

**Simone Osthoff**

## **Raising the Temperature of the Conversation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

It was a pleasure to participate in the fruitful round table discussions organized by Steffi Winkler and Baruch Gottlieb this spring in The Hague and to continue engaging with the extraordinary provocations posed by Vilém Flusser and my Flusserian colleagues over the two days of conversations we shared in the symposium *Transcoding Flusser: Synthetic Thinking*, sponsored by the *West*.

The fifteen slides included in my talk addressed Flusser's insights into technology and culture at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, through the work of artists who are critically engaging technology today. The themes they address include entropy, failure, and disinvestment; the collapse of categorical boundaries in dualities such as human and non-human, culture and nature; issues of climate change, big data, and the use of datasets as a raw "palette"; surveillance, participation, and the voyeurism of social media; in addition to perspectives from Latin America, where access to technology is very uneven, reaffirming old social exclusions based on class, race, and gender. In Brazil and Cuba, for instance, technology carries further social and political dimensions, and DIY survival tactics are central to concepts such as "technological disobedience" and "techno-phagic emergence."

My goal was to connect our wireless culture populated by "smart objects" and Flusser's predictions for a telematics society, as well as to examine the inversions he envisioned in the exchanges between art and science. The seven artists included in my slide presentation below are also writers and activists publicly engaging with controversial issues. Whether based in North or Latin America, they work globally. From the U.S., I chose Eduardo Kac, a pioneer of Bio Art eroding boundaries between subject and object, animals and plants, humans and robots; Paul Miller, who creates sound pieces from scientific data; Laura Poitras's documentary films and exhibition about surveillance and the use of remote technologies in war; as well as Andrea Fraser's institutional critique. From Latin America, I included two São Paulo artists: Giselle Beiguelman articulating the concept of techno-cannibalism, and Lucas Bambozzi exploring the invisibility of electronic waves, issues of obso-

lescence and waste; together with the work of Cuban artist Ernesto Oroza's notion of "technological disobedience," all three reaffirm forms of political resistance inherent in the "Anthropophagic Manifesto" of 1928, and the "Aesthetics of Hunger" manifesto from 1965.

Brazilian culture for Flusser and others was an original syncretic mixture of Eastern and Western influences. The combination of modern and oral traditions, technology and samba were for a period charged with transformative potential, and Flusser's *homo ludens* suggested new ways of turning information into knowledge. However, the anticipation that Brazil could become "the country of the future" is increasingly being undone by harsh social and economic inequities, and a deep crisis following an exceptional decade of growth and expansion of the middle class in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

