Mayday and Chromapark, the article elucidates how media systems enact distributed sensation, rhythmic entrainment, and modulated proximity. Folding, in this context, is theorised as both spatial and affective topology through which subjectivity, perception, and relation are reconfigured. The recursive logics of technical media are shown to generate aesthetic conditions where distance is infrastructurally mediated rather than spatially determined. This study contributes to debates in media theory by articulating a techno-aesthetic ontology of sensation—one that interrogates how recursive systems shape the lived realities of digital and post-digital culture.

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Introduction

Moving through the layered proximities and stratified intimacies of contemporary digital aesthetics, this article traces the recursive folds that pulse across rave floors, signal pathways that map media infrastructures, and the ambient architectures of networked life. The concept of *folded distance* is proposed as a technologically generated spatial and biologically affective condition, in which proximity and mediation converge through distributed emergence. Folded distance is a virtual architecture of being-together apart, a modulation of sensation or presence tuned through electromagnetism, circuitry, and loops of light, sound, and code. *Distributed intimacies* is proposed as an additional concept, intended to further this framework, describing how relationality-as-intimacy is now routed through latency, signal, and affective entrainment. These entanglements operate within *techno-ontological affect* —a field where media form(at)s transcend isolated interaction, manifesting in collective phenomena intrinsic to Techno/Tekno raves, networked media ecologies, electronic pictoriality, platforms, CGI, AI, and beyond. Consequently, cultivating decentralised, immersive experiences, that gesture toward a mythos of potential that promises to enable processes of de- and re-territorialization across social, political, cultural, and personal landscapes.

This exploration aligns with the broader evolution of digital culture, where emergent media formats and the affective architectures of mass communication continually reconstruct the collective fabric of experience and perception, which is driven by the flux of technological mediums. *Recursive techno-aesthetics* unfold and reassemble within the signals of these affective architectures as operational milieus —feedback-driven ecologies that are autopoietic in structure, generating and regulating affective climates. They encode coherent vibing intensities as well as their erosion into perceptual saturation and attenuated attunement. Within such architecture, *network anesthesia* (Munster) hovers as an affective condition. Once indebted to the clinical origins of anesthesia in industrial-era surgery, where the numbing of factory-worn bodies paralleled the rise of mechanised perception (Buck-Morss), aesthetic affect undergoes modern reconfiguration. In its digital iteration, this anesthesia no longer silences surgical pain but disperses as overexposure to signal and image that dulls critical response, replacing intensity with ambient haze, disorientation with seamless flow. What arises is a recursive sensorium, layered assemblages of perception and sensation that elude binary framings of the body as either individual or collective, biological or machinic. Folded distance thus offers a conceptual incision into the architectures of mediation, where the body becomes inflected, interfacial, and ambient. In tracing these dynamics through the experimental visual rhythms of VJ Peter Rubin, and the immersive architectures of Techno events like Mayday and Chromapark, this article articulates a conceptual *techno-ontological* terrain governed by *recursive techno-aesthetics*, *folded distance,* and *distributed intimacies*. Inhabiting this recursive field, we are compelled to ask: how might we locate and/or recompose the rhythms of our technological present?

Rhythm & Architecture of Techno-ontology

Techno-events do not unfold in neutral space, they inhabit and reconfigure historically saturated architectures. The power of techno events lies in transforming "techno spaces" into transregional, transnational, and transitional aesthetic sites. In 2024, German UNESCO paradoxically acknowledged this elusive presence by inscribing Berlin's techno culture into the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage, describing it as "electronic sounds strung together in a rhythmically monotonous structure" (*German Commission for UNESCO*). A formative example is Tekknozid (see Figure 1), a pioneering rave series held in Berlin between 1989 and 1992, widely credited as the first German rave initiative and thus a crucial influence on the evolution of the city's techno/tekno scene. Despite its intangible signifier, techno/tekno culture is inextricable from the subcultural reclamation of collective identity and spatial agency. Events like Teknivals embody this ethos, occupying contested or abandoned sites and turning them into virtual, liminal zones of perceived connection and collective resistance. Ephemeral interventions intended to critique state control over land, culture, and access to public space. Similarly, Germany's Mayday festival, launched in 1991, emerged as a protest against the threatened closure of East Germany's youth radio station DT64.

