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# Who is Seeing When Seeing: The Kena Upanishad and the Sensation of Logic

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# After the ruins of representation....

- What are we seeing, when seeing?
- How are we seeing when seeing?
- Where are we seeing when seeing?
- Who is seeing when seeing?

**I AM BECOMING  
A BODY WITHOUT  
ORGANS**



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J. Winckelmann  
(1717-68):

"noble simplicity and  
quiet grandeur."

Laocoön and His Sons  
in the Vatican 27 AD



# Kena Upanishad

Sri Aurobindo translation

By whom missioned falls the mind shot to its mark? By whom yoked moves the first life-breath forward on its paths? By whom impelled is this word that men speak?  
**What god set eye and ear to their workings?**

That which is hearing of our hearing, mind of our mind, speech of our speech, that too is life of our life-breath and **sight of our sight**. The wise are released beyond and they pass from this world and become immortal

**There sight travels not**, nor speech, nor the mind. We know It not nor can distinguish how one should teach of It: for It is other than the known; It is there above the unknown. It is so we have heard from men of old who declared That to our understanding.

That which is unexpressed by the word, that by which the word is expressed, know That to be the Brahman and not this which men follow after here.

That which thinks not by the mind that by which the mind is thought, know That to be the Brahman and not this which men follow after here.

**That which sees not with the eye that by which one sees the eye's seeings, know That to be the Brahman and not this which men follow after here.**

# WHERE IS THE TRUTH IN ART?

- Can art capture the essence of things (shoes)?
- Or is Plato right that art is lying because painted apples you can't eat?
- Or is art about something completely different, once we ask who is seeing when seeing?

Van Gogh

Paul Cezanne



# Sri Aurobindo commentary

"Supposing that there are psychical senses which act through a psychical body and we thus explain these psychical phenomena, still that action also is only an organisation of the inherent functioning of the essential sense, the Sanjnana, which in itself can **operate without bodily organs.**" P.57

# Francis Bacon (1909-92)





# LOGIC OF SENSATION (UPANISAH)



# Sensation

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For first we have intensity of vibration creating regular rhythm which is the basis or constituent of all creative formation;

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secondly, contact or **intermixture** of the movements of conscious being which constitute the rhythm;

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thirdly, definition of the grouping of movements which are in contact, their shape;

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fourthly, the constant welling up of the essential force to support in its continuity the movement that has been thus defined;

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fifthly, the actual enforcement and compression of the force in its own movement which maintains the form that has been assumed.

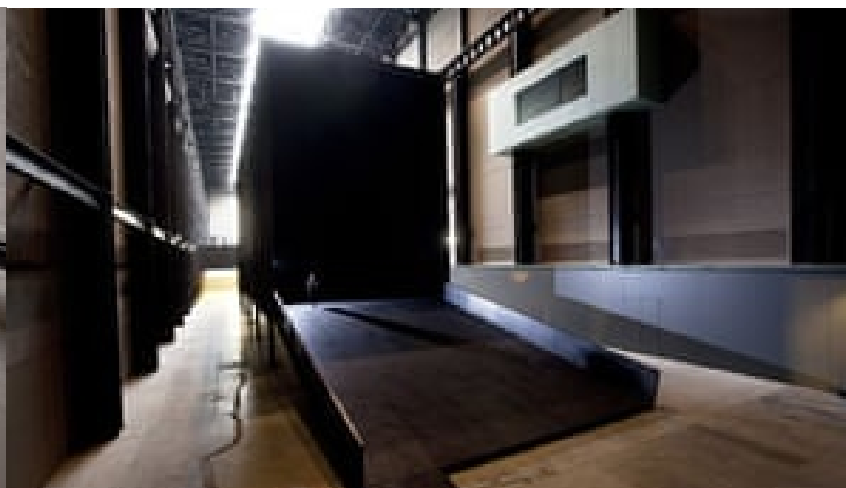
# 5 senses

"In Matter these five constituent operations are said by the Sankhyas to represent themselves as five elemental conditions of substance, the etheric, atmospheric, igneous, liquid and solid;

and the *rhythm* of vibration is seen by them as śabda, **sound**, the basis of hearing, the *intermixture* as contact, the basis of **touch**, the *definition as shape*, the basis of **sight**, the *upflow of force as rasa*, sap, the basis of **taste**, and the *discharge of the atomic compression* as gandha, odour, the basis of **smell**." P.59

