

# REVIEW: AUDIO/VISUAL MAKINGS. PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH, POST-DIGITAL HYBRIDISATION & TECHNO-CRITICISM

 **ANA GAGO**

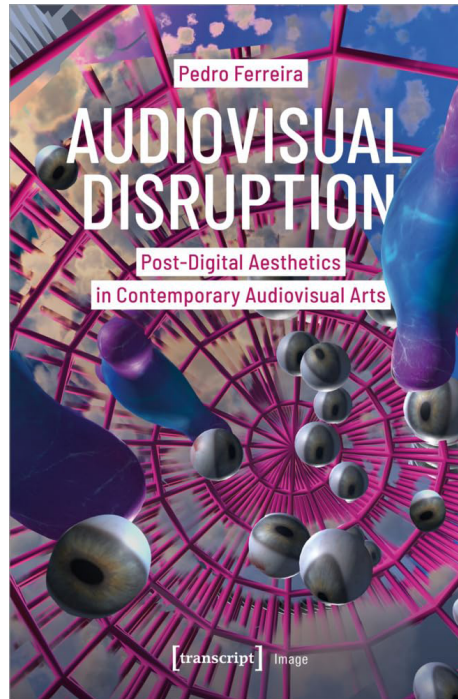
Universidade Católica Portuguesa,  
School of Arts,  
Research Center for Science and Technology  
of the Arts  
algago@gmail.com

## ABSTRACT

Anchored by the Pedro Ferreira's own practice-based research, *Audiovisual Disruption: Post-Digital Aesthetics in Contemporary Audiovisual Arts* (2024) explores critical making as a way to address the impact(s) of digital technologies, in/through contemporary arts, and *IRL*. In this sense, the book's theoretical-conceptual foundation, carefully set throughout its initial chapters, proceeds to be (de)materialized in the analysis of artistic projects that explore *post-digital hybridisation*, thus, challenging static categories of digital aesthetics, referenced from the analysis of Christiane Paul and Alexander Galloway. When trying to avoid insider-outsider, on and off, and other *meta-existentialistic* dichotomies, the author positions himself (as well as his *audio/visuo/logical* work/s) somewhere in between: media, medium, arts and techno-criticism. In this review, we synthesize Pedro Ferreira's perspective, briefly relating it to other critical approaches, namely the idea of "multiple makings", as proposed by Simon Bowen, and Tim Ingold's "ways of making".

Keywords: Post-digital aesthetics; *Audiovisuology*; Critical making; Hybridisation.

**FERREIRA, P. (2024). AUDIOVISUAL DISRUPTION: POST-DIGITAL AESTHETICS IN CONTEMPORARY AUDIOVISUAL ARTS. TRANSCRIPT IMAGE.**



**1. ALL AND EVERYTHING AT THE SAME TIME – INTRODUCING AUDIOVISUOLOGY**

When trying to define post-digital art, in *Audiovisual Disruption: Post-Digital Aesthetics in Contemporary Audiovisual Arts* (2024), Pedro Ferreira starts by looking at it from the conceptual framework of more recent proposals addressing the cultural productions of “computational societies”, such as “Post-media”, “Post-Internet” or “New Aesthetics”. From “analogue” to “digital”, Ferreira arrives to “post-digital”, a sort of looping *momentum* that further densify “digital aesthetics” categorization systems, as proposed by Christiane Paul in *Digital Art* (2003), or Alexander Galloway in “Jodi’s Infrastructure” (2016). The author’s goal is to discuss “artistic explorations” that operate “over” the infrastructure of digital medium, inside, outside and, finally, in between digital and non-digital.

Nonetheless, by relating “post-digital”, hybrid, explorations, to its own field of action and body of work, the author ends up, as it frequently happens when pursuing similar genealogical enterprises, to go back to B.D. [Before Digital] artistic practices, such as drawing, music and abstract film. Following this circular path, Ferreira proceeds to formulate its (own) understanding of “audiovisuology”, a field of practice-based research, spreading through audiovisual theory, games theory, cinematic, and, also, of contemporary art practices, such as generative art. As a conclusion, this ever-expanding and encompassing exercise of affiliation, introduces to the complexity of post-digital aesthetics, as well as its intrinsic, interdependent connection with post-digital condition[ing]; a socio-cultural-technological ecosystem that is both influenced by artistic inquiry and influences it.