American-born, Amsterdam-based experimental filmmaker and video artist Peter Rubin played a formative role in shaping the architectural aesthetics in Germany's technoculture, such as in Mayday's. Beyond his organizational support, Rubin crafted the festival's sensory architecture through fusing visuals, movement, and rhythm into a singular techno-aesthetic. His first engagement in Germany came in 1988, when he brought his VJ practice from the Netherlands to Berlin's Tempodrom, followed soon after by a performance at Hamburg's Grosse Freiheit. In 1994, three years after Mayday's debut, Rubin returned to Berlin for Chromapark—the first exhibition devoted entirely to techno art and culture. Held at E-Werk under the theme 'House of Techno', Chromapark reimagined Berlin as a speculative media ecology. From U-Bahn interventions by Lila Lutz, Christoph Husemann, and others, to a continuous 96-hour rave-exhibition featuring over 40 artists, Chromapark collapsed the distinctions between art gallery, discotheque, and media lab. The post-reunification void—social, political, and architectural—offered fertile ground for reappropriation. Vacant East German factories, bunkers, and power stations became vessels for social and sonic inhabitation. Venues like E-Werk, Tresor, and Berghain (formerly Ostgut) emerged not merely as nightlife spaces, but as affective techno-architectures where historical detritus fused with a hope in ecstatic cyber futurity.

Figure 1: Tekknozoid Flyer from the year 1991. The Peter Rubin Collection: Amsterdam. Courtesy of Eye Filmmuseum.

Berlin's techno-aesthetic politics drew power from the city's raw materiality—concrete, steel, rust—and infused it with loops of light and sound. Chromapark's E-Werk, a site housed in a former electricity plant in Mitte and active in the early 1990s, straddled a moment of techno-ontological transition in Berlin's techno imaginary. Its architecture was marked by clean industrial lines, open multi-level layouts, and cathedral-like vertical volumes. It honed a spatial grammar that activated both the machinic past of energy production and the spiritually speculative future of digital collectivity. Unlike the total occlusion of subterranean compression in Tresor, or the sensorial vortex of verticality in Berghain, E-Werk cultivated a "modulated openness" as a surface of spatial recursion across levels, balconies, and stairwells. As dancers moved vertically and horizontally through its

grid, they were caught in *rhythmic feedback loops*—not just of music, but of collective movement, expanded architecture, as well as virtual and visceral affect. As Brian Massumi notes, "a building is a technology of movement... in direct membranic connection with virtual event spaces" (204). Following Massumi, techno-architectures and techno-events thus engender virtual techno-aesthetic matrices: environments that produce and are produced by the movement of recursive flows of affect, rhythm, and embodied presence. Like the dancing attendee, the crowd itself becomes a techno-social body that is tuned to pulses, flickers, and spatial thresholds.

In the context of techno-ontology, the virtual folded architecture of the networked rave is a rhizomatic cartography that re-maps intimacy and distance. It is a dance of spatial and rhythmic dynamics oscillating between proximity and separation, individuality and collectivity, orientation and disorientation. The techno/tekno rave's foggy dancefloor, saturated with recursive images, beats, and stroboscopic flickers, embodies *rhythmic space* (Lefebvre): a space not statically given but produced through the interplay of bodily, social, and environmental rhythms, and as lived, affective zones continually reconfigured through repetition, difference, and syncopation. Within these environments, sensorial distance is not erased but folded as it is stretched and reframed through industrial-mechanical recursive cycles of decentralised sound, light, and (collective) movement. Recursive oscillations become both structuring force and site of disjunction, a deterritorialised zone of molecular motion, composing a techno-affective matrix where identity, agency, and perception are rendered and recalibrated. *Folded distance* becomes the operative condition of the techno-affective matrix, emerging as distributed presence that is modulated across signal paths and recursive perceptual architectures, resisting binary models of the body (e.g., individual or collective, organic or machinic). In this techno-aesthetic milieu, rhythmic folded distance is both perceptual and architectural: a topology where the expanded screens and techno tones becomes a sensory membrane, and the network becomes an ambient field of a new anaesthetic affect (Munster). Presence is no longer singular, immediate, or bound to the intensity of individual consciousness, but rather becomes recursive, patterned, and machinically modulated across environments and biological systems, expanding any pre-conceived notions on the boundaries of mediated proximity.