# 'HOW IT IS' - MIROSLAW BALKA

TATE MODERN, LONDON 2009

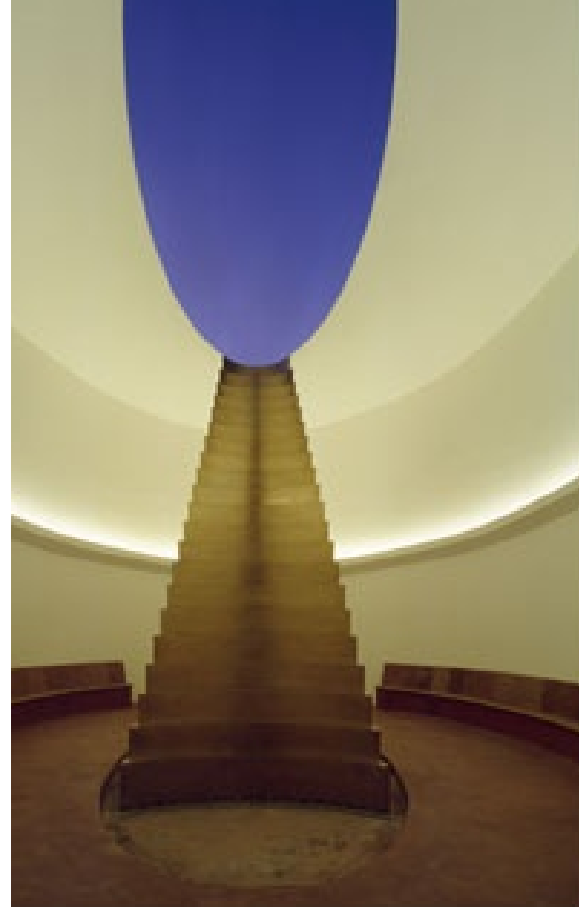
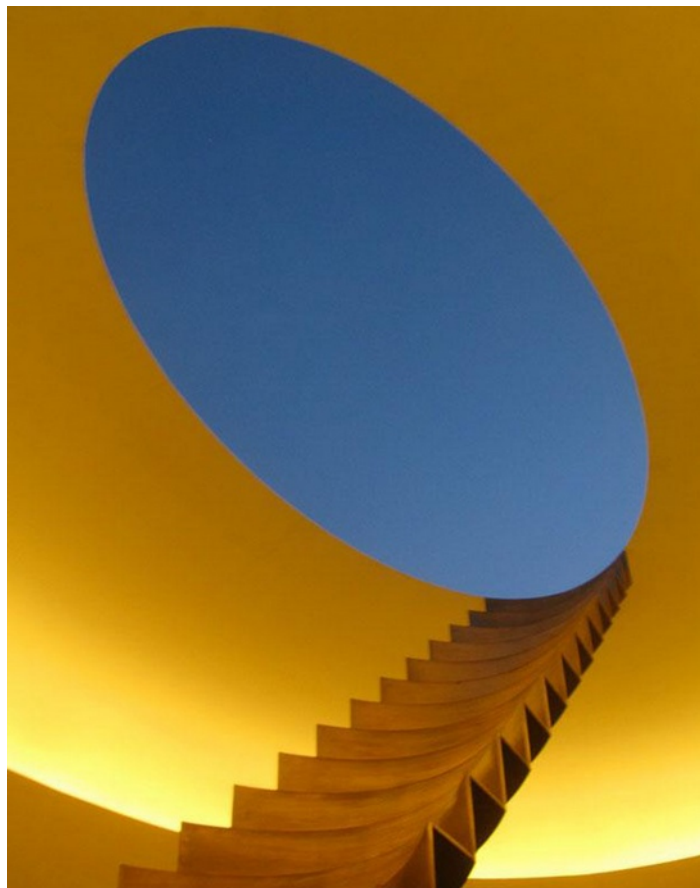