## 2. POST-DIGITAL AESTHETICS – IN-BETWEEN ERROR AND SATURATION

As already been stated, Pedro Ferreira identifies four possibilities to engage with “post-digital condition”, that take place “on,” “within”, “off,” and “in-between” digital media and/or technologies. The “on” approach explores “surface-level interactions, emphasising the visible aesthetics and effects of digital tools, often turning technology itself into the subject of critique” (Ferreira, 2023, p.2), whereas the “within” perspective explores underlying systems and infrastructures, revealing “invisible mechanisms”, that, though, “define the post-digital condition”. In a completely opposite approach, “off” operates through deliberate “acts of disengagement”, in rejection of “digital frameworks” and technologies, and offering “critical counterpoints”. With a strong ecological (or echo-critical) focus, the author relates this approach to an “aesthetics of reusing” (Ferreira, 2023, p.2), that frequently materializes in the repurposing of analogue technologies and/or digital tech debris.

While remaining sceptical towards potential nostalgic revivalisms of analogue media, Pedro Ferreira proposes a hybrid, tense, in-between space. In his view, this is a space that allows for aesthetical experimentation that can take advantage, for instance, of the critical role of glitch, as proposed by Alexander Galloway, but also by Kim Cascone in “The Aesthetics of Failure: "Post-Digital" Tendencies in Contemporary Computer Music” (2000). Moreover, Ferreira adds to the intentional practice of error the bases for an “aesthetics of saturation”; another strategy for artistic questioning of utilitarian and normative uses of digital media and technologies, by appropriating and re-interpreting its own device(s), language(s) and symbols.

Overall, the author tries to explore alternatives to artistic practices that, in his view, still heavily rely on digital media, thus, do not actually propose a significant rupture in/to its uses. Ferreira believes that “hybrid aesthetics” can foster more subversive (and efficient) approaches to digital. Although, only when (and if) artistic practice follows a “Critical Making” approach – here referencing Matt Ratto in “Critical Making: Conceptual and Material Studies in Technology and Social Life” (2011) – a *leitmotiv*, that himself declares behind his (artistic)research projects.

## 3. CRITICAL MAKINGS – ON A HYBRID CASE STUDY

In Chapter 3, Pedro Ferreira definitively places his attention on the practice(s) of Critical Making (Ratto, 2011), to envision post-digital art, for instance, through re-materializations of digital and computing technologies into physical space, and manual practices that combine diverse media. In short, practices of hybridization, both offline and online, that reject the normalization of digital media. By endowing the artistic process with an aesthetics of hybridization, and, above all, with a (self/meta) critical stance, Ferreira briefly highlights practices of “making” and “hacking”, “digital fabrication”, “physical computing”, and/or “creative coding,” while

also investigating (and demonstrating) the sociocultural, economic, political, and environmental effects of digital technologies.

The mapping of post-digital aesthetic (critical) possibilities also helps contextualizing his own artistic research and some of the projects that Ferreira proceeds to describe in the following chapter. For example, through the audiovisual performance<sup>1</sup> and resulting “electro-acoustic” album<sup>2</sup>, “Datox” (2019-2022)<sup>3</sup>, the author artistically explores sonic materialities of electromagnetic fields generated by digital devices, with the goal of highlighting the energetic over-dependence of computational societies. Still following a (self-defined) eco-techno-critical manifesto, Ferreira presents us with “Debris” (2021)<sup>4</sup>, a claustrophobic, hyper-saturated, online version of a 2000’s hit, the “Snake” mobile game, where we anxiously try to escape the ever-growing traces of our relentless consumption of/on electronic devices<sup>5</sup>. Or, yet, “All To Sand Returns” (2022), an audiovisual installation co-created with Assunta Alegiani (“open circuit”), where the duo reuses analogue media to produce a speculative, dystopic, landscape, transformed by rising sea levels and accelerated global warming<sup>6</sup>.