# Raising the Temperature of the Conversation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

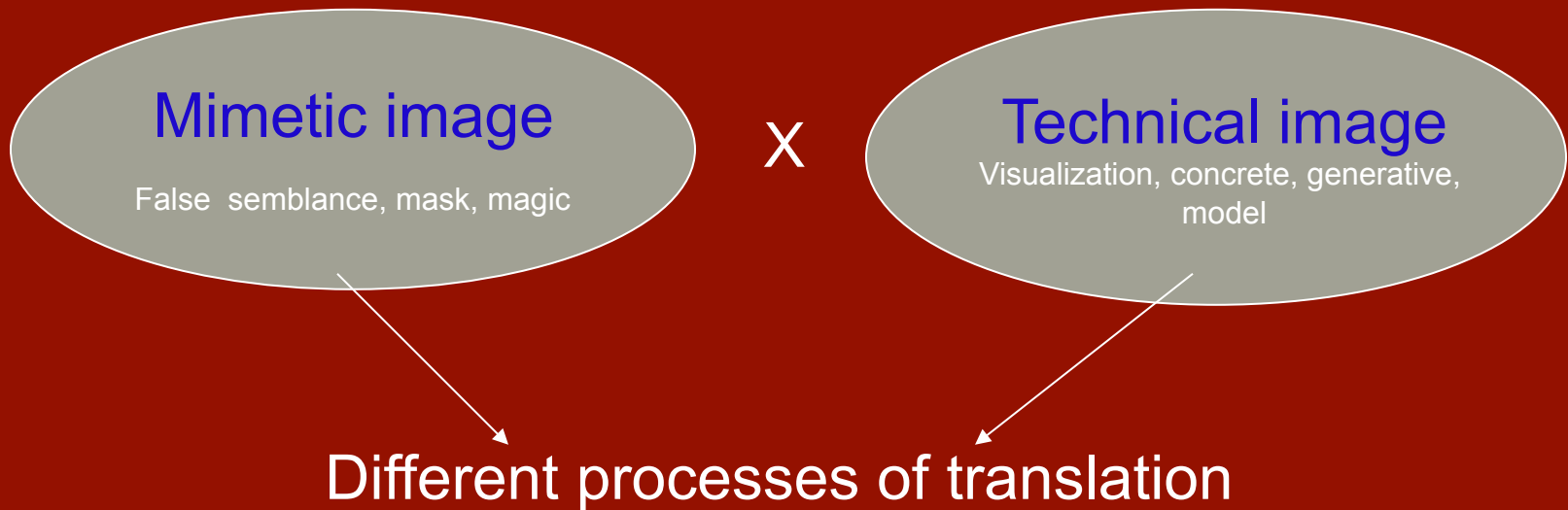


Simone Osthoff, Professor of Art and Critical Studies  
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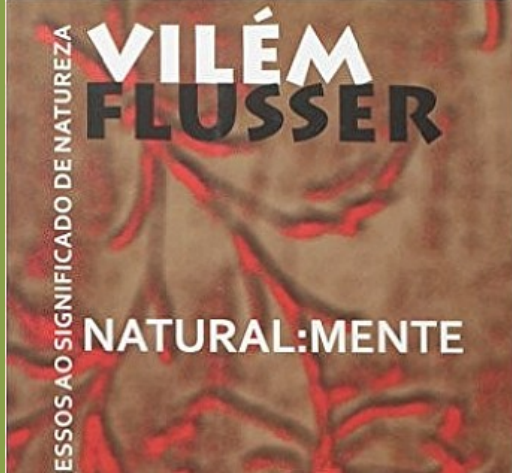
*Symposium Transcoding Flusser: Synthetic Thinking*, West Den Haag, April 15-16, 2016.