# Complex unity

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This various sense will, it is obvious, be in the highest consciousness a **complex unity**, just as we have seen that there the various operation of knowledge is also a complex unity. Even if we examine the physical senses, say, the sense of hearing, if we observe how the underlying mind receives their action, we shall see that **in their essence all the senses are in each other**. That mind is not only aware of the vibration which we call *sound*; it is aware also of the contact and interchange between the force in the sound and the nervous force in us with which that intermixes; it is aware of the definition or form of the sound and of the complex contacts or relations which make up the *form*; it is aware of the essence or outwelling conscious force which constitutes and maintains the sound and prolongs its vibrations in our *nervous being*; it is aware of our own nervous inhalation of the vibratory discharge proceeding from the compression of force which makes, so to speak, the solidity of the sound. All these sensations enter into the sensitive reception and joy of music which is the highest physical form of this operation of force, — they constitute our physical sensitiveness to it and the joy of our nervous being in it; (p.60)

**Roden Crater, East Portal -  
James Turrell**



# IMAGES



**"LET'S SURVIVE FOREVER," 2017  
ARTIST: YAYOI KUSAMA**





# Henri Bergson's Image - Why memory matters

## The Universe as an Ensemble of Images

- **Definition:** In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson says the universe is made up of “images,” and our body is itself an image among others. An “image” here is neither purely subjective nor purely objective, but the fundamental reality in-between.
- **Continuum and Interaction:** These images are not isolated; they exist in a continuum where everything *acts upon* everything else—albeit to different degrees.
- **Center of Indetermination:** The body is distinct because it is a “center of indetermination,” capable of choosing (or “selecting”) how to respond to the overall flow of images.

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Mark  
Rothko  
No 14  
1960



**BODY WITHOUT  
ORGANS -  
IMMANENCE**

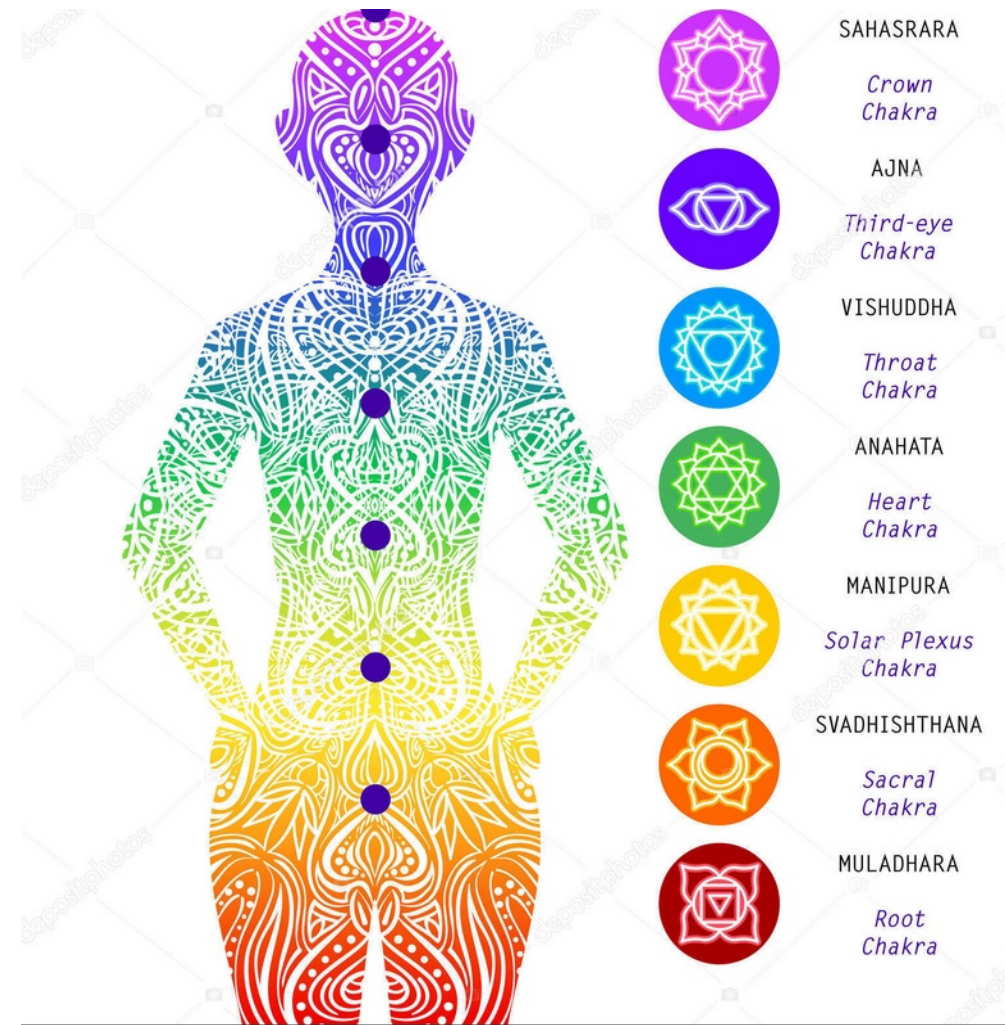


The **plane of immanence**, Brahman, Satchitananda.