Shifting his attention to other hot topics, “On A Scroll Through The Cloud” (2019-23) Ferreira addresses the normalization of online mass surveillance, which commercially exploits user data. The installation consists both of a VR/3D game<sup>7</sup>, and a physical object resembling a scroll bar<sup>8</sup>. Furthermore, the latest also became part of a public performance, “Scrolling Around”<sup>9</sup>, aimed at pointing it out as a symbol for the infinite, additive (doom)scrolling functioning, incorporated, by design, across various platforms and social media, and followed through the physical gestures of its users worldwide. Turning the camera precisely on the users, “Things I Do When I’m Bored (2017-22)”<sup>10</sup>, which was first exhibited, in 2021, at UCP’s *[e]motion – I Graduate Conference on Science and Technology of the Arts*<sup>11</sup>, presents a collage of videos produced by several YouTube vloggers, most at a very young age, where they self-proclaim their (online) boredom status. This piece haunts us, as equally bored voyeurs, with a sense of pointlessness and existential dread. Almost self-pityingly, since the videos usually present very few or zero visualizations, the vloggers end up alone in their self-performativity of boredom, perfectly representing Ferreira’s view of a disenchanting, post-digital, society, always somewhere, but in-between itself<sup>12</sup>.

#### 4. MULTIPLE MAKINGS – FOR AN OPEN-END CONCLUSION

By exposing the material nature of digital technologies along with their socio-cultural (and environmental) debris, Audiovisual Disruption challenges us to consider artistic practices as an a/effective way to critically face contemporary life, in a post-digital era. It is indeed his own artistic research practice that better illustrate, not only its potential applications for techno-criticism, but also the hybrid, often overlapping, nature of post-digital art, that escapes any attempt of categorization,

1 The performance was first presented in 2019, at Arkaoda Berlin, and, lastly, in Coimbra, at the 10<sup>th</sup> Conference on Computation, Communication, Aesthetics & X - xCoAx 2022. See <https://pedroferreira.net/sound/pedra-ferro-datox>

2 For more details on this album access this [link](#).

3 For more details on the project, access its [website/online iteration](#).

4 Once more, the development of an online videogame, was paired with the creation of an offline, mixed media and sound installation, presented at the 10th International Conference on Digital and Interactive Art - ARTECH, Aveiro, Portugal, and Sonic Curiosities VI, Berlin. For more details on this installation access this [link](#).

5 To see “Debris”, access this [link](#).

6 The installation was presented at XCoAx 2023, in Weimar, Germany. For more information access [here](#).

7 For more information access [here](#).

8 This piece has been presented and experimented in multiple contexts and venues, including the [collective exhibition “split level”](#), gathering works from 70 media students at the Arts University of Berlin, in 2019, online, at xCoAx 2020, and “in-between”, as part of the Polish-Portuguese curation project, [POR-POL NET](#), in 2023.

9 For more information on this public performance access this [link](#).

10 More information on the Pedro Ferreira website, [here](#) and [here](#).

11 More details on this conference [here](#).

12 In the artist statement following this video piece, Pedro Ferreira frames performative boredom as a “symptom of disenchantment”, that “social media and digital technologies fail to entertain” (Ferreira, 2023b).

even the one fairly proposed by the author, around the re-definition of *audiovisuology* works.

Nonetheless, Ferreira's analysis could benefit from broadening its theoretical-conceptual horizons beyond artistic studies and/or art history, further extending bridges to philosophy and communication sciences, in relation to semiotics, media studies, (cyber)textualities, as well as to sociological and/or anthropological approaches to the many existential issues summoned by this book. Furthermore, when dealing with a (critical) functionalisation of artistic practices, one feels that the focus could be placed less on materialistic and technical materialisations of a post-digital aesthetics and its production strategies, and more on its potential uses and users.