# Vilém Flusser Media Theory is argued as a series of translations between images and texts

4, 3, 2, 1, 0  $\longrightarrow$  technical imagination





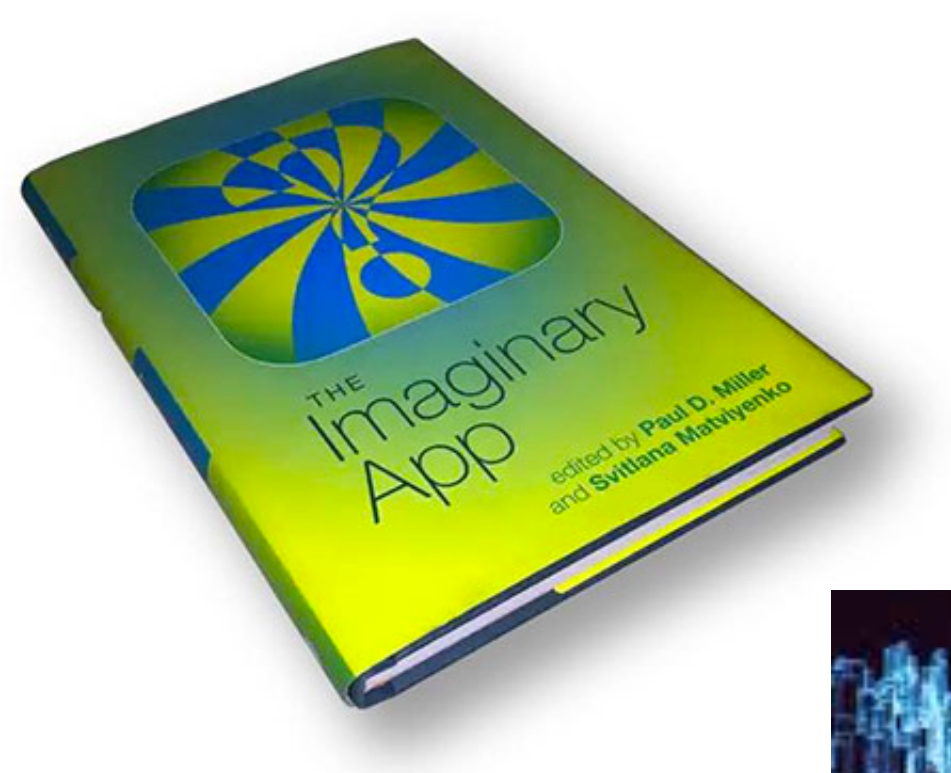


Levi van Veluw, Landscape I, 2008



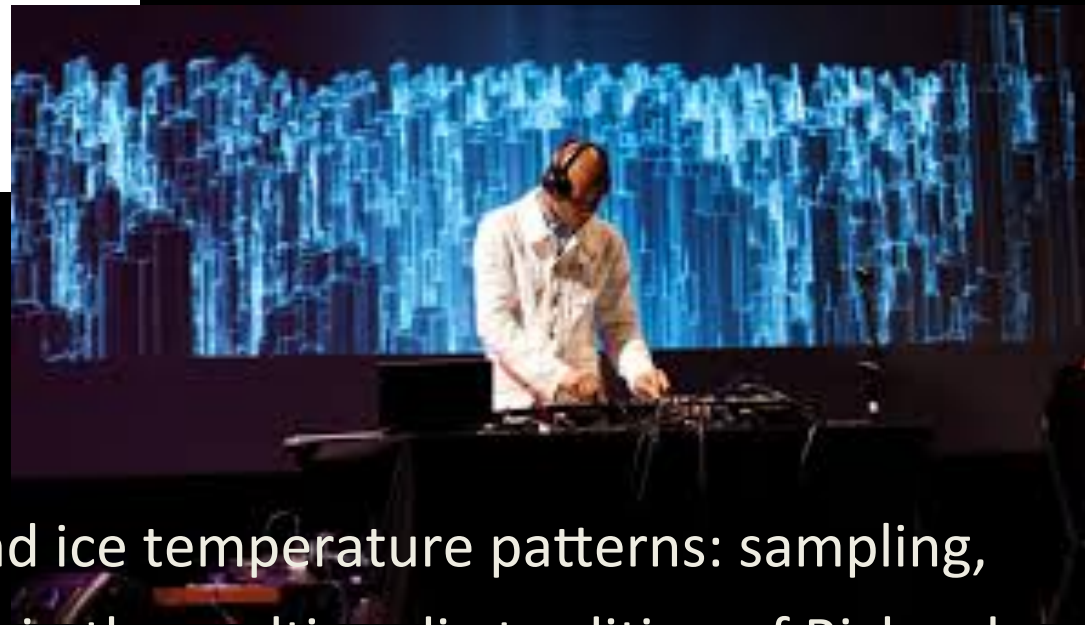


Eduardo Kac, *Natural History of the Enigma*, Weisman Art Museum Minneapolis, 2009.  
Hybrid of Kac's DNA and a Petunia