In the techno-event or rave, distance becomes felt in the shared pulse of bodies and mediated through the technological interfaces of sound systems, visual projections, and expanded visuals (Reynolds; St. John; Butler; Garcia; Thornton; Gaillot; Holl). This interplay enacts feedback that is recursive, where proximity becomes reconstituted through rhythmic entrainment and distance is reimagined as resonant intervals within the latency between beats, flickers, gestures, and re-mixed visual media. Within the techno-aesthetic paradigm of the mediated sense acts (Fedorova), this perspective highlights a critical ontological tension requiring a rethinking of the Real and aesthetics in media theory (Fazi). Particularly, it addresses the conceptualization of images as they reconcile the fluid, continuous

nature of sensory experience with the discrete, fragmented digital "bits" traversing hyper-networked virtual architectures. In the context of new media assemblages and the advent of discorrelated images (Denson), the blurred flatline between real/virtual, simulated/physical, and synthetic/non-synthetic images emerges as a liminal zone that requires historical and theoretical tracing. Namely, what modes of *techno-aesthetic operations* govern the movement constituting the hyper-networked audiovisual images, dispersed across aggregates in flux? What machinic logics, what rhythmic recursions, drive the movement of hyper-networked images? How do they circulate, fragment, and recombine across architectures of flux? And, what exactly are techno-aesthetics in relation to operationality versus experimentation, and as constituting folded distance(s)?

Before addressing questions concerning techno-aesthetics as operational systems or experimental ruptures, recursion must be situated as the coupling of automation and emergence. Yuk Hui frames recursion as a spiral of individuation, where each loop expresses singularity and self-determination (Hui). Within this framing, a critical distinction arises between *technological implementation* and *artistic experimentation*. Though both operate within techno-aesthetic domains, their trajectories diverge both functionally and ontologically. Artistic practices, such as Rubin's live-mix visuals or rave's rhythmic architecture, generate perceptual uncertainty that craft affective spaces intended for the unsettling of normative embodiment. Technological implementations, by contrast, operationalise, automate, and codify these affective dimensions into predictable loops of capture, habituation, and optimization. Thus, if experimentation opens zones of affective potential, implementation folds them into circuits of profiling, feedback optimization, and predictive modulation. The tension between disorientation and modulation, rupture and recursion, marks the contested terrain of folded distance. Recursion becomes no longer a generative fold but a flattened logic of modulation and control. Folded distance becomes the battleground between technics as protocol and technics as potential.

Techno-Aesthetic Operations of The Fold

Techno-aesthetics mark the threshold where technical apparatuses acquire aesthetic force through human gesture, movement, and perception (Simondon, "On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects "). Techno-aesthetic operations form a milieu in which subject and system no longer stand opposed, but co-emerge through loops of feedback, ambient intensities, and machinic attunement (Simondon, "On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects"; Deleuze and Guattari). In this configuration, "techno" functions as a conceptual-aesthetic vector, an abstract interface with the machinic, where perception and system become reciprocally generative (Rapp) enacting mediation of (relational) perception and biofeedback. This orientation invites a turn toward aesthetic coherence as it arises within distributed systems, not through semantic unity but through emergent aesthetic consistency. Drawing from machine learning and continental aesthetics, Peli Grietzer proposes aesthetic unity—or *vibe*—as an

"abstractum," a shared vector of affective coherence across divergent inputs—"the collective affinity of the objects in a class" (27). To approach techno-aesthetics, one must then also consider the role of the abstract collective—the weaved assemblage, and the fold between the layers in the assembled set—as that which constitutes an abstraction paradoxically inherent to the representational logic of human subjectivity. To deepen an understanding of distributed aesthetic unity, Gilles Deleuze's concept of the Fold, developed in *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1993), offers a critical method here.

For Deleuze, the Fold is a continuous operation and an ontological gesture that replaces the dichotomy of interior and exterior with a topology of relational contingency. Drawing on Leibniz's monadology, Deleuze envisions folds as infinite, compressed, and enfolded within matter itself. The Fold is thus an abstract architecture of subjectivity shaped through inflection, bending, and co-formation. In a 1986 seminar entitled *Subjectification*, Deleuze declares: "Folding the outside… placing oneself on the inside of the outside… not at all a personal sort of interiority" (Deleuze; "Foucault Seminar: Part III – Subjectification"). This is the crux of the Fold: it functions as a diagram of subjectivation and a logic of becoming in which the inside is not a given interiority but a position on the "inside of the outside," formed through recursive engagement with external forces (Deleuze, "Foucault" 103). Subjectivity, in this sense, is not a sealed or closed entity (Deleuze *Cinema 1* 60; *Cinema 2* 98), but a transductive process, a topological inflection shaped by the interplay of forces, systems, and sensations (Simondon, "On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects"; Deleuze, "The Fold*";* Massumi). Erin Manning extends this by conceptualizing the Fold as a site of 'movement-thinking'—a pre-cognitive field where sensation exceeds representation and subjectivity is felt before it is named (Manning). In her terms, the Fold is where affect becomes operative: a generative milieu in which perception, relation, and motion co-compose. Applied to techno-aesthetics, the Fold thus emerges as a structural figure for understanding abstraction as affective proximity—as a sensuous logic across virtual and actual domains. Grietzer's "vibe" resonates as a maximally virtual *Stimmung* (mood) that binds disparate elements into affective coherence. It is within this field of recursive abstraction and modulation that techno-ontological operations unfold.