Trying to escape the usual dichotomic contemplation of digital media – between dystopia and utopia –, however not disconnecting from the cultural, social, political and economic problems related to the uses of digital technologies and electronic devices, we would like to present a counterpoint to the author's perspective on critical making. That is: following Simon Bowen proposals of "multiple makings" and "making in public". Our suggestion derives from the fact that Bowen et al's (2018) exploration of collaborative artistic processes seems to extend from an interactive paradigm, that still haunts (post)digital art, allowing for less author-centred, emancipatory, approaches to artistic, mixed media, practices<sup>13</sup>.

In this sense, further expanding on Pedro Ferreira's Do-It-Yourself practice, to an idea(l) of Do-It-With-Others, therefore, also echoing Tim Ingold's understanding of the ways of making as ways of learning (2020). As Françoise Choay points out in *Alegoria do Património* (2019) [1982], in order to escape the labyrinth, one must know how to build it first<sup>14</sup>. When learning the labyrinth, just like Dedalus, we recover our ability to make, that is, to create, that is, to imagine. From sub-cultural, individual, representation, to *glocal*, collective making(s). Or: from techno-criticism to techno-empowerment and techno-action.

## REFERENCES

Bowen, S., Shaw, T., Bowers, J., & Williamson, M. (2018). illuminations: Exploring Community Engagement with Intangible Heritage Through Multiple Making. *Proceedings of the 3rd Digital Heritage International Congress (DigitalHERITAGE)*, 1-24.

<https://doi.org/10.1109/DigitalHeritage.2018.8810050>

Cascone, K. (2000). The Aesthetics of Failure: 'Post-Digital' Tendencies in Contemporary Computer Music. *Computer Music Journal*, 24(4), 12–18.

Choay, F. (2019). *Alegoria do Património*. Edições 70.

<sup>13</sup> Bowen et al propose both approaches as part of the results of artistic-research project, "illuminations", namely the creative work developed with a community group, "seeking to increase cultural and social use of the medieval Church of St Andrew" (2018). For a more detailed take on this proposal, see Ana Gago and Diogo Marques' article, "MOIRA: (Re) making Algarve's culture(s) of water through mixed media arts" In *Cultural Studies*, 39(5), 755–776.

<sup>14</sup> Françoise Choay's argument follows a reflection on the de-materialization of current western society, specifically addressing its impacts on the "loss of ability to build", and, therefore, to experience and take ownership of individual and collective heritage(s). For a detailed analysis on Choay's argument, see Gago, (2025, pp.104-107).



Ferreira, P. (2023a). *Audiovisual Disruption: Post-digital Aesthetics in Contemporary Audiovisual Arts* [Doctoral Dissertation, Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Lisbon]. FBAUL Repository.

<http://hdl.handle.net/10451/59741>

Ferreira, P. (2023b). *THINGS I DO WHEN I'M BORED*. [Video] [pedroferreira.net](http://pedroferreira.net).

<https://pedroferreira.net/moving-image/things-i-do-when-im-bored>

Gago, A. (2025). *(Re)criar o património: caraterização de problemáticas e tendências para a programação de residências artísticas em Portugal* [Doctoral Dissertation, School of Arts, Universidade Católica Portuguesa]. UCP Repository.

<https://repositorio.ucp.pt/entities/publication/cb42acec-741a-4cd0-b539-da926e6e895a>

Galloway, A. (2016). Jodi's Infrastructure. *E-Flux*, 74.

<https://www.e-flux.com/journal/74/59810/jodi-s-infrastructure>

Ingold, T. (2020). Of Work and Words: Craft as a Way of Telling. In V. O. Jorge (Coord.), *Proceedings of Modos de Fazer / Ways of Making* (pp. 13-32). CITCEM/FLUP.

Paul, C. (2003). *Digital Art*. Thames & Hudson.

Ratto, M. (2011). Critical Making: Conceptual and Material Studies in Technology and Social Life. *The Information Society*, 27, 252–60.

Article received on 17/11/2025 and accepted on 27/11/2025.

[Creative Commons Attribution License](#) | This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY). The use, distribution or reproduction in other forums is permitted, provided the original author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are credited and that the original publication in this journal is cited, in accordance with accepted academic practice. No use, distribution or reproduction is permitted which does not comply with these terms.