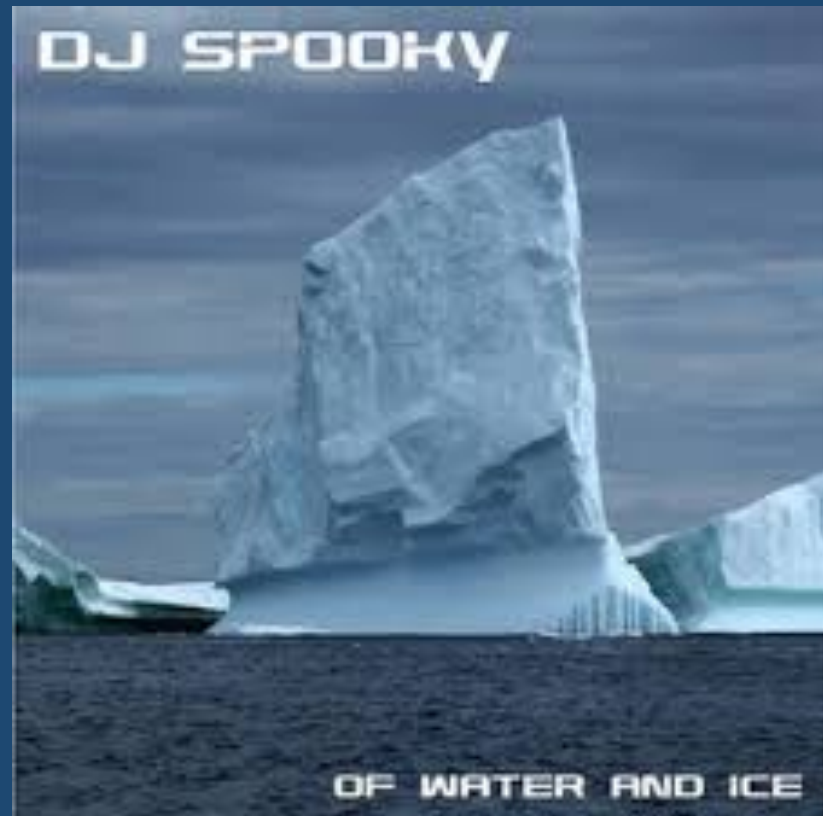
Paul Miller, aka DJ Spooky

Creating music from water and ice temperature patterns: sampling, looping, layering, and editing, in the multimedia tradition of Richard Wagner, John Cage, and Nam June Paik.