VJ Peter Rubin's live-mixing practice offer a tactile instantiation of the Fold as techno-aesthetic praxis. Through recursive layers of moving images, flickering projections, and audiovisual loops, Rubin's performances function as techno-aesthetic sites of both abstraction and subjectivity. His *Mayday Vision Mix 1* (see Figure 2) elucidates this dynamic as a saturated palimpsest of re-mixed samples, sensory textures, temporalities and visual intensities. Rubin's VJ process began with a collection of curated material—TV broadcasts, avant-garde cinema, early computer-generated imagery via the Panasonic MX50, and live footage of ravers—all woven into a real-time choreography of signal and affect. Each source—fixed on VHS tape—formed a discrete "set," as contained visual archives. Yet in performance, these closed sets became operationally open. Rubin loaded dual VHS

decks, switching inputs live to create emergent pairings, modulating rhythm and visual tone in response to crowd energy, musical tempo, and spatial dynamics. The set's affective potential thus exceeded its material fixity. Rubin's artistry of discovering aesthetic unity lay not only between media sources, movement in two oscillating images, but also in attuning to the virtual atmospheric and intangible aesthetic inherent in the ambience, pulse, or *vibe* of the room, setting, and crowd. Through layered rhythms of moving images, flickering projections, and immersive audiovisual loops, Rubin's work became both a site of artistic experimentation and evidence to techno-aesthetic operations of collective abstraction.

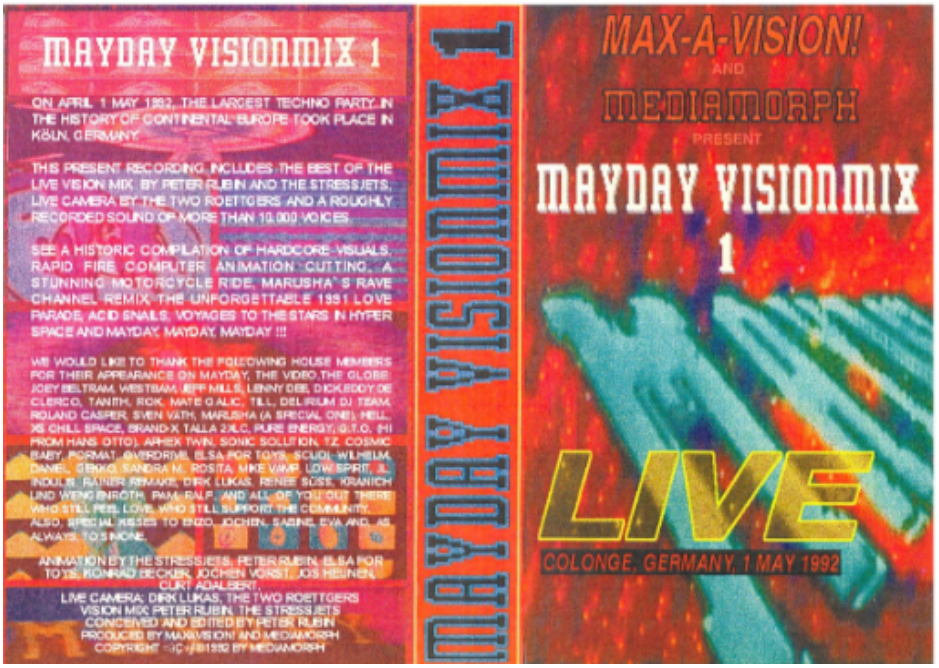

Figure 2: Peter Rubin. VHS cassette, box cover. Mayday Visionmix 1. 1992. The Peter Rubin Collection: Amsterdam. Courtesy of Eye Filmmuseum.