On this plane, Deleuze and Guattari talk about the body without organs (**BwO**). It is my body still, but not the one with organs, not my physical body with heart, liver, kidney... It is my body connected to the plane of immanence, with all its potentialities, that allow it to encounter and to become.

That **becoming** allows my eyes to hear. So the BwO is my being in the transcendental field that surrounds all being.

**Institutions** have BwO, art also, the political and social, the anthropological, the living, geology and cosmology—probably everything can be BwO and connect with everything; all is part of a **rhizome**.



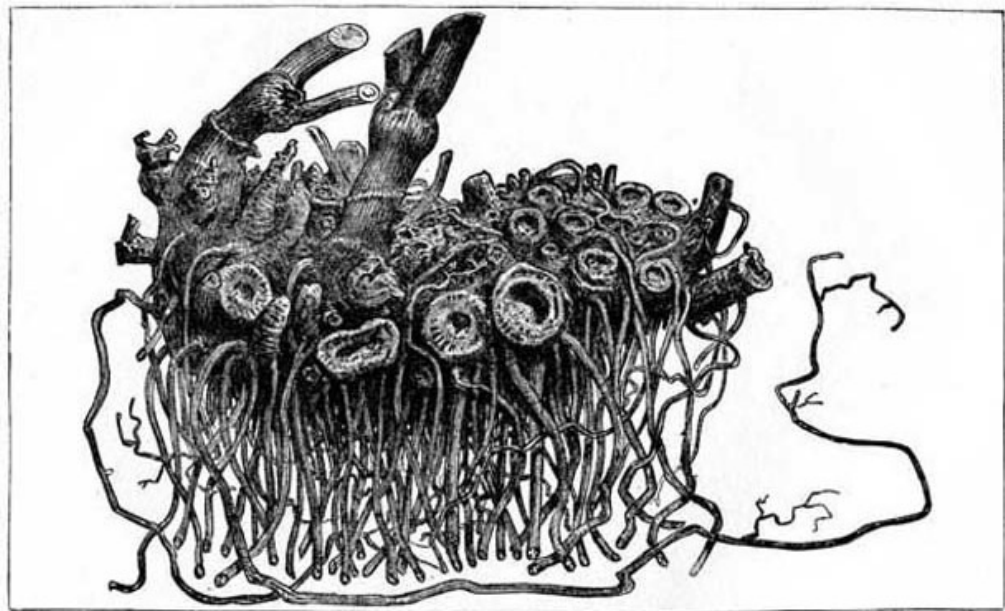
# Gilles Deleuze

In the **BwO** state, perception is not constrained by typical sensory divisions but operates through intensities—vibrations, movements, and forces that do not belong to any one sensory modality.

**Artistic creation** often operates on the **level of intensity**—color fields in painting, dissonant tones in music, tactile textures in sculpture, or immersive environments in multimedia art. These are not reducible to mere objects or representations but evoke sensations that bypass cognitive categorization and resonate with the BwO's unformed, affective plane.

BwO offers a framework for **rethinking perception as unbound from hierarchical structures** and for approaching art as a domain of pure potentiality and intensity. By inhabiting the BwO, one engages with the world and artistic creation not as fixed entities but as dynamic, ever-changing fields of affect and





## Percept

**Definition:** A **percept** is not the perception of an individual but a form of sensation detached from subjective experience. It is an autonomous block of sensory experience that exists on its own, independent of a perceiver.

## Affect

**Definition:** An **affect** refers to a pre-personal intensity of feeling or emotion that is independent of individual subjectivity. It is a raw, unqualified state of being that is not "owned" by anyone.

## Concept

**Definition:** A **concept** is the domain of philosophy and thought. It represents a mode of thinking that organizes, articulates, and creates new ways of understanding.