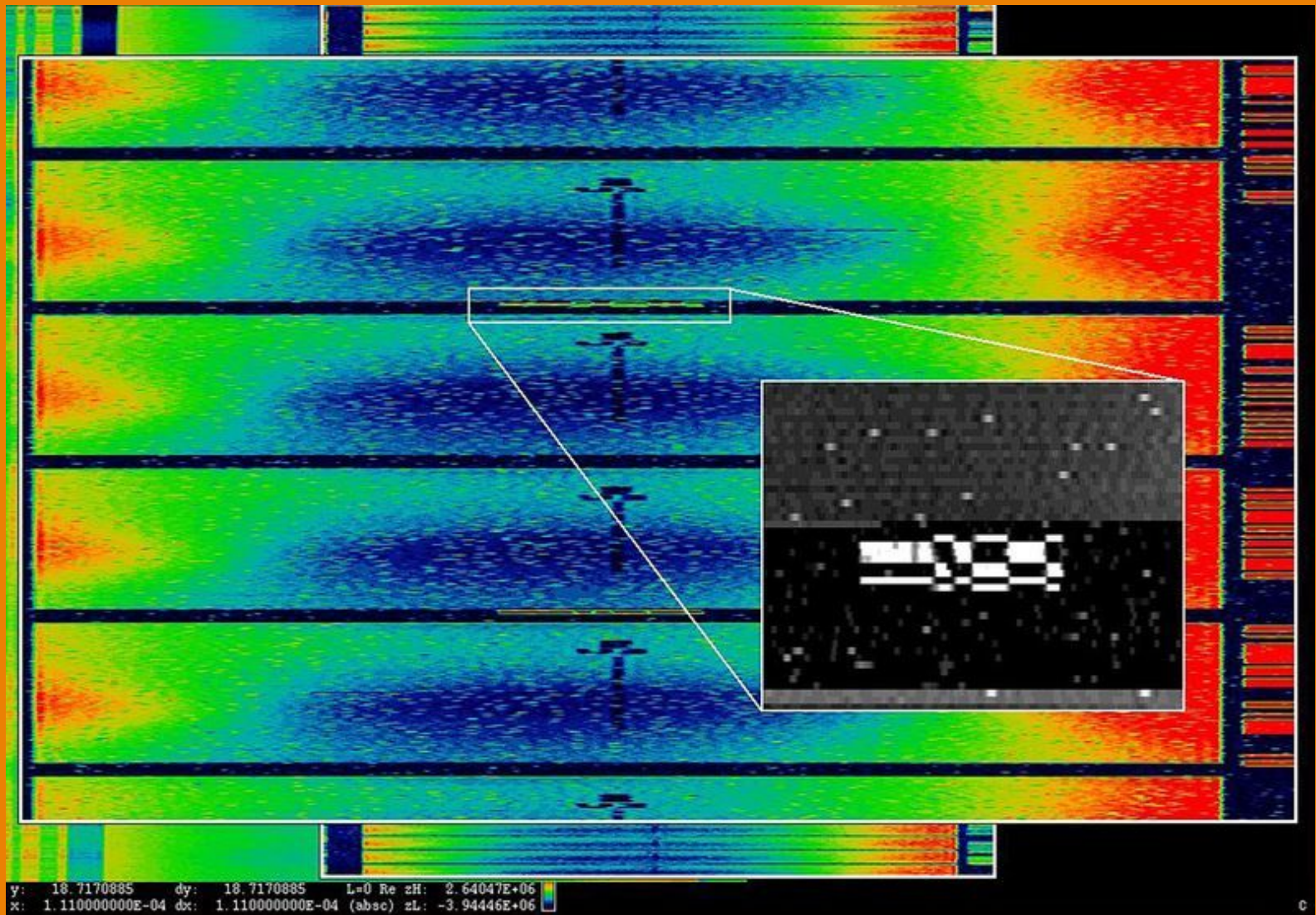




Acoustic portraits of water and ice  
“the dataset is the score”



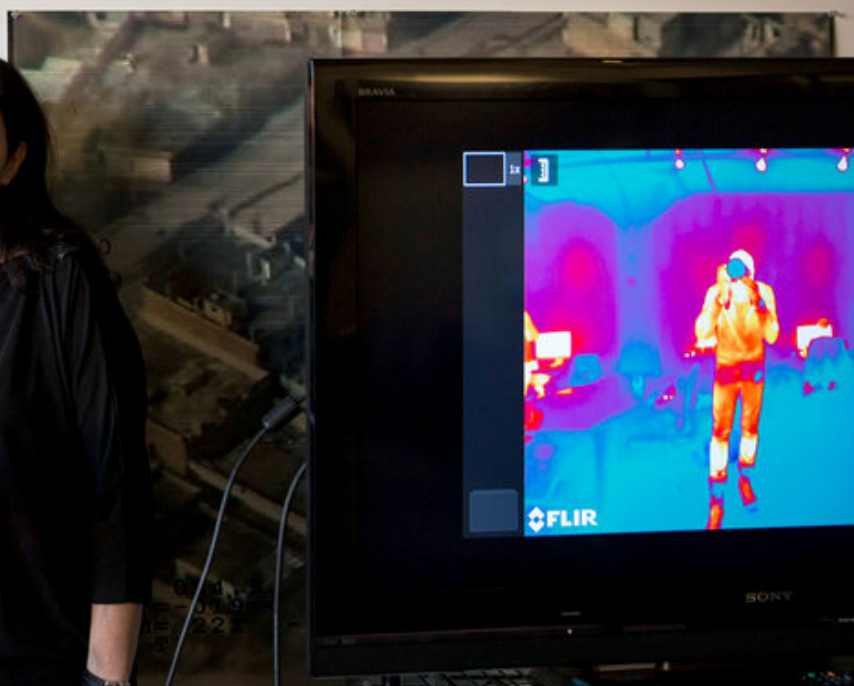
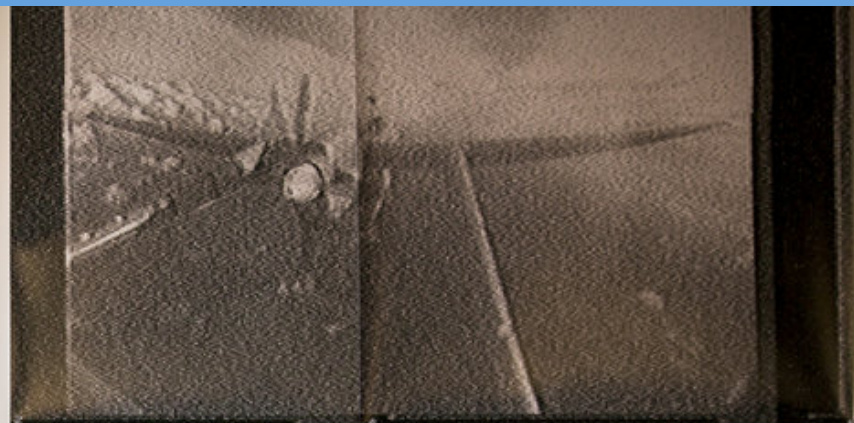
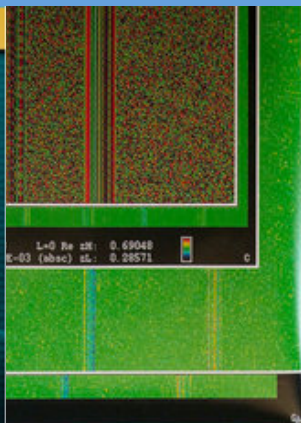




Laura Poitras 2016 exhibition “Astro Noise” at the Whitney Museum in NY  
comments on the impulse to look that underlies both art and surveillance: “One  
watches the artist watching the government watching you.”