The techno-aesthetics of *Mayday Vision Mix*—split-screen panels, increased source-input options, and hyper-rapid rhythmic alternation or convergent cuts (Deleuze, *Cinema 1* 56; *Cinema 2* 43)— illustrate the operations of aesthetic unity by enacting the techno-ontological Fold in two key ways. First, they emerge from time-coded media infrastructures, shaped by earlier circuits of broadcast and signal transmission. As Friedrich Kittler reminds us, what we can see or hear is always conditioned by what media can store, process, and transmit (Kittler). Rubin's work channels this media archaeology, elucidating how audiovisual formats are haunted by prior regimes of perception, recursively feeding forward in layered remix that demands a sense of agency. Second, Rubin's aesthetics anticipate the oversaturated visual logic of contemporary networked media ecologies. His techniques prefigure today's expanded sensor-media environments constituted by affectively dense visual flows that float in recursive loops—palettes and rhythms unmoored from linear narrative or spatial logic. The Fold, here, becomes an emblem of the audiovisual excesses of contemporary techno-images—images that no longer depict binary subjectivity, but pulse in the folded liminal zones of institutional media regimes and individual affective perception.

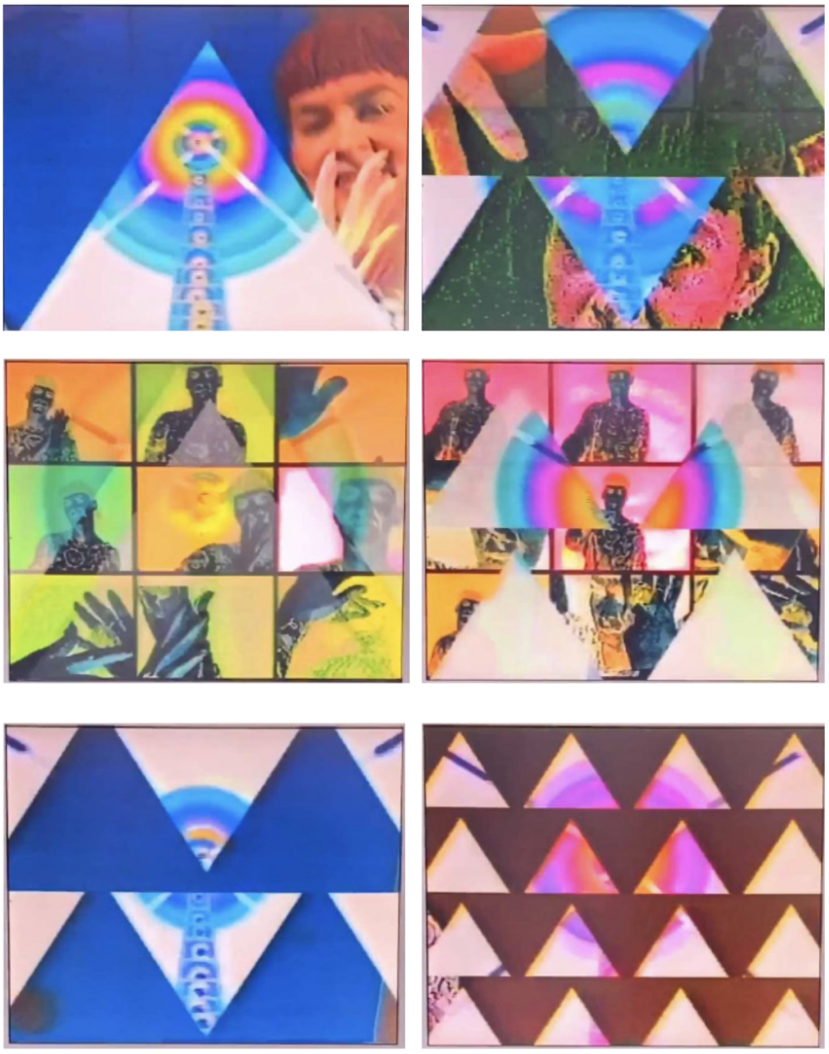

Figure 25. Peter Rubin (MAYDAY VISION) *Mayday Visionmix 1* Screenshots. © EYE Filmmuseum.

Figure 3: Peter Rubin. Mayday Visionmix 1. 1992. (curated selection of stills). The Peter Rubin Collection: Amsterdam. Courtesy of Eye Filmmuseum.