# Paul Cezanne

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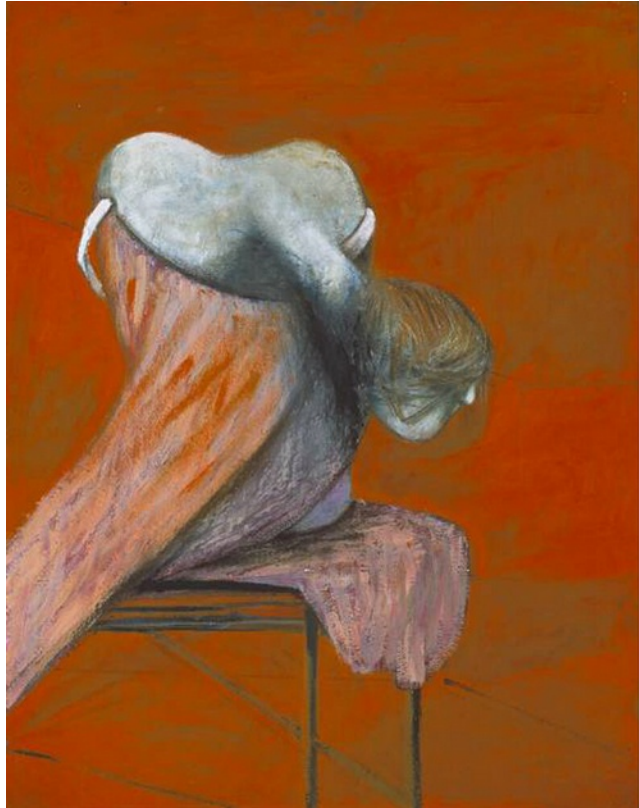
Paul Cézanne, *Mont Sainte-Victoire*,  
1902-04, oil on canvas, 73 x 91.9 cm  
(Philadelphia Museum of Art)



# RHYTHM







Baum

Artien

Feldyphon

- Strata
- Foldings (enclosures)
- Vibration
- Refrain and rhythm
- Territory
- Milieu
- De-territorialization
- Becoming
- House of intersecting planes
- Earth, house, cosmos

Selbst Enhance

⊙

Funktion

Rhythmus  
Refrain  
Riten

Code

de-code

Territory

Fische + Vögel

Expressiv werden

Plakat

Selbst

Funktion

# 7 Sisters/Brothers



# WORDS



The Kena Upanishad doesn't start with 'Who is seeing when seeing'. It starts with

"By whom impelled is this word that men speak?"



*Shiv*  
03/02/20

Brahman expresses by the Word a form or presentation of himself in the objects of sense and consciousness which constitute the universe, just as the human word expresses a mental image of those objects.