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# Tendencies in Digital Art Creation in Brazil Toward Technophagy

Giselle Beiguelman

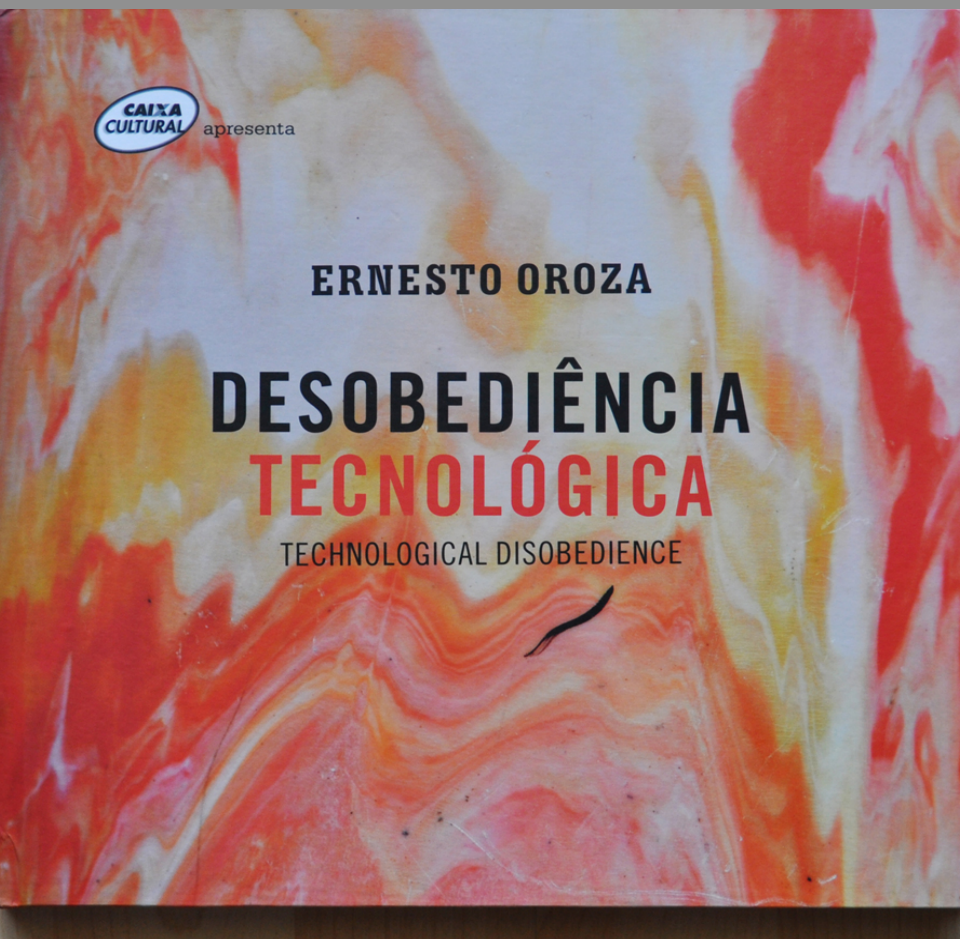
“Technophagic Emergence” is a tendency of the digital culture in Brazil to devour and grind technology into DIY production models for collective use.





Ernesto Oroza, *Architecture of Necessity*, Habana Vieja, 2012.





Oroza's *Technological Disobedience* references the *Cinema Novo* manifesto the "Aesthetics of Hunger" (1965) by the Brazilian filmmaker Glauber Rocha.



Lucas Bambozzi, *On broken things*, São Paulo 2012.

The machine turns the communication flow around us into waste. It apparently makes its own decisions on whether to crush our electronic consumption waste or not, based on the intensity of the electromagnetic fields that hover in the environment.





Participants find pleasure in destruction





*Rolezinho in the Shopping Metrô Tapuapé, São Paulo, April, 2016.*





Andrea Fraser, *Down the River*, Whitney Museum NY, 2016.