Contemporary techno-images can be defined by their hypermodulated plasticity, oversaturated palettes, upload excess, and decoupled spatial logics and topologies. They float in a liquid visual field of ephemeral loops and recursive rhythms, as 'groundless' (Gil-Fournier and Parikka) configurations that reflect a profound ontological shift in the form and function of the audiovisual image. No longer tethered to a singular frame, these visuals dissolve traditional cinematic dispositifs (Baudry; Foucault " Power/Knowledge"; Stiegler; Elsaesser). Instead, becoming mutable nodes in a larger structural system of data flows and affective registers. Namely, contemporary techno-aesthetics now operate within vast, slippery, and sticky (Rushkoff; Munster 100) assemblages layered with rendered ambiguity and buffered abstraction. In digital or computational aesthetics, AI systems process imagery through depth maps, shadow buffers, and probabilistic textures that reconfigure perception across machinic and human registers. These operations mark the shift from local, embodied sensation to planetary-scale modulation: from

representation to recursive sensation. The techno-aesthetic image becomes a node within a distributed infrastructure that hovers between abstraction and immersion, data and flesh, system and subject. Through the lens of techno-ontology, such images are not simply seen but felt, folded into the environments they circulate within. Rubin's artistic works, and transition from cinema as experimental filmmaker to techno artist as VJ, anticipates a broader shift toward the logics of techno-aesthetics: hypermodulated, synthetic visuals traversing a "sea of data" (Steyerl), a corpuscular, media-ecological fog (Massumi, 146; Gibson) of disarray and affect of networked bombardment. Rubin's legacy, then, lies not just in pioneering a live-media performance style, but in foreshadowing a broader ontological condition: where sensation is recursively bombarded, imagery is algorithmic and programmed, and affect becomes distributed, remixed, and infrastructural.

Affective Registers of Folded Distance: Network Disorientation & Distributed Intimacy

Rubin's remix craft—rooted in sampling, splicing, découpage, and modulation—prefigures the fluid, recursive visual logic that now defines the hyperlinked weave of techno-aesthetics in networked environments. However, Rubin's early influence draws from abstract, avant-garde, experimental, and structural film traditions, particularly flicker films and kinetic time-based art—as exemplified by Paul Sharits, Peter Kubelka, Eric De Kuyper, etc.—or "the art movement of the 1960s known as 'op art' or 'kinetic art' ('art cinétique')" (Lameris 86). As Bregt Lameris notes, artists like de Kuyper explored rhythm through 'oscillations and instabilities' (86), treating these elements as the grammar of sensation. In *La beauté du diable*, de Kuyper reflects on the rhythmic role of color alternations, suggesting that editing can serve as synesthetic layering akin to musical counterpoint that has clear effect on the spectator (21). These early explorations of flicker, rhythm, and sensory overload laid the groundwork for techno-aesthetic operations and the affective registers of rhythmic spaces and techniques that would later unfold across clubs, screens, and data centres.

From analog light shows to stroboscopic assaults, operations of techno-aesthetics have probed perceptual thresholds of vision by inviting us to see what has no physical anchor. These perceptual strategies trace back to mid-20th-century strobe experiments, which were once scientific, then countercultural, later aesthetic (Canales 183). As the strobe migrated from lab to dancefloor, it carried with it the ghost of altered states, mescaline dreams, and Beat experimentation. In a 1958 Cambridge trial, subjects exposed to flickering light reported visions of microbial life —floating forms without depth or logic (Canales 183). Such images are "object-like impressions" (Massumi), sensory apparitions with form but no fixity, hovering between hallucination and substance. Through light, rhythm, and sensory overload—or what Rubin termed "calculated bombardment"—they create immersive experiences that extend perception into altered, affective territories where the seen and the felt blur. Through rhythm, intensity, and the calculated bombarded

chaos of light, they sketch a new networked sensorium where the intangible becomes momentarily felt, and the real flickers in and out of phase. Recursive rhythms and trance-inducing pulses act not merely as stylistic flourishes but as ontological ruptures: moments of 'ontological shock' (Tillich; Noorani) that short-circuit or circuit-bend the machinic and rewire sensation and/or perceptual parameters.