Brahman

Word ->

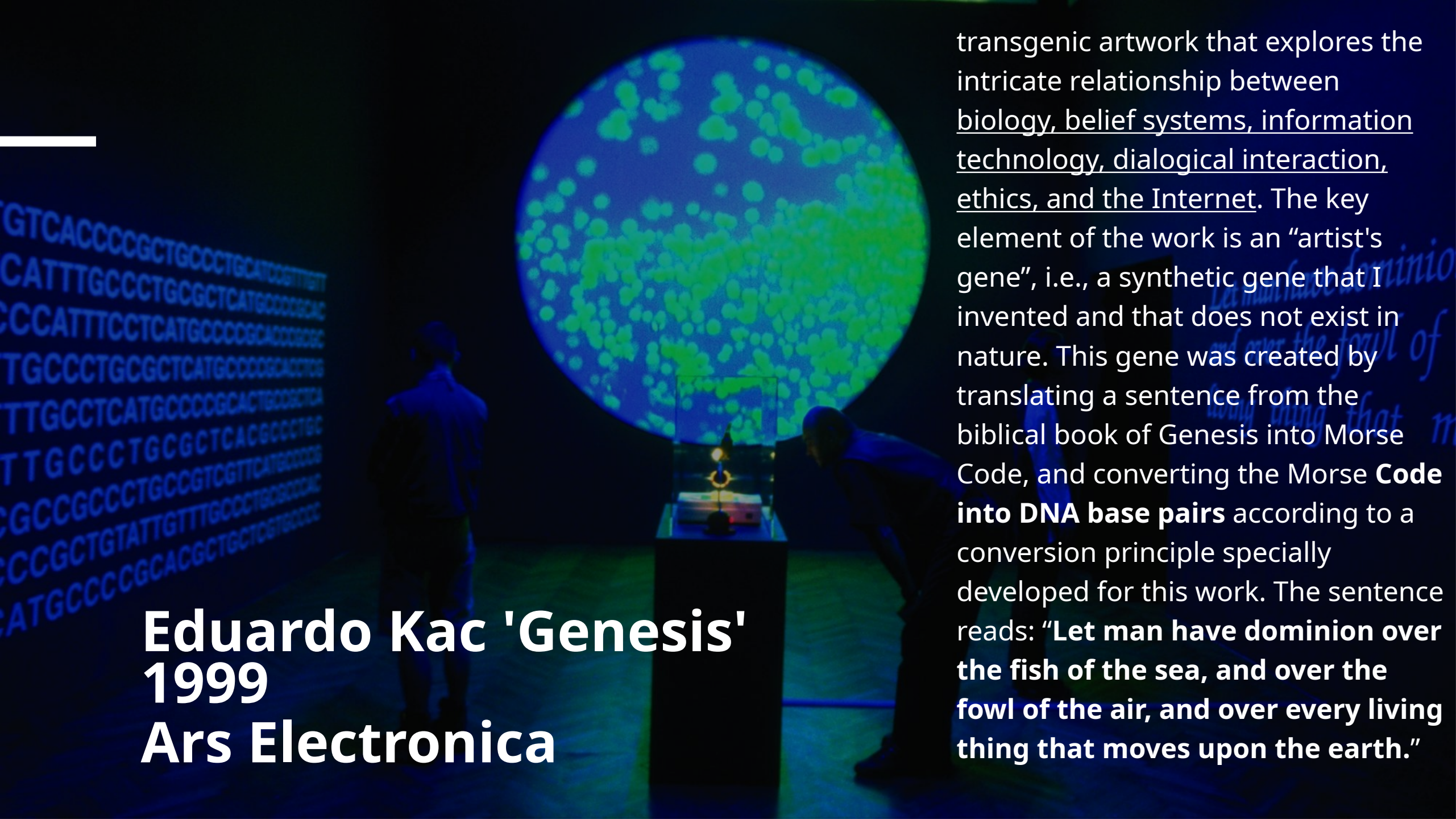
**Object**

<- Word

Human

sense and consciousness  
which constitute the universe

mental image of those objects



**Eduardo Kac 'Genesis'**  
**1999**  
**Ars Electronica**

transgenic artwork that explores the intricate relationship between biology, belief systems, information technology, dialogical interaction, ethics, and the Internet. The key element of the work is an “artist's gene”, i.e., a synthetic gene that I invented and that does not exist in nature. This gene was created by translating a sentence from the biblical book of Genesis into Morse Code, and converting the Morse **Code into DNA base pairs** according to a conversion principle specially developed for this work. The sentence reads: “**Let man have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.**”

# DECONSTRUCTION





# Post-structuralism - Mark Tansey 'a' 1990

- The Vedic conception sees the Word (vāc) as a force that brings worlds into being, not just a descriptive tool. It has the capacity to shape reality.
- Sri Aurobindo aligns with this view, describing mantra as carrying a "seed-sound" that activates subtler levels of consciousness and energy.





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**LUIS BUNUEL 'UN CHIEN  
ANDALOUS' (1929)**

# Cy Twombly 'School of Athens' 1961





**End**

Jaque Lacan owned *The Origin of the World* (1866) by Gustave Courbet;



Lacan purchased the painting in 1955 through an intermediary to maintain anonymity due to the work's controversial nature. Lacan kept the painting hidden behind a wooden sliding panel adorned with another artwork, *Landscape with Shepherd* by André Masson, to preserve its privacy and mystery. The painting was housed in Lacan's country home in Guitrancourt, where it became an intriguing yet secret centerpiece of his collection.

## Where is the harmony in the sacred architecture coming from?

The vibration of Shiva's drum, the harmony of sound, the symmetry of forms, the touch of the surface, and the absorption of energy in the stone; the smell of the pujas and the taste, rasa; the transformed perception of sensations; the realization of the logic of sensation; the synthesis of all manifests in the carving of the stones



# "The Mantra

- can not only **create new subjective states** in ourselves, alter our psychical being, reveal knowledge and faculties we did not before possess,
- can not only **produce similar results in other minds** than that of the user,
- but can produce vibrations in the mental and vital atmosphere which result in **effects, in actions and even in the production of material forms on the physical plane.**"  
(Aurobindo p.31)