Figure 4: Dreamscape Flyer from the year 1995. The Peter Rubin Collection: Amsterdam. Courtesy of Eye Filmmuseum

Teetering between proprioception and vertigo, ontological shocks intrinsic to folded distance induce affective registers of techno-aesthetics that elucidate what Anna Munster refers to as "network anesthesia" (Munster): where rhythmic ecstasy and numbing simultaneity converge. This somatic network-disorientation functions as

both a “technique of ecstasy”—as seen in the promotional marital of the rave *Dreamscape* (see Figure 4)—and a numbing simultaneity of nodes, links, and flows that obscure relationalities from the local to the global. This techno-ontological shift marks a transition from localised sensory experience to generalised perceptual saturation, where visuality is both expansive and anesthetised, immersive and opaque. This political-aesthetic shift marks the technological transformation from linear input/output models to implementation of recursive feedback loops, expanding distances and fostering *distributed intimacies*. In networked aesthetics and AI-driven media, however, shock is no longer episodic but ambient—produced through recursive algorithmic mediation, unstable images, and machinic authorship that destabilise the subject’s grounding in space, time, and perception (Denson; Munster; Chun).

In the technosphere, the entanglement of *networked aesthetics* and the constellation of audiovisual data sets now constitute machine learning sequences, pipelines, and inferences of interoperability: aggregate relations between audiovisual sets persist. These sets, as Munster and Adrian MacKenzie suggest, constitute moments where the ceaseless flow of images is momentarily captured and transformed, marking a threshold between perceptual flux and operational meaning. Affective registers of networked techno-aesthetic operations thus construct an immanent territory constituted by a spatio-temporal energetic urban architecture—a virtual grid or transarchitecture (Novak) where "code as architecture works to structure the boundaries, as well as regulate the flows, of the internet traffic" (Cheney-Lippold 166). The scaffolding of these global communication networks relies on standardised protocols and predictive algorithms for interoperability in ways that exceed human perception, reshaping environments and folding human subjectivity. These media systems, subsequently, embody a tension between determination and indeterminacy as they act as more than tools, actively reconfiguring the conditions of corporeal existence. This “correlative capture” (Denson 40) intertwines phenomenological and statistical forces, embedding political structures in affective and aesthetic realms, shaping and augmenting collective and individual norms. Proprioception—the body’s sense of spatial orientation—becomes redefined through vestibular reconfigurations within global network environments. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty’s corporeal phenomenology, Shane Denson explains that the “spectators’ bodies act as filters, distilling visual phenomena from a range of extraperceptual facets” (Denson). He continues, “in particular, bodies react to invisible algorithmic infrastructures, which, in the case of machine learning algorithms, also operate as filters in their own right. The collision of metabolic and computational microtemporal operations calls forth a number of embodied affects, ranging from sublime awe to disorientation, cringe, and uncanny feelings of relational and environmental entanglement” (Denson 1). The body’s affective register of this "city-like" infrastructure of aggregates thus affords boundaries upon not only sensation or movement, but also embodied perception and identity. Thus, embedding individuals into a recursive algorithmic structural system while simultaneously shaping the possibilities for emergent forms of (sensorial) engagement within networked folded distance(s). Augmented by

audiovisual technologies, proprioception thus becomes a mediated act (Fedorova), extending the body's sensory reach into mapped virtual dimensions. Akin to the flicker film, this augmentation disrupts the equilibrium of center and periphery by producing a sensory disorientation that recalibrates the digital subject's relationship to space and time as well as the collective and self. Olga Goriunova explains how traffic of this virtual (tracked) movement defines the *digital subject.* Namely, by situating subjectivity in "an abstracted position, a performance, constructed persona from data, profiles, and other records and aggregates." (*Digital Subjects: An Introduction* 126) Recursively affording a dual shaping of the algorithmic infrastructure (or 'grid'), via movement through the global communications network, as constitutive of subjective perception and affective embodied dimensions. This political-aesthetic shift signals a technological transformation, from linear input/output models to recursive feedback systems that implement and extend distance as an operational affordance. Within this expanded architecture, the *eurhythmic* gives rise to *distributed intimacy* and other distributed forms of attunement. Eurhythmia, when aligned with the collectively entrained body—on the rave floor, in protest formations, or in digital swarms—reveals an affective mode of synchronization shaped by techno-aesthetic infrastructures (Jaques-Dalcroze; Banham). Networked ecologies of rhythmic space, composed of hyperlinked techno-aesthetics, become sites where the eu-rhythmic body emerges (Lefebvre), marking a move away from fixed choreographies toward situated harmonics that resonate across media interfaces, infrastructures, and spatial architectures. This distributed body clusters in folded proximities, with entrained participant embedded in networks of technologically mediated collective sensation. Returning to Deleuze's notion of subjectification, folded distance becomes the catalyst for eu-rhythmic modulation, acting as interplay for proximity and for dispersal that continually recalibrates embodied affect, perception and relational subjectivity.

Conclusion: Folded Relations in Soft Architectures of the Now

Across rave architectures, digital aesthetics, communication infrastructures, and platform protocols alike, affective sensation loses fixed linear and geographical coordinates. Rhythmic entrainment becomes a mode of dispersed yet collective individuation, a field of distributed intimacy where sensation folds and circulates between bodies, interfaces, (virtual) circuitry, and across recursive loops of light, sound, and code. These are architectures of *folded distance* are where subjectivity emerges through recursive relation and where presence is glitched, echoed, ambient, refracted. Rhythmic entrainment—the body moving with sound, the VJ's hand splicing visual flickers to the beat—restructures proximity as affective latency and re-maps sensorial affect, engendering a layered topology threading collections of globalised sensorial assemblages.

The techno dancefloor acts as a media archaeological site in this soft architecture of media infrastructure and digital aesthetics and their affordances of distributed

intimacy and techno-ontological affect. In these virtual spaces, relationality is buffered and constantly mediated with latency and lag.

Rhythmic recursion as the fold operates as an ontogenetic logic of modulation where the contingent loops of sensation, system, and subject co-compose the consensus of the Real. Folded distance thus marks the contemporary condition of technologically mediated life, where subjectivity emerges from tracked, stacked and layered sensation, becoming virtually infrastructural. In digital ecologies, presence is no longer singular or embodied, but spliced, compressed, and routed through layers of latency, feedback, and interface. Techno-aesthetics extend beyond the rave's tactility and into the operational aesthetics and techno rhythms of everyday digital infrastructures, such as in platforms and communication networks, where the digital subject is shaped by the rhythm of pulses curated through feeds, notifications, livestreams, and biometric loops. Intimacy becomes engineered through impersonal cycles of coded attention, where closeness becomes perhaps a function of refresh rate or content velocity. Recursive media thus both simulates nearness as well as automates it. In doing so, it reconfigures the politics of relation through re-mapping the limits of proximity that afford affective sensorial experience. Techno territories where feeling is filtered, optimised, and abstracted into distant, formulaic, and anticipated patterns.

Folded distance thus persists beyond the club or screen. It permeates digital culture through the pulse of notifications, the infinite scroll of feeds, the curated tempo of livestreams. Recursive rhythms, in this context, are the framework for techno-ontological infrastructures. From Rubin's VJ sets to platform rhythms to AI-generated images, a shift in how techno-aesthetics operate surfaces as a critical site of inquiry as it artificially and generatively mutates. The vibe, once curated through embodied feedback, is now predicted and interpolated through latent data structures. AI remix systems translate atmosphere into vectorised resemblances. In this machinic fold, the VJ becomes a prompt. Bodies disappear into training sets and affect is statistical. Yet even here, the Fold remains. As Deleuze reminds us, the Fold is the site of recursive interiority formed by the inflection of the outside. The techno-aesthetic Fold enacts this topology through entangling agency, authorship, and atmosphere through an increasingly complex logic of globalization and new cartographies mapping of expanded proximities for sensational affect. Yet, whether analog or algorithmic, the question persists: How does aesthetic unity arise in systems without center? What becomes of resonance when the body is no longer proximate, but inferred?

Recursive techno-aesthetics produce proximity without nearness, rhythms without physical or tangible friction. They render intimacy spectral—felt, but dispersed. This is the melancholic edge, the sad design (Lovink, " *Sad by Design* "), of techno-ontology: the yearning for connection persists even as presence is endlessly mediated, unreachable, and untouchable. This recursion is bifuricated as a Janus-face that promises to hold potential. The techno-event, with all its synthetic intensity, becomes a site of diffraction or agential cuts (Barad 132) where rhythm

unsettles fixed boundaries. Yet, without critical reflexivity, this deteritorialization through recursive loops risks reinforcing the logics they might disrupt. As Hui cautions, recursive systems (may) merely mirror *acosmic enframings*—technological salvationism replacing relation with abstraction (Hui). To move forward, techno-aesthetics must reconcile rupture with repair, disorientation with consciousness as both vestibular and potentially grounding. This means resisting the fetish of recursion for its own sake, and instead fostering a techno-sensibility that critically moves with, rather than beyond, the world—across systems, scales, settings, and folds. In the end, techno-aesthetics offer not answers but questions that are tangled, pulsing, and recursive.

The question then remains: where, exactly, are these *folded distances* leading us towards?

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Biography

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